The Mutualism of Culture and Engagement

One way to assess your wisdom relates to your ability to hold two conflicting thoughts in your mind at the same time, without going crazy. Consider this issue of The Art of Health Promotion as a thought experiment testing your mental resiliency. I’ve juxtaposed an article summarizing expert opinions on how to improve employee’s engagement in their personal health with an article that describes what experts believe should be the top priorities for research into employee health improvement. Both emphasize the importance of culture, but as you’ll see in my commentary at the end of this issue, you can’t help but reflect on our authors’ somewhat contradictory exhortations. How is it that, according to some, we practitioners need to get busy creating cultures of health, while others say we must make it a priority to learn what that actually involves?

During my planning process for my new editing duties at The Art of Health Promotion, I sent out a survey to health promotion practitioners asking them what topics they were most interested in learning more about, and what article formats they enjoyed reading. Practitioner interests were wide ranging. “Building a culture of health” was the leading area of interest with related topics such as “social marketing,” “communications strategy,” with “behavioral economics” following close behind. The two leading preferences for article formats were expert interviews (88% likely or very likely to read) followed closely by case studies (87% likely or very likely to read). We delved into the thoughts of Dr. James Prochaska in the last issue. In this issue, though, I’m excited to bring you a case study in a format that has become a time-honored tradition in business schools and leading business journals. I tee up a composite story that will sound very familiar to readers working in the trenches on worksite health promotion, and I ask experts to weigh in with their advice. In addition, we will be posting these case studies online, so you may also offer your opinion. In addition, I’ll be sharing some of the best of your thoughts in future issues as well as online. Please share your thoughts by dropping in now and then on our blog at The American Journal of Health Promotion Web site. Also, follow me on Twitter at @pauleterry, and I’ll keep you posted on what’s happening in The Art of Health Promotion.

In future issues of The Art of Health Promotion, watch for more of these composite case studies as well as case studies offered by practitioners who are having success in implementing best practices programs within their organizations. In the composite story format, I am able to present current challenges in the field, warts and all. Such case studies are much more difficult to solicit from practitioners working in large organizations, which have those pesky public relations departments, but please be sure to be in touch with me if you have a case study (with or without warts) that you think readers of this section can learn from.

Paul E. Terry, PhD
Editor, The Art of Health Promotion

Why share your thoughts on our Blog?
Are you interested in a proven way to increase your comprehension of what you read? Do you want to improve your recall of the ideas presented in this issue and increase the likelihood that you will apply new learnings in your work? When you take time for post-reading methods, such as sharing your reflections and connecting your previous knowledge with the topics at hand, you accomplish all of the above. An added bonus of summarizing and retelling is that you’re fueling additional learning for others. Watch for “The Best Of” ideas from our Blog-abetted social network in future issues. Check out our Blog today under “More Good Stuff” at healthpromotionjournal.com.

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