

Return to Work - Hindering Your Own Success?

Believe it or not, employers are the biggest resisters of a return to work process. Why is that? Studies have shown that a properly developed and implemented return to work process, which includes transitional duty positions, can have dramatic benefits such as decreased employee re-habilitation time and state specific claim cost reductions. Unfortunately, many employers are still unaware, or misinformed of the possible advantages a return to work process can have on their profitability of the company. So let's discuss the four most commonly heard excuses employers have on why they haven't implemented a return to work process, and examine whether they are legitimate or not.

- No "light duty" or "transitional duty" positions
- Don't trust employees in the office
- Need employees 100 percent or not at all
- Concerned about being sued if employee is reinjured

All of these sound like legitimate reasons for not implementing a return to work policy, right? Well, let's find out.

No Light Duty

This can be a legitimate excuse in only few companies. Every employer should be able to modify an employee's position to some degree to allow the individual to return to work and be productive. As an employer, trying to fit a "transitional duty" position into a full-time position may be unnecessary. If available, great! If not, accommodate the injured employee by having the person do tasks that have been neglected, i.e., preventive maintenance.

Don't Trust Employees in the Office

I have heard this excuse from more than a handful of companies so it may be more prevalent than you think. If you can't trust your employees, why are they working for you to begin with? Remember that the employees on a modified duty assignment should have supervision, so they don't get into your secret files on the assassination of JFK? Besides, put a lock on that drawer. Seriously, if you don't trust your employees in your office or having access to certain files, don't place them in an assignment where they can gain access to those files or revisit your hiring process.

Need Employees 100 Percent or Not at All

You are paying for the employee regardless if they are on transitional duty or sitting at home rehabilitating. Why pay for 0 percent productivity when you can get 50 percent or more? Every single one of you, including myself, cannot say we give 100 percent effort every hour of every day.

Concerned About Being Sued if Employee is Re-injured

In today's litigious society, people sue each other for the most incredible reasons. At face value, this reason is legitimate. However, with the proper knowledge of workers' compensation law, or with a Google search, you'll find this should be the least of your concerns. As long as you abide by the doctor's restrictions and are not forcing the employee to do work that is obviously out of scope of those restrictions, you cannot be sued. The only way that an employer can get a civil lawsuit brought against them in a workers' compensation case is if you didn't have any insurance to begin with.

If any of these reasons seem all too familiar, understand that it's not too late to implement a re - turn to work process and reap the spoils of your success. If you don't, your competitors will and remember "to the winner go the spoils."

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