

Fitting way to slim down a workforce

By Natasha Muktarsingh

B RITISH bosses may soon lead the way in health and fitness, thanks to sportswear company Adidas.

It runs a special Wellness Centre for the 450 workers at its UK headquarters in Stockport, Cheshire. Designed to look at their health and lifestyles to reduce the risk of problems later, the centre has been so successful that other firms are being invited to share the benefits.

A report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel says 65 per cent of workers think the number of hours they work affects their health, and that this lowers their morale and productivity.

Cardiac specialist Dr Dorian Dugmore, who set up the centre five years ago, insists: 'You have to stay healthy to cope with pressure. If people are a company's most important assets, they must be looked after.'



'Improving someone's health and fitness can help prevent serious disease later in life, which must be good for business.'

At Adidas, 83 per cent of the staff use the centre in some way. It has a good gym – but more important, staff can have individual tests to identify health risks.

Tests include physical measurements such as body fat and lung function as well as blood pressure, cholesterol levels and general fitness.

Specialists in fitness and nutrition will draw up individual plans to help minimise any health risks.

When the centre was set up, Adidas staff rated stress as one of their top health priorities, but it has now dropped to seventh place.

Robert Bulman, a 48-year-old IT



'20 years younger': Pryce Williams works out in the Adidas Wellness Centre

technical support analyst, visited the centre 18 months ago – and found he had high blood pressure.

He says: 'The team here work in partnership with my GP, who is happy to see me only twice a year rather than every month because my blood pressure has dropped since I've been on the programme.'

'I don't find myself flagging in the afternoon at work any more, and I

feel more loyal to the company as a result of the experience. The fact that the centre is here does influence my choice of employer.'

Pryce Williams, 60, who works in the warehouse, had a triple heart bypass and a valve replacement four months ago, but he is already back at work after receiving rehabilitation treatment through the centre.

He says: 'I was quite fit before my operation because my job is very physical, but now I have even more energy and I feel 20 years younger.'

'If every company looked after their staff like Adidas does, they would get more out of them.'



Pressure off: Robert Bulman trains

THE same programme is offered to executives and includes counselling, goal setting and tracking health targets.

So far, 70 executives in the UK have taken part and have been re-tested 12 months later. After following their individual programmes, their stress levels were reduced from seven out of ten to three during that period.

Mike Kontowtt, 39, has been through the programme at Adidas and urged boardroom colleagues at IT company PSL in Haslingden, Lancashire, to take it, too.

He says: 'Their health is as impor-

tant to the business as mine. I enjoyed it and wanted them to try it.'

At about £1,500 for a full executive programme, the service is not cheap.

Kontowtt says: 'The business benefit of this sort of thing might not always be tangible, but I want to create a company that people want to work for.'

Gordon Baird, managing director of Adidas UK, adds: 'The investment in the centre has been significant, but we are helping people look after themselves, which results in a healthier, more motivated workforce.'