Injury management round table discussion

Below is a summary of a discussion on current practices in organisations represented at the mining forum hosted by WorkCover Queensland.

Supervisors role in Return to Work (RTW)

- The development of a front line supervisor program to improve understanding and show the human face of the organisation. It has shown that employees are more amenable to returning to work.
- Supervisors challenging workers when appropriate if something looks out of place. This has helped in a number of areas such as the absentee management process.
- A “straight talk” program for discussions with employees. All discussions supervisors have with employees are to be based on facts rather than emotions and clearly identify any concerns or current issues.

Rehab/coordinator roles in RTW

- It’s important to act as a support for the staff and employee. Rehab Return to Work (RRTW) coordinators role is a balance between knowing who you are and also recognising good supervisors can be the face of, or the “in charge person”.
- The RRTW coordinator should follow up and coordinate the relevant parties.
- At times injured workers don’t know who their RRTW coordinator is until they are injured.

Feedback from employees on rehab/RTW process and programs

- Provide a feedback process for employees who have gone through the return to work process. The worker can call someone more senior to discuss the process, and provide feedback on whether they were happy with the process and any obstacles or difficulty they encountered.
- Conduct direct supervisor training, back to basics for RRTW coordinators.
- A bigger focus on injury management process by updating task details assessments which go to the doctor. The process is simple and contains lots of pictures for consideration of RTW.
- Dedicated training and development supervisors and superintendents and can see improvements using an integrated approach. It can’t be an isolated approach with only a RRTW coordinator driving it. This approach doesn’t necessarily have immediate results, it can be a longer term result rewarded over a couple of years.

Challenges faced by small/medium employers

- People are often wearing multiple hats and can have difficulty getting ideas and procedures actioned by senior management.
- Suggestions were to remember that ‘money talks’. Portray dollar values by using injury costing projections to estimate claims costs through flowcharts –for example, apply average claims costs to all first aid costs to highlight how expensive claims can be.
- It’s also important to remember some interventions don’t have immediate results, but let supervisors and senior management know when you have some success.