



Changing the Paradigm

Building a Business Model for Your Return
to Work Program

Ohio Safety Congress Presentation

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About Margaret Spence:

Margaret Spence is the President/CEO of Douglas Claims & Risk Consultants, Inc. and WorkCompSeminars.com. The core foundation of her company is a commitment to helping employers implement proactive workers compensation and integrated disability management policies, that retains or returns ill, injured and disabled employees to the workforce. Margaret is an expert at showing companies how to navigate the often complex workers compensation system and create policies that link HR best practices with prudent injury management strategies.

Margaret is the author of, From Workers Comp Claimant to Valued Employee, published in 2008 and her new book, The HR Managers Survival Guide to Workers Compensation Injury Management will be published this spring. She has written extensively for many business publications on return to work implementation, worksite wellness, post-disability inclusion and she is a national speaker on workers compensation and mentoring women to entrepreneurial leadership. Her blog the WorkersCompGazette.com was awarded the 2010 - Top 25 Workers Compensation Blog by LexisNexis.

Margaret was a three year member of SHRM's Special Expertise Panel on Employee Health, Safety & Security and she is the two term VP of Professional Development for the Greater Miami SHRM Chapter.

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Create a Business Model for Your Return to Work Program

Your Return-to-Work Coordinator position must become a profit center—not a cost center.

Vision/Mission:

- You must be able to articulate what your return to work program will stand for.
- _____(Vision)
- _____(Mission)

S-W-O-T:

- What are the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats to your establishing a return to work program and maintaining the program.

Goal:

- What do you want to accomplish? Tangible realistic goals.
- Example: Reduce the number of employees who have repeat injuries and reduce the number of lost work days. Add bottom-line savings to the workers comp program.
- _____(Goal)

Process:

- Must be well thought out and defined for all participants

Results:

- When we get down the road our results will be the following
- _____(Intended Results)

Reassessment:

- How will you assess the success of your role/program/benefits?
- What worked and what items must change to achieve success?
- _____(Proof)

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Cost/ROI:

- What return on investment will your organization gain by implementing a RTW Program and having you as the RTW Coordinator?
- Program Cost or Program Savings
- _____ (I will Save the Company)
- _____ (The ROI)

Success:

- Your organization must know your value every day!
- How will you measure success?
- How will you convey success?

Your Team:

- Who will participate in your Return to Work Team?
- Who will triage your injuries on day one?
- When will you start the advocacy role?

Survey the Landscape: Obstacles – Opportunities – Landmines

- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Insurance carrier issues
- Adjuster and Physician Issues
- State Laws
- Attorneys
- Management/Supervisors

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RTW Coordinator Job Description

Your return-to-work coordinator must have the backing of upper management, and he/she must be able to make logical, sound, prudent business decisions regarding work assignments.

The coordinator will perform the following tasks:

- Conduct an ongoing evaluation of your transitional return-to-work programs (this also includes working with employees who are off work due to non-work-related disabilities).
- Continually update the pre-injury job demand evaluations, which we will outline in the next chapter.
- Create job descriptions for transitional-duty positions.
- Train new managers and supervisors on effective return-to-work techniques.
- Identify tasks that can be assigned to injured employees.
- Coordinate the safe return of injured employees.
- Work with supervisors to make sure injured employees are adhering to their restrictions and limitations.
- Evaluate your program for ADA, FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) compliance.
- Participate in the safety committee by providing up-to-date reports on employees in the transitional program.
- Act as a liaison between the employee, the supervisor, the insurance carrier and the treating physicians.
- Identify assistive devices that can allow employees to return to work with a job modification.
- Provide technical assistance to your supervisors and managers so employees can return to work in a safe, healthy and timely manner.

Primary Duty:

- Advocacy
- Enforcement
- Liaison

**You Must Sell Success – Show the value of your program
by the success that you achieve.**

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Things You Must Know to Start Down the Road to Success:

- **Notice of Injury Process:** Must be clearly defined
- **First Contact:** Who starts the advocacy process?
- **Disability Determination:** What constitutes Light Duty? Do you want employees working when they are “sick at work”?
- **Job Availability:** What positions do you have for light duty employees? How will you build a pool of available jobs?
- **Job Assignments:** How will you assign employees to your “RTW Program”?
- **Tracking:** How will you track employees who enter the RTW Program?
- **Follow-Up Appointments/Transfer of Care:** How will you track physician appointments and how do you track new doctors who enter the process?
- **Define MMI Process in Your State:** What is MMI and what does it mean in your State?
- **Permanent Restrictions:** What happens when the employee cannot return to the pre-injury job?

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SWOT Worksheet

Strength: What are the positive things about your return to work program or return to work goal?

Weakness: What are the clear, very specific weaknesses in your program or establishing your program?

Opportunities: What are the "GREAT" reasons why everyone wants to implement the RTW Program?

Threats: What specific things will stand in the way of your return to work program? Who dislikes the program? Who is most vocal about the program inefficiencies? Who wants to see the program go away?

What are you going to do to turn – Threats into Opportunities? How do you plan to win over the naysayers?

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Building Your Team:

- Always Have a Backup Person Available

Early Intervention:

Adjusters:

Physicians:

Strategic Plan:

Internal Core Supporters:

Creating Benchmark Reports

How will you track the performance of your Return to Work Program?

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Success Roadmap:

Goal:

Benchmark:

Results:

Cost Savings:

New Goals:

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