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Danone Simpson has more than 17 years experience in all lines of insurance. Danone has built an agency focused on employee benefit and property & casualty programs for the commercial and nonprofit sectors. Under Danone's leadership the firm has partnered with over 100 carriers in order to find the perfect insurance solutions for their clients. Danone has been presented multiple awards in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Business Journals, including being selected a Trusted Advisor in Insurance and one of the Top Twelve Women Owned Businesses in Los Angeles. Recently Danone was selected by Forbes magazine to be represented in the Women of Power series for Southern California. She sits on the Valley Village Board of Directors and Make-A-Wish and was honored as a founding member of Women for Wishes. Danone received her Masters of Business Administration from the Graziadio School of Business at Pepperdine University.

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| EMPLOYEE BENEFITS |

## Growing Pains Are Real

Managing the costs of employees through providing safe and healthy workplaces

It is an election year so while the presidential candidates have town hall meetings, so must employers. Growth is apparent and costly, advises Gerry Schauer, CFO and trusted advisor—so let's look at what we can do to get ahead of the cost curve on employee costs.

First and foremost, the cost of turnover is a great place to cut costs, by creating a strong culture where employees want to stay. The Department of Labor (DOL) reported December 2015 offered 201,000 job openings, with a quit rate that rose more than eyebrows. Stronger candidates are becoming available, so capitalize on hiring the right people. Employee training has suffered in past years and is imperative in today's fast growing environment. Making sure our trainers are ready to train new hires and blending them into a strong culture is an important focus to cut costs.

### Employee Engagement

Keeping employees present and wanting to come to work takes resources; however if we could swing the negative costs of high claims into healthier environments, providing language training, proper education, a great place to work and growth in job opportunities, employees will stay.

Efficiencies in processes and procedures are taking claim as more and more highly educated employees are flooding the marketplace. Disorganization is being cleaned up and bringing employees along with new ideas and technologies has a profound impact on keeping workers engaged. Workers are aging, keeping benefits longer as they are catching up on retirement planning, so this should be a focus.

One of my favorite case studies was on BMW and their approach to keeping

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their workers. With a shortage of younger employees coming into the workforce they held committee meetings asking employees what they needed. They put in large magnifying glasses the employees could move around to help them see the intricate parts they were working on. They put in stools so workers could sit while working. The assembly line was inspired into being more productive by being allowed to have proper tools to help them work faster. They were a part of the solution. Translate this into your place of work.

### Wage Hikes

Minimum wage increases are here and deserved. Keeping the costs of turnover down in manufacturing, leisure, and hospitality and services will offset higher costs due to health care, workers' compensation, as well as wage and hour compliance. We are seeing change happen – improving employees'

environments, getting them involved with safety training, routine exercises to improve WC claims, and overall health.

### Corporate Wellness

Providing healthier choices in the workplace if snacks are available by vending machines is one way to communicate commitment to employee well-being. Allowing vendors to come in to promote wellness, give flu shots, and biometric screenings also sends the message that you are fully invested in your most valuable asset. Creating employee appreciation and proper incentive programs results in the following net benefits for a business:

- ▶ Promotes a safe environment
- ▶ Keeps workers compensation claims at a minimum
- ▶ Reduces fraud by communicating the employer cares
- ▶ Creates appropriate workflows with the proper staff

Immigrants are important to the workforce in Southern California and diversity is our way of life. Understanding the cultures of our employees is becoming increasingly important. Details such as festive colors in the kitchen, having a locker available to store personal belongings, offering benefits with proper education on how to use wellness benefits, and allowing employees adequate time to get their wellness treatments all contribute to having healthier employees.

The flu seasons and disability costs must be reduced with healthier and safer workplaces. Managing the negative impact on disengaged workers by cutting through negative employee relations must be addressed and replaced. Businesses are coming out of a tough few years and will be able to keep their best workers and let the others go, hire carefully and create a Best Place to work.



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