

# Benefits

CANADA

## B.C. logging company brings in happiness expert to help start 2017

Jennifer Paterson | January 12, 2017



As part of its efforts to focus on wellness and expand its health and safety program, a B.C. logging company hosted two seminars with a happiness expert at the beginning of January.

Island Timberlands has about 60 unionized employees who work on its logging sites and another 60 who work at one of its two main offices in Nanaimo and Nanoose Bay, B.C.

All employees attend a crew meeting on the first working day of the year, so the company brought in happiness expert Paul Krismer for two separate sessions on Jan. 3.

“It’s not a normal work day for 60 loggers to come to work

for a happiness seminar,” says Melinda Morben, manager of operational logistics at Island Timberlands. “It was a bit uncomfortable at first, but by the end, he had everybody in good spirits.”

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Krismer spoke about the Losada ratio, which involves evoking three positive emotions for every negative one, as well as lessons about practising gratitude and mindfulness. “It’s not new or revolutionary but it was really great to have a crew meeting where we talk about things that are a little uncomfortable and then make them OK,” says Morben.

“All feedback from our staff is that they absolutely loved it and they thought it was great that the company was investing in their personal well-being.”

The sessions with the happiness expert are the latest in a number of efforts by Island Timberlands in the past year as part of a new focus on wellness alongside its traditional work on health and safety. “It really is the next wave of safety for us,” says Morben.

“All industrial companies will have very intensive safety programs; we certainly do. Safety isn’t only about wearing the proper personal protective equipment and following the job safety breakdowns; it is also about keeping yourself healthy and happy and being able to be fit for work and be able to come to work and be alert and there.”

The move towards a more holistic focus on health and wellness came after Island Timberlands signed up with health-care provider Iridia Medical Inc. at the beginning of 2016. “Our workforce is aging, our guys are getting past 50, 60 years old, they are having more chronic, repetitive injuries,” says Morben.

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“We really looked at what we were going to get from Iridia and what we could do to really step it up, not only to prevent those things but to show the staff that we do genuinely care about their health, their happiness, their family, their mindfulness, their time off, all of those kinds of things.”

The company introduced a number of changes last year, including a weekly boot camp at a local gym, sessions with a nutritionist, hypnotherapy workshops, a fruit bowl in all of its lunch rooms, a healthy cooking demonstration with a chef, unlimited physiotherapy and four weeks of squash lessons with a professional. The squash program was so popular that the company will offer it again this month.

Since the company holds its annual crew meeting on the first day of the year, Island Timberlands uses it to tell employees what’s available in term of health and well-being. “We have a central dispatch area, so for the most part, the guys come and go through there first thing in the morning and end of day,” says Morben. “They can grab a piece of fruit out of the fruit bowl before they go out, they will see all the posters and the documents if there’s a contest and then we have managers and safety representatives who are relaying information.”

The logging staff also have files in the office they check about once a week, so the company also uses them to communicate any chances. “We do our very best to get it on all ears that we can,” says Morben. “We try and have enough notice of anything that’s going on that, within a week to two weeks leading up to it, people will see a poster or something.”

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