



+ Pears are a good source of water-soluble fibre and are high in pectin, which helps lower cholesterol levels.



CASE STUDY:

A partnership with benefits

Unison Networks and Southern Cross have forged a strong business partnership that has recently led to a whole new conversation – and it's not about health insurance.

Headquartered in Hastings, Unison owns, manages and operates the electricity network serving Hawke's Bay, Taupo and Rotorua. It has a longstanding commitment to being an employer of choice, with recent initiatives including a comprehensive health and wellness programme that's seen employee engagement scores soar, and a move to being a values-driven organisation.

Southern Cross has been there every step of the way, offering health insurance to Unison employees and, more recently, making a valued contribution to the company's new strategic direction.

Stepping things up a notch

Southern Cross's relationship with Unison goes back many years, originally to a voluntary work insurance scheme that provided staff with premium discounts. Things stepped up a notch in 2008, when Unison launched its 'Switched On To Health' wellbeing programme.

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"We knew that our ability to attract and retain good people – especially industry specialists – required us to have a strong, positive brand and an appealing employment package," says HR Manager Michelle Lyes. "So among other things we decided to offer fully subsidised health insurance."

All 360 employees are now fully subsidised on Southern Cross's Wellbeing One plan, which covers surgical treatment, related expenses and cancer care. Family members can also sign up at a discounted rate.

"Switched On To Health had an almost immediate impact," says Michelle. "We received very positive feedback from our staff, and achieved a 7 per cent increase in the wellbeing section of our 2010 employee engagement survey."

The programme has since been expanded to include – among other things – free flu vaccinations and health checks, and subsidies for health services and gym memberships. Unison has also established a Wellbeing Committee, which organises regular health and wellness initiatives covering topics such as sun awareness, nutrition, and men's and women's health.

Not surprisingly, employee engagement has continued to improve, with a 4.5 per cent increase between 2011 and 2013. Today, Unison's staff retention rate is well below the national – and the industry – average, and it continues to achieve significant reductions in workplace incidents and injuries.

A rewarding partnership

Michelle Lyes says the Southern Cross health insurance, and the support that Southern Cross provides to Unison employees, have been a success right from the start.

"People are avoiding waiting lists and getting the surgery they need quickly, and our surveys clearly show that they appreciate it," she says. "It gives them and their families important peace of mind and they feel valued and supported, which is really important to us. We in turn benefit from having them back at work after prompt treatment."

Michelle comments particularly on Southern Cross's service. "We don't have to worry about a thing," she says. "We have a local account manager who visits us regularly, introduces new employees to the plan and generally takes care of everything. They save us a lot of work; it's really hassle free."

Sharing ideas and expertise

This successful business partnership took a new direction in 2013, when Unison began to look more closely at its culture and the concept of being a values-based organisation.

"We were pleased with the progress we'd made, but we wanted to move from being a good company to being a great one," says Michelle. "That meant involving our people, and working with them to decide on the values and behaviours that are important to us.

"I was aware that Southern Cross had successfully introduced values into their organisation, and I was keen to do the same at Unison. So I was delighted when they generously offered to meet and share their experience."

"We were only too happy to help," says Craig Wagstaff, Southern Cross's National Sales Manager – Corporate Sales. "Unison is a valued business partner, and helping them in this way enabled us to give something back, on a very practical level."

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More than a year after Unison met with Southern Cross and launched its own values and behaviours, the two organisations continue to touch base. "They check in regularly to see how we're doing, and we continue to benefit from their advice," says Michelle.

"It's yet another example of the help and support that Southern Cross has given our company. It's a very positive relationship, and one that we truly appreciate."

About Southern Cross Health Society

Southern Cross Health Society is New Zealand's leading specialist health insurance and wellness provider with over 50 years experience in the health insurance industry. We continually invest in researching and developing new health insurance and wellness services so that we can offer our customers solutions that are leading edge.

Healthy people

When you offer health insurance for your employees, they can:

- have access to discounted premiums
- get back to work faster with faster access to treatment by avoiding public hospital waiting lists
- feel more appreciated, satisfied and loyal.

Healthy business

A partnership with Southern Cross means your business can benefit from our:

- wide variety of flexible health insurance and wellness solutions
- nationwide quality service
- Affiliated Provider program
- not-for-profit status
- commitment to creating a healthier society.

Let's get a healthier team

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