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Lessons from Scrooge

At our annual meeting with Scrooge, we took a look at his office: people working long hours, in dark rooms, with little heat, and having no cheer. Clearly, the working conditions had an effect on his employees' health and surely, we are much more sophisticated nowadays than Scrooge. But are we?

The work environment has a marked effect on health, even when the conditions are less dire than poor Bob Cratchit had to endure. Simple workplace factors can make health care costs higher than they need to be. For example . . .

<i>Workplace Factor</i>	<i>Effect on Health, Productivity, and Health Care Costs</i>
No paid sick time, or a corporate culture that expects people to come to work when they are ill.	The ill employee is less productive and spreads germs to co-workers. Ultimately, everyone's productivity suffers.
Work pace is hectic, and employees have no time for breaks.	People who have no time to go to the bathroom are more prone to kidney stones.
Performance goals are unrealistically high and few employees reach them.	High stress can give even young employees chest pain and heart palpitations. Also contributes to greater employee turnover.
Employees punch a time clock.	Instead of hassling with supervisors to get time for a medical appointment, employees go to the Emergency Room for care.

Scrooge ultimately transformed his office with better heat, more pay, and health benefits for his employees. (In fact, it might be a HIPAA violation for Scrooge to know about little Tim's leg.) **Today's employers need more than an extra shovel of coal to make the workplace conducive to employees' health. They need to know what health problems are driving their costs, and what they can do as employers to reduce those costs.**

When your client is barely surviving his renewal, it's time to try a new strategy. Call us. We have plenty of ideas for you.