

Music Making for Corporate Wellness

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According to Stress Directions (stressdirections.com), workplace stress continues to grow. In the U.S., experts at the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are dedicated to studying stress. They've found:

- Job burnout experienced by 25% to 40% of U.S. workers is blamed on stress.
- Depression, only one type of stress reaction, is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21st century, responsible for more days lost than any other single factor.
- \$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U.S. on stress-related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, health insurance costs, direct medical expenses (nearly 50% higher for workers who report stress), and employee turnover.

In an amazing, revolutionary step towards the practical application of music making for wellness, Toyota Motor Sales USA's corporate headquarters in Torrance, California has created a unique and effective method of "beating" stress and building up their high-performance teams. It's called the Toyota Drum Room.

The Toyota Drum Room is an extraordinary, first-of-its-kind experiment in the use of on-going music making for corporate teambuilding, stress-reduction, and change management. And the drummers you may hear aren't musicians and performers; they are associates of Toyota, drumming to build the level of teamwork in their respective departments.

The Toyota Drum Circle challenges traditional training paradigms. Participants are immersed in an entirely new environment where traditional roles and skills are replaced by a whole new world of sights, sounds and a driving rhythm. The experience is effective because it helps us talk about traditional challenges – barriers to teamwork, managing stress, and roles on the team and inclusion – in non-traditional ways.

According to Midge Waters, associate Dean of the University of Toyota, the primary benefits of the drum circles for Toyota include; experiencing a "high-performance team," morale building, interpersonal connecting, stress reduction and experiencing teamwork. "It's an opportunity for our associates to listen to each other and put their personal creativity into the

process.”

And the transfer is obvious. As corporations continue to explore best practices in caring for their employees and maintaining a loyal workforce, the Toyota experience of using music making may be the beginning of a national trend.

Known to the music products industry as “recreational music making,” Toyota exemplifies the paradigm change towards making music for non-musical outcomes. In the case of Toyota, these outcomes are workplace driven; however, hospitals, wellness centers, and community groups are incorporating recreational drumming and drum circles into programs aimed at giving people tools to enhance their quality of life on the job or at home.

Facilitated by Ron “RJ” Johnson, Associate Development Manager for the Center for the Toyota Way at Toyota Motor Sales’ Corporate University, drum circles are taking place on an average of twice a week. Sessions are available on request to any teams or departments within Toyota.

Through an on-going mentorship with Paulo Mattioli, a professional drum circle facilitator, performer, drum designer and Remo signature artist, RJ has transformed himself from the twenty-two year, corporate veteran to the inspirational facilitator, known to his fellow-associates as the “drum guy.” Since opening The Drum Room in March 2001, over 3,000 associates have taken the rhythmic journey toward wellness.

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