

“It’s better to act early.”

Long periods of incapacity for work are a burden for all involved and incur a lot of expense. Case Management from an early stage helps employees who have become ill or had an accident to return to work more quickly. Sandra Hauser, a Case Management specialist at Helsana, explains how successful reintegration is achieved and what the focus should be.



Sandra Hauser
Head of Specialised Services
for the corporate division

About the interviewee

Sandra Hauser heads up B2B Functional Management, Benefits at Helsana. As a social insurance expert, she empowers and supports people in their day-to-day work and also gives lectures at various professional education institutions. Her specialist areas are leadership, coaching, change and personality analysis. At Helsana, Sandra Hauser and her team support the specialist areas of Daily Sickness Benefits, Accident and Case Management. They advise companies on how to identify incapacity for work at an early stage and help reintegrate employees back into work, so that all employees stay healthy, recover quickly or can live a better life while affected by illness. With over 2.1 million insured persons, the Helsana Group is Switzerland's leading health and accident insurance provider.

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Sandra Hauser, when is Case Management necessary?

Depending on the situation, an initial evaluation with the Case Manager right at the start of the period of incapacity for work can pay off.

But isn't instigating Case Management after just a week's absence a bit premature?

It depends on what the employee is suffering from. The normal period of recovery after a knee operation is more or less known. But what if the healing process doesn't go as planned, or it is an illness where the course and outcome is unknown?

An important factor here is time. It's better to act early.

Why is early detection so important?

The longer somebody cannot work, the more difficult it is for them to return to work. Even after 30 days, the risk of chronification, meaning long-term incapacity for work, is twice as high as in the beginning. The route to getting back into work becomes harder.

Who reports the need for Case Management? The company?

That would be the quickest way. But often what happens is that we as insurance partners find out about the

case through the registration for daily sickness benefit and see the potential need for Case Management. Then we get in contact with the sick employee.

What happens in this first stage?

We get to know the person, as well as their needs and current situation – how they are, where they are in the whole process. It's not just about the medical details or work situation. Pressures in people's personal life affect their recovery, such as money worries, problems within the family or other conflicts. Any treatment needs to consider what caused the problem in the first place and other influential factors.

What is the aim of the initial meeting?

If a patient doesn't actively work with what's offered them, then even the best form of help won't achieve anything. Motivating people is the first aim – and it's the hardest one.

“We always see people's potential, not their problems.”

Why is that so difficult?

People in this position are often stuck in negative thoughts: this doesn't work, that's not right. So we must get them out of their state of thinking about their illness or incapacity. We always see people's potential, not their problems. What are their strengths? What resources do they already have and how can we activate these? What can they manage to do at the moment? And a very important thing: being ill or incapacitated is not a failure.

What role does the Case Manager play?

A Case Manager coordinates all the measures needed to get people back to work. This enables the person who is ill to focus on getting better and returning to work. If incapacity is triggered or compounded by the work environment, we can act as mediators or facilitators and help to resolve the conflict. Simply resolving the medical

issues is not enough. What we need are creative, situation-based solutions and a shared view of the goal. That is what we are committed to doing.

How do employers benefit from Case Management?

It greatly relieves the burden on companies. By supporting the person who is incapacitated for work and coordinating the measures, we take a lot of the burden off the employer's shoulders, but also reduce the uncertainties connected to any absence from work. Case Management also enables the business to remain successful. Faster reintegration of employees saves costs and avoids the loss of expertise.

What are the advantages for managers?

They always have an expert on hand – cases of incapacity for work raise questions: when will the person return? What do they need in order to recover? How should we respond and deal with the person?

Does re-integration always work?

No, sometimes it is actually better for the person if they do something different. What is more, it is not just the employee who has to be willing to reintegrate: the employer must also be willing. Taking the attitude “Make my employee fit for work again” doesn't work. The goal in the beginning isn't about productivity – it's about staying in the work process. Of course, this is a real challenge, depending on the financial situation. But in the end, it pays off for everyone.

Free Case Management

Our experienced Case Managers assist with the medical and social stabilisation process as well as helping you and your employees with reintegration into the workplace – from the initial case assessment to the improvement of the individual's personal and work situation. We coordinate procedures involving doctors, lawyers, third-party and social insurances and other involved parties. The person who is ill or has had an accident can therefore fully concentrate on getting better and returning to working life.

How can we help you?

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