

Addiction and the Rising Financial Toll on American Business

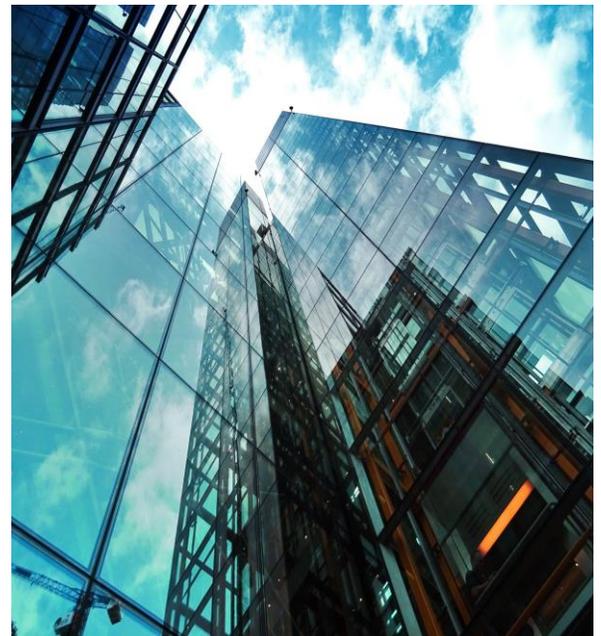
Substance use and addiction is a global crisis and an equally important issue is the stigma associated with addiction. The stigma and lack of awareness prevents people with substance use disorders (SUD) from availing the necessary treatment and this incurs substantial costs. For example, a company in the IT environment with 1500 employees incurs a cost of just over \$1.2 million per year based on the research conducted by the National Safety Council. The national bill of substance use estimates that America spends more than \$600 billion annually. There is a multiplying effect to the number of people impacted when you look at dependents, families and friends that suffer emotionally, financially and functionally. Addiction also has a significant impact on American businesses and criminal justice.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) report from 2012-2014 shows that 75% of the adults going through a substance use disorder belong to the workforce (age 18-65). When an industry wise review was carried out, the study showed that it is the information, communication, professional services, and mining sectors that bear the highest costs. However, construction, food, entertainment and recreation have a larger number of workers with substance use disorder. Therefore, the excess costs to the companies in these sectors are high. Today there is no sector of the workforce that is untouched by this problem. Substance misuse can affect companies that employ traditionally white-collar workers and physical laborers who work in grueling working conditions.

There are three main factors that add up to the excess costs: absenteeism, healthcare spending and turnover. The average costs by companies on workers with substance use disorder differ across industries. There are differences in the wages, paid time off reimbursement, turnover rate, and associated recruitment and training costs. And all these differences reflect on the amount of spending.

Work environment matters for employees wellbeing. Workplace stress, long working hours and poor work-life balance is linked to increased use of alcohol and poor performance. And the physiological distress is higher in workers with substance use disorder than their peers. There is increased anxiety, depression and loneliness, which could prevent them from availing the necessary treatment. The NSDUH survey also shows that there is higher rate of nicotine-dependence among individuals with substance use disorders. With these issues so prevalent today, why are we seeing less than 10% of the people with substance use disorders receive treatment in the U.S.? There are a number of factors including the perceived stigma associated with substance use, the financial and career strains of taking three to six weeks off of work for inpatient recovery programs, the actual capacity constraints at treatment facilities, and the out-of-pocket expenses associated with the programs. These too become factors to be dealt with by organizations and individuals.

AI based systems can have an impact on how extended enterprises are run by helping resolve complexities that have always traditionally belied satisfactory, iterative solutions. Machine learning could be an integral tool in enhancing both labor participation as well as customer engagement.



Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs accounts for 31% of traffic-related fatalities in the U.S. According to The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, driving under the influence costs the USA more than \$44 billion each year in prosecution, higher insurance rates, higher taxes, medical claims, and property damage. The rate of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs is very high among workers with substance use disorder. Almost 2/3rd of those with alcohol use disorder report drinking and driving at least once in the past one year. These rates are high among workers with drug use disorders as well.

How can we make a difference? With less than 10% of those with substance use disorder availing treatment and chances of relapse (currently estimated at 85%), it is important to provide tools to employees and their family members to help reduce relapse rates and perhaps have a conversation about societal stigma and raise awareness. The NSDUH survey clearly shows how workers in the recovery group can greatly bring down the expenses in the workplace with less absenteeism, healthcare expenses and turnover. With a lot of the time and energy between the ages of 18 – 65 spent in work, by investing in the wellness of the employees and engaging in a conversation about addiction and stigma, American businesses have the potential to reduce costs and improve productivity.

There is no simple solution to the substance use disorder problem in America today. We will see major initiatives aimed at reducing the issue along the path. There are efforts underway to improve the medical protocols, distribution channels, treatment methods and even change packaging with the intention of reducing use on the front-end. We have to reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorder in order get people into treatment, should they find themselves with a problem and then we need to help keep them from relapsing once they have sought treatment.

At Enlyte we are working with organizations to help their constituents and extended families reduce substance use disorder relapses from their current rate of 85%. Click [here](#) to learn more about how Enlyte is tackling the substance abuse challenge.

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ABOUT ENLYTE

Enlyte LLC. is an innovator in machine learning and bot platform technology specifically designed for employee health and wellness. Designed for organizations looking to help people manage stress and addictions, Enlyte offers a robust intelligent platform that can adapt to different types of users, conversations, and challenges.

Enlyte brings decades of experience in understanding how people learn and consume information coupled with domain experience from the scientific healthcare community to deliver a scalable, health and wellness bot application, designed to improve the lives and productivity of employees.