

Chapter Six

How to Implement a Corporate Wellness Program

Change Your Corporate Culture

80 % of American executives feel that corporate America has a responsibility to promote wellness. - Source: Study by the American Management Association, October 2004

WORKPLACE BEST PLACE FOR WELLNESS PROGRAMS

The work site is one of the best places for health and wellness programs. Employees spend more than half of their waking hours at work. This is an excellent reason to take a close look at how corporate wellness programs can be implemented to increase productivity and revenue while reducing concrete costs related to unhealthy employees.

SMALL BUSINESSES BENEFIT TOO

Small businesses benefit from wellness programs as well. Eliminate any thought from your mind that a wellness program is too expensive. I will show you how to implement a “bare bones,” high-impact wellness program that will be affordable for the smallest business.

More and more employers understand that healthy and happy employees are more productive, less stressed, take fewer sick days and care more for and about

customers and clients. This chapter will explain how to measure the *return on investment* of wellness programs and how to implement one with very little cost.

There are some employers and employees who may be against workplace wellness programs with the argument, “The workplace is just for work.” This would be a fatal view of the workplace since human interaction and productivity at the workplace is made up of much more than just work. There is much more to managing people than just managing work schedules and better performance matrices for improved productivity. Excellent leadership that inspires employees to support one another and care about one another creates a workplace that will benefit from increased productivity and strong, cohesive teams.

IMPLEMENTATION IS PARAMOUNT

Wellness programs in the workplace are not something new. Getting them approved and effectively implemented requires getting past the chief financial officer who is looking for hard facts that will at least result in a break even. If you get \$3 back for every \$1 invested, you will have achieved an excellent return.

Stronger, healthier and happier Americans are more productive. Inject solid, practiced core and life values into the formula, and the customers and clients will be attracted to your products and services. The corporate wellness program belongs in the arsenal of every business enterprise to increase the bottom line.

THE DILEMMA

Less than 20% of U.S. employers offer lifestyle modification services. 4% offer smoking cessation programs (*2006 study, American Journal of Health Promotion*).

LACK OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS IS COSTING CORPORATIONS BIG BUCKS

The greatest diseases associated with the lack of wellness programs are the following:

- **Sedentary-itis** – this is the sedentary lifestyle disease.
- **What’s-exercise-itis?** – This is the lack-of-exercise disease.
- **Eat-too-much-itis** – this one is self-explanatory.
- **Eat-too-much-fat-and-sugar-itis** – this one is self-explanatory.

These four “diseases” are primary contributors to cost-incurring medical issues. Any program that focuses on overcoming their cost-incurring and time-robbing consequences is the most effective program.

In 2002, a study titled “Economic Costs of Diabetes in the U.S.” was conducted. The direct medical and indirect expenditures associated with diabetes for the U.S. population amounted to an estimated \$132 billion per year. This costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$92 billion on higher health care expenditures. Lost productivity attributed to diabetes resulting from lost workdays, lost home services, permanent disability, and premature death is estimated at \$40 billion. Health care spending in 2002 for people with diabetes is more than double what spending would be without diabetes.

Source: Report prepared by Paul Hogan, Tim Dall, and Plamen Nikolov of the Lewin Group, Inc., Falls Church, Virginia; appeared in Diabetes Care, Volume 26, Number 3, March 2003, Report from the American Diabetes Association

Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death by disease in the United States. Diabetes also contributes to higher rates of occurrence of other diseases. People with diabetes are at higher risk for heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, extremity amputations, and other chronic conditions. See the American Diabetes Association website at Diabetes.org for more information.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 75% of employers’ health care costs and productivity losses are related to employee lifestyle choices.

20% ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR 80% OF THE COSTS

AstraZeneca, a pharmaceutical company, determined that 20% of its workforce was responsible for 80% of lost productivity and total health care costs. By focusing on the 20% group, AstraZeneca was able to reduce emergency room visits and hospital admissions.

Source: Forbes.com, “The ROI of Wellness,” by Tony Zook, president and chief executive officer of AstraZeneca U.S., April 24, 2006