

SUMMARY: WELLNESS CHALLENGES AND IDEAS

GETTING HITCHED ON WELLNESS:

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

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The following notes summarize a discussion by event participants around the challenges as well as opportunities of wellness programming.

Challenge: Gaining management buy-in to wellness.

Ideas:

- » Create top-down involvement, including a CEO who offers strong support and senior managers who “walk the talk.”
- » Design a wellness program that addresses specific employee situations.
- » Learn the lessons offered by safety programs, which have shown that a preventive approach pays off.
- » Use the rising cost of health care to illustrate the potential gains.
- » Calculate the Return on Investment (ROI) in terms that make sense to financial leaders.
- » Get financial leaders to buy-in to your figures.
- » A return of \$5 for every \$1 invested is the standard ROI reported by U.S. companies four to five years after establishing a wellness program.
- » Track the results of wellness programs at target locations to make the case for rolling it out throughout the workforce.

Challenge: Meeting the needs of varied groups within the workforce, including different locations, job classifications, and union vs. non-union groups.

Ideas:

- » Identify the different segments within your employee population (healthy and engaged vs. negative and unengaged, for example) and personalize messages to appeal to each group.
- » Be aware of how to target messages using age and gender.
- » Never send messages based on health status from the company. Only vendors with appropriate relationships should send messages targeting employees by health status.
- » Take advantage of communication materials from vendors for disease management.
- » Use the right channel to reach employees, with e-mail restricted to those who have access and print materials offered to those without e-mail access.
- » Remember that face-to-face communication is the most effective method, with other channels used to support it.
- » Make sure vendors give you tools and communication materials that will reach all groups, including workers on different shifts and employees’ spouses.
- » Remember that spouses, especially female spouses, are often the health care decision-makers in the home.
- » Make special efforts to target hard-to-reach employee groups.
- » Use testimonials, especially for manufacturing employees.
- » Offer examples showing how HRAs or other wellness elements made a significant or life-saving difference, but share the information without using names or details that identify individuals.
- » Video testimonials can be very effective when used appropriately.
- » Create wellness champions among opinion leaders at all levels of the workforce.
- » A wellness event that has an “extreme makeover” impact on an employee can produce a wellness champion who is willing to offer testimonials.
- » Wellness champions personalize the information in a meaningful way for their peers.

Challenge: Getting employees to pay attention to human resources.

Ideas:

- » Make it fun.
- » Fun events generate positive word-of-mouth that spreads quickly throughout the workforce.
- » Gain the full support of senior leaders. Use that support to back your messages to employees.
- » Get human resources reps out of the office and out into the workplace where they are visible to employees.
- » Put the “human” element back into human resources.

Top Challenges Identified by Employer Groups

Manufacturing Group 1

- » Gaining senior management support for company buy-in and funding
- » Finding time among employees or committees to create the program
- » Meeting the needs of everyone; different groups have different needs

Manufacturing Group 2

- » How to reach remote locations with the same message, the same program, and the same enthusiasm as the headquarters or original location
- » Allocating resources, including time, money, stopping production, and dedicated team leadership
- » How to meet employee needs to overcome resistance and build knowledge and participation

Combined Finance/Health Care Group

- » Knowing the best channel to use for reaching various audiences
- » Getting employees to pay attention to human resources
- » How to deal with inconsistency between the message and the culture
- » Paternalism vs. accountability

Service Group 1

- » How and where to begin researching and gathering ideas
- » Keeping the wellness program “fair” in program elements available to different levels of employees and different team members
- » How to provide incentives that work for different groups

Service Group 2

- » How to meet the needs of different locations and different employees
- » Union vs. non-union, different plans, different levels of accountability
- » How to get senior management support
- » How to create a business case