



success with wellness programs: push, pull or focus on wellbeing?

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Incorporate wellbeing into wellness

Employees are employers' most important asset, so that's why it's essential that they are healthy, productive and positive. Employers that focus on employee wellbeing tend to have workers who are engaged, have higher job performance and are more satisfied with their work. Make sure to devote time to helping employees understand the value of good health and wellness.

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1

incorporating dental and vision benefits as physical care factors

Wellness programs have become a staple benefit at most American businesses. Nearly 90 percent of American businesses with 1,000 or more employees do something to promote employee health and wellness. But many struggle to know how to engage employees in programs. Research shows that employees are not motivated by efforts that push or pull them to wellness programs. Instead employers need a comprehensive plan that focuses on employee wellbeing. This includes providing health care coverage that helps employees maintain good overall health. Research shows that employees rate dental and vision as highly valued benefits.

2

genuine relationship

For success, wellness must be a core philosophy of the business that is incorporated into every aspect of the work. Research by Gallup demonstrates that employee wellbeing is central to successfully engaging employees in their jobs. Researchers have identified five essential elements: purpose, social, financial, community and physical. Businesses should engage employees by helping them develop their core values in each of these elements. It requires considerable time and effort to intentionally care about employees beyond the job they do each day. It means providing employees with resources, mentoring and support to help them develop fulfilled lives.

3

encouragement works

Employee wellbeing should be the primary theme of wellness efforts. This approach changes how employees respond to programs, from focusing on earning incentives to making lifestyle changes because they see the value for their personal health.

A U.S. News & World Report article recommends that employers should stop focusing on dangling a carrot to get certain results, such as programs designed to motivate employees to stop smoking or lose weight. Instead, employers should offer programs that encourage employees without alienating them such as the following:

- **Stock readily accessible healthy foods and snacks** – Consider subscribing to a service that brings in tasty, nutritional foods and treats for employees each week.

- **Encourage exercise at the office** – Some employers now provide work stations that allow employees to stand while they work, or provide rewards for employees who walk or bike to work.

- **Change weight reduction focus** – Employer-sponsored weight-loss competitions may create division and friction among employees, especially since some workers struggle to lose weight due to medical problems. Instead focus on educating employees about healthy food and exercise choices, as well as preventing health issues that can result from weight gain and lack of exercise.



- **Encourage employees to use vacation time** – Sometimes employees hesitate to take earned vacation time due to concerns about losing their job or being considered not committed to their work.
- **Provide excellent health benefits** – Plans should feature coverage choices that employees expect and need. In addition to medical benefits, employees look for dental and vision plans to take care of their oral and vision needs. Benefit premiums should be predictable so employees can budget costs each year. Most employees appreciate choices, but they also expect employers to invest time in helping them understand which choices best fit their needs.
- **Offer value-added benefits** – Include benefits that go beyond the standard offerings to help improve your employees' self-image. Benefits for things like orthodontia, LASIK surgery, and eyeglasses and frames help employees feel good about the way they look and boost confidence, which leads to other positive behaviors.

4 help employees understand wellness

For successful employee engagement, communication is a necessity. Research from the Institute for Wellness Education identified gaps in employees' understanding of what constitutes good health and wellness.

Many employees fail to connect wellness to making healthier lifestyle choices. In fact, 1 in 3 Americans surveyed thought that wellness was the absence of a diagnosed illness or disease. Interestingly, this research also showed that despite the existence of wellness programs at more than 80 percent of employers with more than 50 employees, 62 percent of employees surveyed said their employers do not promote or encourage healthy habits or activities at work.



5 focus on dental, vision and hearing wellness

Many employers recognize dental, vision and hearing benefits as vital components of employee wellness programs. But they also acknowledge that they need to help employees understand the importance of these preventive care programs. Insurance carriers can help employers communicate the value of preventive care, and explain how benefits can make care easier to access and more affordable.

During dental and vision exams, health professionals can detect many health concerns, often at an early stage, which can help in treating the condition and lowering medical costs over the long term.

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