

Six Ways to
Take Your Wellness
Program to...



The Next Level

A Special 2004
Well Workplace Supplement
from the Wellness Councils
Of America



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On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Wellness Councils of America, we are pleased to issue this brief report. This report outlines six specific ways that will take your corporate wellness program to the next level. While not a comprehensive list, these six strategies—if implemented properly—will have a significant impact on the health and well-being of your employees.

In each of the six strategies listed in this report, there are web links/web addresses that will provide you with more in-depth information. I highly encourage you to follow these “links” and access this important information — I think you’ll find it extremely useful.

In closing, it is our hope that you will continue to invest in your workplace wellness initiative. In fact, in rapidly changing and highly competitive times, the importance of maintaining and enhancing your employees' health and productivity cannot be understated.

These six strategies will help you take your program to the next level.



David Hunnicutt, PhD
President, Wellness Councils of America



Six Ways to Take Your Wellness Program to the Next Level



In the next ten years, the working population will be getting older...rapidly.

In fact, throughout the rest of the decade, one baby boomer will turn 50 every eight seconds. And, because of this phenomenon, healthcare costs will continue to rise. Unfortunately, American business will pick up the lion's share of these costs.

The following six ideas will help you take your wellness program to the next level.

1 Initiate a Senior Level Wellness Program.

If there is anything that we've learned through almost a decade of delivering the Well Workplace Awards Initiative it's that results-oriented wellness programs are driven from the top down.

In light of this revelation, the first way you can take your wellness program to the next level is by initiating a health promotion program for your senior level executives—especially your CEO.

In fact, one of the reasons why corporate wellness programs never actually become a part of the company's culture is due to the fact that senior level executives never really buy into the concept of healthier lifestyles in the first place. By starting a senior level wellness initiative, this phenomenon can be overcome.

Take The Principal Financial Group's experience with their CEO J. Barry Griswell.

Indeed, The Principal Financial Group, located in Des Moines, IA has had a very good wellness program for years. But it wasn't until Principal's CEO, J. Barry Griswell, dedicated himself to adopting a healthier lifestyle that things really began to click for Principal.

According to Griswell, "We have had a long standing history of CEO's living healthy lifestyles. In fact, when I joined the company in 1988, our CEO jogged to work and another high-level executive swam each morning...over the course of time I somehow let myself get out of shape...by sticking with a sensible diet and exercising regularly, I went from 297 pounds to 246 in one year...I'm 6'9" so I can carry a lot of weight, but weighing 297 pounds is not a good thing for anybody."

Griswell credits nationally-recognized wellness manager, Kaye Halvorson. "She reminded me that you really can't be an advocate for something (in this case health and wellness) if you're not doing it yourself. It was at this point that I made a personal commitment to get back into shape," states Griswell.

Griswell's personal commitment to health and well-being has helped to shape the entire company's approach to health promotion. "I have a philosophy that if you want to lead a successful company and satisfy shareholders, you must start by making sure your employees are treated well...with our wellness program, we take a more holistic approach that allows employees to not only improve their skills and competencies at work, but also to reach their full potential as human beings through work/life balance, exercise, eating right, and so forth," Griswell comments.

For their efforts, The Principal Financial Group has achieved Well Workplace Platinum.

By initiating a senior-level executive wellness program in your company, you can better engage the highest level decision makers in embracing a lifestyle that will not only help

them as individuals, but will translate into greater sensitivity to the need for health and well-being among the rest of your employee population.

To learn more about initiating a senior level wellness program, we encourage you to read an exclusive interview with J. Barry Griswell, this interview can be accessed at www.welcoa.org/freeresources in the Expert Interviews section.

J. Barry Griswell: By The Numbers

By following a sensible diet and increasing physical activity, J. Barry Griswell, CEO of The Principal Financial Group, lost 50 pounds in just one year. His cholesterol levels also improved dramatically (see the "Before and After" numbers listed below). Says Griswell, "Exercise is one of the most important things you can do each day, and you can't let it slip through the cracks, no matter how busy you are."

BEFORE

Weight: 297
Total Cholesterol: 204
Triglycerides: 130
LDL (Bad Cholesterol): 131
HDL (Good Cholesterol): 47

AFTER

Weight: 246
Total Cholesterol: 182
Triglycerides: 61
LDL (Bad Cholesterol): 104
HDL (Good Cholesterol): 66



The Principal Financial Group's CEO J. Barry Griswell holds up 50 pounds of fat at a recent company-wide wellness event. The bag of fat was given to Griswell as a reward after he lost 50 pounds, demonstrating his commitment to staying healthy and improving organizational health and well-being.

{2} Beef Up Your Strategic Plan.

According to Dr. Joe Leutzinger, one of the nation's leading health promotion experts, "Notoriously, one of the most neglected aspects of any company's wellness initiative, is their strategic plan. The strategic plan is the document that guides all of the efforts and activities...and it's the lynch pin in linking the wellness program to overall strategic objectives."

Of course, the operating plan should include such information as vision and mission statements, goals, budgets, and communication strategies. But, the two most important parts of the plan are oftentimes the weakest: (1) specific objectives identifying what needs to be accomplished; and (2) evaluation strategies that articulate how you measure success. These two elements need special attention in any wellness plan.

An excellent way to incorporate meaningful objectives into your company's strategic wellness plan is to piggy back on the Healthy People 2010 objectives. As you may know, the Healthy People 2010 objectives are the key measures for establishing national health priorities.

These objectives can be incorporated directly into your operating plan. In so doing, you can have a greater level of confidence in the objectives because they've been developed by national health experts.

What's more, when you have measurable objectives (like those contained in Healthy People 2010) in your operating plan, it makes evaluation much more straightforward.

To learn more about incorporating Healthy People 2010 objectives into your operating plan, you'll want to check out a publication developed by Partnership For Prevention. This document is available at no charge by accessing this web address: http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/Healthy_Workforce_2010.pdf.

{3} Link Your Health Promotion Initiative To Participation In Your Benefits Plan.

One of the biggest challenges for most workplace health initiatives is that the people who need it most—the 20 percent of the population that are going to consume 80 percent of your healthcare costs—don't want to participate. As a result, most workplace wellness programs have participation rates somewhere around 15 to 25 percent.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Just ask the leadership at Monongalia Health System in Morgantown, WV.

Says MHS CFO Nicholas Grubbs, "...One of the reasons MHS has become such a significant proponent and leader in the field of employee wellness is in large part due to the significant increase in our healthcare costs—an increase that totaled in excess of 100% in only two years."

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This monumental increase prompted quick action from MHS execs.

It was at this time in mid-2002 that MHS administrators, HR, and the Wellness Staff made the decision to link health benefits to the completion of the company HRA. During the 2002 re-enrollment period, any MHS employee seeking health benefits through the organization were required to complete the HRA. Additionally, to engage employees in taking more responsibility for their own health status, and to educate them on healthcare costs and the tools needed to make more prudent decisions when accessing healthcare, each employee was required to attend a self-care training.

Even though the new "tough-love" process for receiving health benefits through MHS was unique, and created some initial apprehension, the system has been embraced en masse by employees. Says Kelly Stobbe, former Wellness Coordinator for MHS, "Getting this process in place was really about staying committed, sticking to the game plan, and communicating with employees as to why this was taking place. Any pushback we received from employees faded pretty quickly as they began to realize how this model, though unique, helped everybody."

The results?

While most companies and organizations are experiencing 12-13% increases in healthcare costs, Monongalia has held their costs steady for the past two years.

Linking health promotion to benefit plan design may seem like a radical approach. However, given the declining health status of American workers and unprecedented increases in healthcare costs, linking health promotion to

participation in company benefits is a trend that is here to stay—and if done right, it can be a legitimate strategy in linking health to business outcomes.

To learn more about linking health promotion to benefit plan design, we encourage you to read the case study with Monongalia Health System, this document can be accessed at www.welcoa.org/freeresources in the Case Studies section.

{4} Use Telephonic Counseling for At-Risk Employees.

As companies go about setting up workplace health promotion programs, two major strategies emerge—keep the low-risk employees healthy and provide at-risk employees with assistance so that they can migrate to low-risk status. Indeed, these two strategies are very important to creating outcomes in your organization's wellness program.

To keep your low-risk employees at low-risk, a variety of general wellness programs need to be offered. Health newsletters, lunch-and-learns, healthier cafeterias, and opportunities to exercise are just a few of the ways this can be accomplished.

However, it's going to take a more intensive intervention to help at-risk employees migrate to low-risk status. These interventions are often outside of a company's present expertise. To take your program to the next level, we recommend contracting with a reputable vendor to provide your at-risk employees with telephonic counseling.

Nationally recognized health expert John Harris believes that telephonically-driven programs are the way to go because "health counselors can talk to people at 9PM in their pajamas about the direction they're trying to go with their health, and they're not running around chasing kids or trying to get their work done at 5:30 in the afternoon. They're now ready to sit down and have a fruitful conversation on how they can go about reducing their risks for certain health problems."

Harris goes on to state, "Typically, lifestyle or disease management programs are a year long effort...the person may get anywhere in the neighborhood of 10 to 15 calls a year that might last 10 or 12 minutes on the average. So in the bigger scheme of things, it's probably only delivered to the tune of a couple of hours of a person's year. Obviously, what they're asked to accomplish in between those calls and by taking self-action is where the large commitment occurs."

Still not convinced?

Personal health coaching delivered through telephonic counseling is vitally important because a high-risk group of employees might have as many as four to five risk factors each—these risk factors are expensive and they need to be mitigated. According to Harris, "Our experience has been that you can actually eliminate approximately 45 to 50 percent of the risks in the pool, even if you're not able to convert but 20 percent all the way to low-risk."

Telephonic counseling for at-risk employees is rapidly emerging as a preferred strategy for mitigating risks and one that is becoming a cornerstone of results-oriented wellness programs.

To learn more about telephonic counseling for at-risk employees, we encourage you to read an exclusive interview with John Harris, this interview can be accessed at www.welcoa.org/freeresources in the Expert Interviews section.

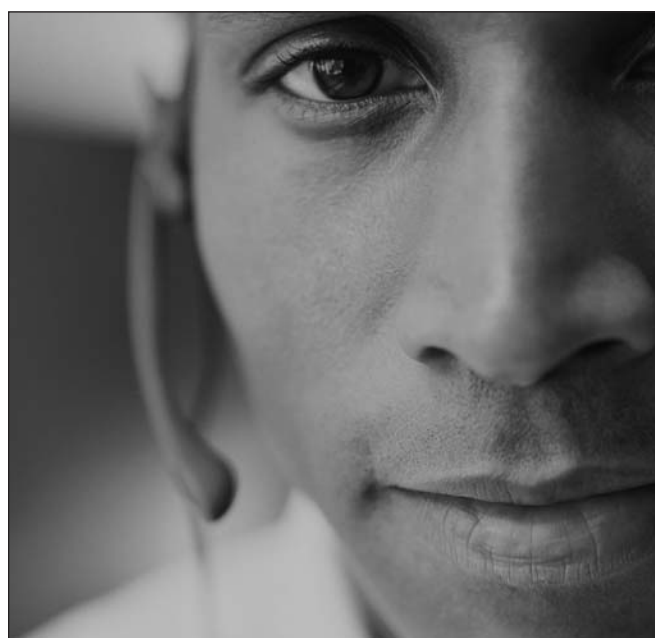
{5} Make Obesity And Physical Activity The Central Focus.

According to a recent Rand report, "Americans are getting fatter. One in five Americans is obese; three in five are either overweight or obese. The obesity rate has accelerated dramatically in the past 20 years, in conjunction with a national trend toward sedentary lifestyles."

In fact, the two RAND researchers responsible for this report, health economist Roland Sturm and psychiatrist Kenneth Wells, examined the comparative effects of obesity, smoking, heavy drinking, and poverty on chronic health conditions and health expenditures. Their finding: Obesity is the most serious problem. It is linked to a big increase in chronic health conditions and significantly higher health expenditures. And it affects more people than smoking, heavy drinking, or poverty.

How serious are the problems of obesity and sedentary lifestyles?

Again, according to the Rand report, "when compared with normal-weight individuals of the same age and sex having similar social demographics, obese people suffer from an increase in chronic conditions of approximately 67 percent. In contrast, the increase for normal-weight daily smokers is only 25 percent; and for normal-weight heavy drinkers, only 12 percent."



In addition, obese individuals spend more on both health services and medication than daily smokers and heavy drinkers. For example, obese individuals spend approximately 36 percent more than the general baseline population on health services, compared with a 21 percent increase for daily smokers and a 14 percent increase for heavy drinkers. Obese individuals spend 77 percent more on medications.

In light of this important new information, every worksite should make obesity/nutrition and physical activity an integral part of their wellness initiative.

For more information on addressing obesity and physical activity at the worksite, you're encouraged to read three important issues of *Absolute Advantage: Tipping The Scales: The Mediterranean Diet Sheds New Light On Weight Management And Nutrition* (September 2004); *The CHIP Prescription for Health: The Coronary Health Improvement Project Helps Organizations and Individuals Implement Lifestyle Changes* (August 2004); and *Heart Work: Promoting Physical Activity Among The Nation's Workforce* (February 2003).

{6} Increase Your Level Of Investment In Wellness.

If you're looking to take your wellness initiative to the next level, one thing you'll have to consider is increasing your level of investment.

Plain and simple, most employers contribute too little and expect too much when it comes to investing in employee health. In fact, in a recent interview with nationally recognized expert, Dr. Ron Goetzel, it was revealed that most employers will spend anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per employee, per year on healthcare delivery. And these costs are escalating rapidly each year.

When employers are asked how much of these costs should be invested in health promotion, there's usually a long silence and then a response of "around 10 percent, I suppose."

When you do the math, this would be a \$250 to \$500 investment in health promotion for each employee who is receiving company sponsored healthcare. But when you examine the actual level of investment in wellness, it's probably closer to \$10 to \$15 per employee, per year.

So how much should you be investing in your wellness program? In actuality, it doesn't have to be \$250 to \$500 per employee...but it's substantially more than \$10 to \$15 per employee, per year.

In fact, according to Goetzel, investment in a workplace wellness program should be the equivalent of \$100 to \$150 per employee, per year. This cost includes health risk appraisals, coaching for at-risk employees, general wellness initiatives, health information, and a variety of other necessary components.

If this sounds like a lot compared to what you are presently investing, you will need to change your mindset.

“Investment in a workplace wellness program should be the equivalent of \$100 to \$150 per employee.”

According to Goetzel, when you look at the literature published on health promotion outcomes, the average ROI is somewhere around \$3 for every \$1 invested. At the most elementary level, if you take the \$100 or \$150 figure, you can expect a \$300 to \$450 savings per employee, per year.

While \$150 per employee, per year, may sound like a lot, it needs to be seen as an *investment*—not as an expense. If you build your program properly, your return on investment should be about 3:1.

Also, if you don't invest this amount, you run the risk of not allocating the appropriate resources to bring about behavior change.

For more on this topic, see the interview with Ron Goetzel. This document can be accessed at www.welcoa.org/freeresources in the Expert Interviews section.

Parting Thoughts...

While there are many ways to take your wellness program to the next level, these six items should provide some food for thought as you look to the future.

In fact, as we look forward toward 2010 and beyond, it's important to understand that health and well-being will be tremendously valuable to every company and to our nation as a whole.

Indeed, the working population will be getting older rapidly—one baby boomer will turn 50 every eight seconds for the rest of the decade. And, because of our aging population, healthcare costs will continue to rise. Unfortunately, American business will pick up the lion's share of these costs.

Prevention and early intervention will be paramount to keeping these costs under control and also in keeping the nation's workforce healthy, functional, and productive.

We trust that workplace wellness will remain a priority within your organization.

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About The Well Workplace Awards Initiative

To advance an aggressive national worksite wellness agenda, WELCOA has developed the Well Workplace Awards initiative. The Well Workplace Awards initiative is driven by a rigorous set of criteria. Since its inception in 1991, approximately 700 corporations, healthcare systems, public agencies, and educational institutions—employing over one million people—have met those criteria and been recognized as some of “America’s Healthiest Companies.”

About The Wellness Councils of America

The Wellness Councils of America is one of North America’s most trusted voices on the topic of worksite wellness. With over a decade of experience,



WELCOA is widely recognized and highly regarded for its innovative approach to worksite wellness. Indeed, through their internationally recognized “Well Workplace” awards initiative, WELCOA has helped hundreds of companies transform their corporate cultures and improve the health and well-being of their most valuable asset—their employees.