



Wellness Councils
of America



The purpose of our series "Well Informed" is to give organizations the information needed to transform themselves into Well Workplaces. We at the Wellness Councils of America believe this is a seven-step process. Each issue will focus on a topic related to at least one of these seven critical steps, which is highlighted below.

The Seven C's of successful worksite wellness programs

1. Concentrating on Senior-Level Support
2. Creating a Cohesive Wellness Team
3. Collecting Data to Drive Your Health Efforts
4. Crafting an Operating Plan
5. Choosing Appropriate Interventions
6. Creating a Supportive Environment
7. Carefully Evaluating Outcomes

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Well Informed

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Building a Well Workplace

by David Hunnicutt, PhD, and Angie Deming

7 Steps to Success

According to a recent survey conducted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, some 80% of US companies reported that they offered at least one health promotion activity for their employees. At first glance, this statistic appears to be cause for celebration. However, when examined more thoroughly, the ODPHP survey also reveals that only 27% of those companies surveyed conducted a needs assessment. What's more, only a paltry 17% of worksites had a written set of goals and objectives for their health promotion activities. Sadly, only 12% conducted formal evaluations.

What are we to make of these results? Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from ODPHP's survey is that, in large measure, the worksite health promotion movement in this country appears to be activity-centered.

So what's the big deal? After all, health promotion is health promotion is health promotion — right? WRONG! In fact, just because a worksite offers a series of

random health promotion "activities" (brown bag seminars, paycheck stuffers, balloon launchings, etc.), it doesn't necessarily ensure that they'll soon see results.

Presently, there is a profound shift occurring among health promotion practitioners whereby many are moving from activity-centered approaches to results-oriented ones. For many people the questions become, "what's the difference between the two?" and "how does one make the transition?" These are great questions and we'll spend the rest of this report addressing them.

Activity-Centered vs. Results-Oriented

According to a recent article in the Harvard Business Review, "activity-centered programs are those that '... sound good, look good, and allow managers to feel good, but in fact contribute little or nothing to the bottom line.'" Results-oriented programs, on the other hand, are those initiatives which are carefully researched, thoughtfully designed, and flawlessly executed. Sound difficult? Believe it or not, the process is relatively straightforward.

Seven C's of Successful Programs

1. Concentrating on Senior-Level Support
2. Creating Cohesive Wellness Teams
3. Collecting Data to Drive Health Efforts
4. Crafting the Annual Operating Plan
5. Choosing Appropriate Interventions
6. Creating Supportive Environment
7. Consistently Evaluating Outcomes

Navigating the Seven C's

According to recent benchmarking studies, there are a number of common elements — best practices, if you will — inherent in results-oriented health promotion initiatives. At the Wellness Councils of America, we have distilled these down into “Seven C's.” These “Seven C's” should be considered necessary and vital components when attempting to build a comprehensive, results-oriented worksite health promotion initiative.

1. CONCENTRATING ON SENIOR-LEVEL SUPPORT

As you build your program, it's important to understand that senior level support is critical to the success of any worksite health initiative. After all, it's the senior level executives who control the purse strings, the organizational agenda, and all of the communication channels. Because of these realities, succeeding without senior level support is virtually impossible.

The \$64,000 question is “how does one actually secure support from senior level people?” Although there are a number of potential strategies, perhaps the most effective route is to link the health promotion

initiative to business priorities. By taking this approach, health promotion will be seen as an important tool in realizing the business mission.

2. CREATING COHESIVE WELLNESS TEAMS

Because the majority of organizations have become extremely specialized, most decisions are now made in teams. In light of this, to ensure that the health promotion initiative is embraced by all of the major organizational constituents, it is imperative to involve the key players throughout the company. Included in this mix should be the appropriate representatives from management,

personnel, human resources, safety, MIS, occupational health, etc. By taking this approach, you'll ensure that the responsibilities of health promotion will be uniformly and strategically disseminated throughout the organization.

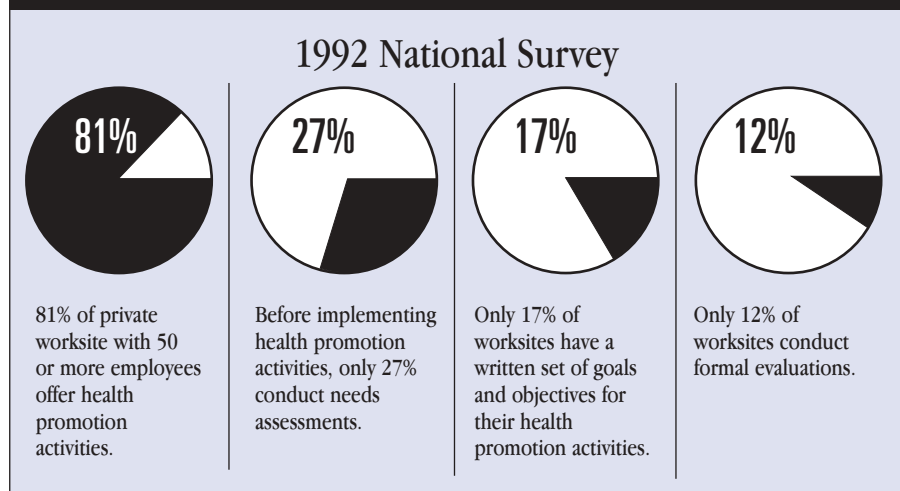
3. COLLECTING DATA TO DRIVE HEALTH EFFORTS

The third “C” of comprehensive programming is collecting data. While this may seem like a no-brainer, it is important to understand that this has been where the major disconnection occurs. For example, it is not uncommon for an organization to secure senior level support and establish a cohesive team. But, instead of them gathering data to obtain a clearer picture of the organization's needs and the individual's interests, the group jumps right into offering activities. More often than not, this maneuver is a fatal one.

Remember, the key of this entire process is to work smarter in order to create results — not simply offer random activities.

Specifically, excellent sources of data include: health care claims, health risk appraisals, health screening,

Worksite Health Promotion Activities



culture audits, facility assessments, and demographic information. In addition to gathering this kind of data, you'll want to spend some time identifying your employees' individual interests. By gathering both kinds of data, you'll be able to better balance organizational needs and individual interests. The results will be dramatic.

4. CRAFTING THE ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN

In most business settings, the annual plan is the vehicle that articulates the strategic direction. Moreover, it is this document against which all progress is ultimately measured. Think about it — how many successful businesses proceed without a plan?

This being the case, how in the world could a health promotion initiative move forward without a formal plan in place? Sounds absurd doesn't it? Yet, according to ODPHP's 1992 survey, only 17% of worksites have a formal plan in place.

Understanding that the health promotion practitioner probably has a good idea where the program is headed, consider this. Without this document, it is impossible to evaluate your program. After all, if you don't write measurable, detailed goals and objectives, evaluation is a foregone conclusion isn't it? In addition, what happens when attrition to the wellness team occurs? Without this plan in place, new team members will struggle and existing priorities will grind to a screeching halt. Remember, the old adage, "failing to plan is planning to fail."

5. CHOOSING APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS

Once the previous steps have been accomplished, it's time to implement your programs. But before doing so,

prudent practitioners would be wise to ask themselves this question: "When it comes to changing behavior, what works and what doesn't?" For example, consider smoking cessation. In the past, many people used to consider paycheck stuffers and the "Great American Smokeout" ideal activities to help people to "kick the habit." However, through years of research, we know

"Activity-centered programs are those that sound good, look good, and feel good, but in fact contribute little or nothing to the bottom line."

that this intervention will not offer the intensity necessary to facilitate and expedite change in most people. Rather, individualized tailoring of messages, personal counseling, supportive environments, a nicotine replacement therapy, and behavioral interventions now constitute the state of the art in smoking cessation.

THE BIG TICKET ITEM IS THIS: Spend some time exploring what works and what doesn't when it comes to changing behaviors.

6. CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

If we have learned anything in the last 25 years it is this: Supportive environments significantly increase the likelihood that positive changes in health behavior will take place. This is

an important benchmark that has been all-too-often overlooked. Fortunately, there are organizations that are doing some amazing things when it comes to creating supportive environments. Consider the multitudes who have implemented smoke-free environments. Think of those who are providing low fat alternatives in the cafeteria and vending machines. Some organizations have designed jobs that allow for more individual latitude and lower levels of organizational stress.

7. CONSISTENTLY EVALUATING OUTCOMES

When was the last time you went bowling without using bowling pins? Now take a moment and consider delivering health promotion programs without evaluating. Are you beginning to see the connection?

The last "C" presented for your consideration is the notion of consistently evaluating outcomes. Although a terrifying prospect for most practitioners, evaluation is a topic that need not be feared. In fact, if you have already formulated clear goals and measurable objectives, you are more than half the way home. Indeed, it is generally those professionals who have "cut corners" that fear this final step the most.

These data should be evaluated: Participation rates; changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior change; return on investment, etc. Remember, evaluation revolves around your own goals and objectives — follow the process!

An important side note — don't confuse EVALUATION with RESEARCH. Evaluation is a step that is taken to improve your programs. Research is done to validate a hypothesis.

**“The key of this process
is to work smarter in
order to create results.”**

Additional Thoughts

The “Seven C’s of Worksite Wellness Programming” are seven steps you’ll need to take if you are going to build a comprehensive program. Additionally, there are two other important benchmarks that deserve some consideration — incentives and communication.

One trademark of successful programs is that they rely heavily on incentives to increase participation. In fact, some of the finest programs have developed intricate and impressive incentive systems. While this is a topic we’ll be spending more time on in the future, suffice to say incentives are very important to the overall process.

Finally, if the program is to remain on the “front burner,” you’ll need to spend some time developing a communications plan. In fact, the more comprehensive the plan, the better off you’ll be. By communicating effectively, not only will you keep people in the loop, you’ll significantly increase your chances of succeeding.

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This Well-Informed Report is one of a series of summaries on the leading edge issues in corporate health promotion. Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) produces these reports as a benefit of membership and supplies them free to corporate members.

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