

## 5 Simple Steps to Developing an Effective Corporate Wellness Initiative

Gillian Goerzen, BSc(kin), BCRPA TFL/ PT

It is widely known that Corporate Fitness and Wellness Programming can attract potential employees and provide a significant return on investment to employers through increased productivity, decreased sick days and decreased turn-over. Small to mid-sized companies want to compete in the larger market in terms of recruitment and employee retention, but many are unsure of how to make the most of a limited budget. The good news is there are numerous simple solutions that are effective and budget conscious.

### Step 1: Find out what they want

The first and most important step in developing any successful program is to investigate the needs of your employee population. Even a generous budget and an extensive program will not result in your desired outcome if it does not meet the needs and address the interests of your employees. Partner with a reputable company or consultant to develop and deliver a simple survey asking employees what they are looking for in terms of support for their personal health and wellness. Consider the following guidelines when delivering and interpreting surveys:

- Voluntary participation: while voluntary participation unfortunately gives a less accurate picture of what is needed or desired by each member of the employee population, privacy issues require employers to ensure all participation is voluntary when requesting health and wellness information.
- Confidentiality: in consideration of privacy, it is essential that all results remain confidential. A summary of results can be utilized; however individual responses must be kept confidential.

### Step 2: Ask yourself the following questions

1. *What is our budget for the program?* Understand what your budget is and how you can best utilize those dollars for greatest impact. Be clear on your budget before you speak with consultants. Consider programs can be fully sponsored by the employer, but they can also be subsidized by the employee by incorporating small drop in fees for usage. Combinations also exist – where part of the program is employer paid and other aspects are employee paid.
2. *What type of space do we have available to provide a program?* Do you have a conference room? What if you have no space available onsite? The space (or lack there of) is an important consideration.
3. *When are you going to offer the programs (survey responses should be considered here)?* The time of day must be considered, but also whether you will allow employees to use work time to participate, or will programming be offered outside of the traditional working day?

### Step 3: Research your options

Taking into account Steps 1-2, programming options can vary widely. Using a consultant with the appropriate background and experience will help to guide you considerably, but here are some options:

1. Conference Room Space:
  - a. Lunch and Learns (1hr) – A lunch and learn is a great way to introduce simple concepts and give your employees information about health and wellness in a non-intimidating environment. Topics can range from nutrition and fitness topics to personal goal setting. (generally Employer paid)

- b. Workshops (2-3hours) – Workshops generally provide more in-depth coverage of health and wellness topics that encourage participants to consider their own health and wellness on a deeper level. Topics can range from nutrition and fitness to personal goal setting. (generally Employer paid)
  - c. Onsite Fitness Programming (ex. Pilates, Yoga) – If you have conference room space available – that can be cleared for open space – consider bringing in a qualified instructor to teach a series of Pilates or Yoga sessions. Equipment required is limited and can be brought by employees. (can be employer or employee paid)
2. No space available – don't fret!
- a. Online Programs - there are many online programming options available depending on your employee needs and desired program outcomes. (can be employer paid or sponsored)
  - b. In Chair Massage - Revitalize your team with a relaxing 5-10-15-20+ minute massage by a trained professional. Roaming (desk to desk) and in chair options are available. A minimum of 5 minutes per person for roaming massage is recommended. (program can be employer paid, employer sponsored or employee paid)
  - c. Meeting Stretch Breaks/ Energizers – Stretch Breaks or Energizers are a great way to give back to employees- especially if they've been sitting all day in a meeting. During this 10-20 minute break a trained team building professional leads your team through fun engaging exercises to help keep them alert and energized for maximum results!

#### **Step 4: Implement your program**

There are three important things to consider when implementing your program

1. Marketing and Promotions – ensure you give your employees adequate notice about the program. At least 6 weeks of notice for any program is recommended.
2. Employee Availability – it is essential employees feel they can tear themselves away from their desk or workstation to participate. Make sure managers are on board and all employees feel comfortable participating.
3. Consultant Credibility – The success of your program depends on having credible and reliable providers. Research your options and ensure the provider you choose has the appropriate credentials and plenty of experience and success.

#### **Step 5: Get Feedback**

After any program is complete it is always important to re-survey the employees to obtain their feedback and gather their ideas. This will not only ensure continued quality programming, but it will also guarantee you and your employees are on the same path.

How well your employees are thriving is essential to the success of your business. By taking small steps to invest in the health and wellness of your employee's you can reap the rewards of a happier, more productive and longer standing staff.

Gillian Goerzen (BSc. Kin) is a registered Personal Trainer and Director of Development for LifeWorks Health Solutions. LifeWorks provides outsourced wellness solutions to corporations, resorts and residential developments of all sizes. Whether you are looking for onsite lunch and learns, workshops and team building events or comprehensive development and management of your onsite wellness facility LifeWorks Health Solutions has solutions that will work for you. Visit us online at [www.lwhs.com](http://www.lwhs.com) for more information.