

# Measuring the Success of Your Workplace Wellness Program

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

How does your organization define success? With regards to your workplace wellness program, success may be defined in a number of ways including but not limited to: participation, employee enjoyment of program offerings, retention, productivity and decreased sick days.

## Step 1: Define Your Program Objectives

Before you develop your measurement methods, it is important to first determine your workplace wellness program objectives. For some organizations, simply offering a well-received wellness initiative is the objective. However, for most organizations, tangible results are required to justify ongoing programming. So, what are the objectives for your organization? To determine your objectives it is important to identify and analyze persistent organizational challenges. For example, is employee retention an issue? What about sick days? Most organizations would agree that increased productivity is a goal – but what does that look like? How do you measure productivity? Some inquiry into the goals of your programming is key to evaluating your programs success.

## Step 2: Determine Your Measures

If you are obtaining your measurements internally the best rule of thumb is to keep it very simple. Keep in mind the measures must be anonymous to protect employee privacy. Here are a few methods to consider:

- Qualitative Measures
  - Survey – survey's are a simple way to get basic information. Keep in mind there should be a mix of questions that ask participants to rate or rank an issue as well as some that ask for quantitative responses.
  - Interviews/focus groups – while interviews and focus groups are more time consuming and costly, they can provide priceless insights into the wants and needs of your employees and help you determine your success or areas needing improvement in your program. Due to confidentiality it is best if these interviews are performed by an outside provider.
- Quantitative Measures
  - Overall HR Data – running a query on a number of variables prior to the start of your program and then again annually can provide you with valuable insight. Note that you are not likely to see results until the program has been successfully running for one year – reviewing the data prior to one year may be discouraging as it does not allow sufficient time to see results. Variables to consider: number of sick days, stress leave, medical leave, onsite injuries, specific health concerns, health claims, etc. If you analyze the number of employees involved in the program against these variables you will likely discover a trend.
  - Active vs. Inactive Data – looking at the changes in trends of those participating can be extremely useful. Using aggregate data and eliminating names to protect privacy, review your employee list based on a number of variables and compare those active in the program vs. those that are not active in the program. When considering those involved and not involved, it is important to remember that

sometimes those that get involved in wellness programs are already 'engaged' in a healthy lifestyle and the program itself may not be incurring change. Therefore, it is recommended this measure be considered alongside overall qualitative HR data for the entire organization.

### **Step 3: Obtain Baseline Data**

Creating a baseline is essential for evaluating any program. Using the measures determined in Step 2 allows you to obtain your company's baseline. Keep in mind the more baseline measures you take the more you will have to draw from when evaluating your program down the line. For this reason, it is best to obtain a variety of both qualitative and quantitative baseline data.

### **Step 4: Obtain Ongoing Data**

Determine the frequencies with which you will obtain data and the methods you will choose. You may choose to obtain quantitative data annually, but it is preferable to gather qualitative data more frequently – perhaps quarterly or semi-annually.

### **Step 5: Re-evaluate and Re-design**

Keep in mind results from health and wellness programs are not immediate. Don't be discouraged if you don't see huge results in one year. The studies show the trends are significant – but generally do not clearly present themselves for 5-10 years, so be patient! This is especially important when evaluating quantitative data. For qualitative data – if the results aren't what you were looking for, look at the results as an opportunity. Negative feedback or constructive criticism is as helpful, if not more helpful than positive feedback – so adjust course, listen to your employees and develop a health and wellness program that suits the needs of your specific team.

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.