

# Top 10 for 2010: Top 10 Simple Workplace Challenges

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

With January just around the corner, now is the time to be thinking about inspiring a workplace of wellness and health in 2011. With that goal in mind we've outlined 10 simple challenges you can promote at your workplace which don't require a huge budget or a lot of organization (read your time)! Of course with all of these ideas the challenge could be accentuated and made more complex if time and budget were available, but here are some great starts!

## 1. Green Commuter Challenge

Encourage employees to take an alternate method of transport to work for a week or month (i.e. take the bus, sky train, walk, cycle or carpool). Participants log "green" kilometres either independently or as a department or team. The person or team with the most "green" kilometres is acknowledged and all participants are entered into a draw for a prize – something green like a bike!

## 2. Pedometer Challenge

Walking based challenges are a great way to encourage physical activity and promote healthy living. Pedometers are relatively economical (a good one can be found for under \$5-10) and they are a fabulous tool. In the challenge setting you can either challenge participants to increase their daily steps to 10,000 over the course of one month or you can 'walk' to a pre-determined location as a workplace. The team or individual who gets there first wins a prize (possibly a trip to the location they walked to). If you want to take this challenge online, consider an online tool where participants can log steps (info in resources).

## 3. Learn to Run Challenge

Follow along with the 'Sun Run in Training' program or find a Run Leader willing to offer a program at your site and prepare as a team for the Sun Run or any local race. Add another layer to the challenge by training for a charitable race and get all employees involved by raising funds for the charity.

## 4. Healthy Lunch Challenge

Have a week where employees are encouraged to bring a healthy lunch to work. Participants get one point per bag lunch – each point enters their name in the draw for a great healthy prize. If you have a cafeteria, engage the food services to only offer a healthy menu for the week. Have employees share their favourite healthy recipes and end the week with a healthy potluck.

## 5. Water Challenge

Educate your staff about the importance of drinking water and challenge them to increase their water intake. Kick off the program by giving all employees a great new water bottle and have them track their water intake for the week. Each day they achieve 8 glasses per day their name will go in the draw for a great healthy prize.

## **6. Activity Challenge**

Make a checklist of a wide variety of simple ways employees can be active (think: take the stairs, walk at lunch, take a fitness class/ yoga class/ Pilates class, go on a hike, take a bike ride, go swimming at the local pool, etc.). Over the course of the challenge, employees mark off their achievements and they tally the total check marks at the end of the challenge. The employee with the most check marks wins a prize (and all participants are entered in a draw). This challenge can also be expanded to incorporate a wellness challenge by including more "mind" and "spirit" types of challenges like doing a Sudoku puzzle, meditating, learning a deep breathing exercise, trying a new food, etc.

## **7. Volunteering Challenge**

Choose a month and promote volunteerism among employees. Make it a challenge by having employees share their experiences. Employees log volunteer hours and get points for each hour. For each hour of volunteer time they are entered into a draw for a great prize. Have each employee share their volunteer experience and showcase these volunteer stories on your company's intranet or in an e-newsletter.

## **8. Food Drive Challenge**

Place a series of boxes in each department for food collection. At the end of the challenge the department with the most food in their box is given the day off with pay to volunteer their time at the local food bank or homeless shelter. This challenge is great for employee morale and teamwork and also helps promote great PR in your community – all while supporting a very worthy cause!

## **9. Reading Challenge**

Challenge employees to read during the same month as literacy awareness day (January). Launch a staff book club and also encourage independent reading through book swaps. As part of the challenge have staff donate used books (similar approach as the Food Drive Challenge). The department with the most book donations has an opportunity to support literacy in their community by helping out at a local library, community or child development centre.

## **10. Stretching Challenge**

Encourage employees to take stretch breaks every day –several times per day. Launch the challenge with a massive onsite stretch break (all employees participate) led by a qualified fitness leader. Employees track their daily stretch breaks and get one name in the draw for each stretch break they take. The winner gets a gift certificate for a local fitness facility or Yoga Class of their choosing.

When it comes to challenges the most important things to determine is how the challenge will promote "team", and will it be realistic for someone internal to manage. Keep in mind; the simplest challenges often have the greatest effect. Don't forget to get creative and most of all have fun!

## Recommended Resources:

Map My Run – great tool for mapping walking, cycling and running routes

<http://www.mapmyrun.com/>

For info and resources around walking for wellness check out this website (Dr. Martin Collis, walking expert):

<http://www.pacificrimwellness.com/stepwell/>

Core Health Technologies: Great resource and tool for online challenges

<http://www.corehealthtech.com/>

Gillian Goerzen (BSc. Kin) is a Registered Personal Trainer and Director of Development for LifeWorks Health Solutions. LifeWorks provides outsourced wellness solutions to corporations. Whether you are looking for onsite lunch and learn's, 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. Subscribe to our blog at <http://lwhs.com/wordpress/> for more ideas and articles about health and wellness and to participate in our weekly wellness challenge.