



Wellness is a Strategy! - Corporate wellness, what?

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Corporate or employee wellness is a relatively new industry that over the years has had many different definitions. These definitions have included subsidizing corporate fitness memberships, hosting a lunch and learn, posting newsletters or offering onsite exercises classes to name a few. These types of wellness programs were thought of as a “nice to have” fringe benefit for companies with money, status or size.

Today the industry of corporate wellness is changing and the gap between traditional benefits and “wellness” is narrowing. Professionals such as company owners, benefit consultants, HR administrators, and health and safety specialists are understanding that wellness at the corporate level needs to be a strategic part an overall benefit plan.

The Sun Life – Buffett 2013 National Wellness Survey put it well by saying, *"While a majority of employers are committed to providing wellness programs, there remains a gap between the primary health risks identified and the type of program offered."*

The contributing factors to a healthy return on a company's investment are ensuring that the program design strategically aligns with the results of the health risk assessment. It is also important that the programs offered support employee needs and interests, along with ensuring employee and management objectives are met.

A successful, results-based corporate wellness plan will offer various programs with the underlying objective of true behavioural change. To achieve the biggest impact, a comprehensive approach should include a healthy balance focusing on both the individual and the group as a whole. Successful programs implement individual, group and awareness initiatives that target the widest range of the population.

Due to the fact that it is now easier for corporations to see a financial return on better health, the employee wellness industry is growing. The more wellness programs offered that encourage lasting behavioural change, the healthier the return will be. Healthy employees cost less, period.

The overall goal of a company introducing wellness program should be to work with a third party vendor that designs wellness programs strategically. They understand that your organization is made up of many different people (locations and demographics) and that those people learn and retain information in different ways. It is this inclusivity that supports engagement success.

Do you currently offer an employee wellness program? How strategic is your current approach?

- We have completed a Health Risk Assessment which determines specific risks and interests.
- We have implemented a variety of awareness and group programs that support our culture and increase moral.
- Our program is inclusive for all staff at all locations.
- We offer employees individual attention to develop programs that are specific to their personal needs and goals.
- We are consistently tracking engagement of each program.
- We have specific metrics that are tracked to monitor the effectiveness of our program.

It is obvious that Canadian companies understand the importance of wellness in the workplace due to the decrease in the gap between benefit plans and wellness programs as was stated earlier. It is also known that companies have varying reasons for providing a corporate wellness program to their employees. What are yours? It is important to understand what the overall program objectives are prior to implementing the initiatives. Note that a successful results-based corporate wellness plan begins with a clear strategy that works with the overall benefits offering.

With 2015 around the corner you may have already made personal and family wellness goals for the New Year. Perhaps it is also time to think about the wellness goals of your organization.

Contact EWSNetwork today to work wellness into your benefit's strategy. Email us at info@EWSNetwork.com or call us at (519)860-0502.