



Low-Cost Worksite Wellness Tips

In every business throughout America, the unhealthy lifestyles of the employees cost the companies money. Many CEOs think that this is due to higher health insurance premiums and there is some merit to that viewpoint. However, increased health insurance premiums are only part of the story.

Decreases in productivity, employee disability, and employee absenteeism can cost a company as much or even more money than the increase in health insurance premiums. Hence, business owners do not need to wait for the long-term benefits of a worksite wellness program to save money. These programs can be productive right from the start.

Limited Budget?



What if you have a very limited budget for a worksite wellness program? There are free and low-cost things that companies can provide for their employees' health. Some of these are listed here.

- First, make it clear that the company owner(s) fully support the worksite wellness program. This can be accomplished with a simple announcement or an email to that effect.

- Post hotline phone numbers in the lunchroom and in other appropriate locations. Sample hotline topics include depression, alcohol abuse, sexual assault, etc.

- Provide newsletters and brochures on various health issues via email or hard copy. Many of these resources can be obtained for free from health websites sponsored by the government (see page 2).

- Starting with the newsletters and brochures, establish an in-house wellness library. You may also obtain free material from the many professional healthcare facilities in your area.



- Include tasty healthy snacks in the vending machines. Start by replacing half of the unhealthy snacks with healthy ones and gradually work up to all healthy snacks. Experience has demonstrated that if you give the employees several months notice before all of the unhealthy snacks are replaced, complaints will be minimal. (This applies to the executive vending machines also)

- Using the same principle as with the snack vending machines, replace all of the unhealthy drink selections with healthy ones.



- Once a month, have a Healthy Snack day where you provide a variety of healthy and tasty snacks.

- Also once a month, provide a healthy and tasty lunch for the entire work force.

Employees may even enjoy taking turns preparing the lunch as long as the boss pays



for the food. Healthy recipes can be obtained from government Internet sources or from your company's healthcare provider.

- Purchase pedometers, heart rate monitors and blood pressure monitors that can be checked-out by the employees. They can learn how to use this equipment during a short after-work or lunchtime presentation.

- Hold friendly wellness contests between groups within the company. Using the honor system, contests can include which group spends the most time on exercising, which group loses the most weight, etc.



- Using free or low-cost (but qualified) personnel, offer after-work or lunch-n-learn seminars on a variety of health issues. Many health care facilities provide expert speakers for free.



- Use a Saturday morning or one-half of a non-working day as an Employee Wellness Day. Start the day with a keynote speaker and then follow-up on this with breakout sessions on a variety of wellness issues.

- Prior to the start of the Employee Wellness Day, offer lab tests for interested employees. Fasting blood tests will provide lipid (cholesterol) levels and blood sugar levels (diabetes).



In addition to performing the blood work, nurses can also perform the blood pressure screenings. After these assessments but before the start of the keynote speaker, provide healthy food items for those employees who fasted for the blood work.

- Hold an end-of-the-year banquet with a variety of healthy and tasty food options. Each employee could prepare a different healthy course like a pot-luck gathering. Allow each employee to bring a guest and make it an enjoyable evening.

These are just some of the free and low-cost things that business owners can do to make their companies "wellness-friendly". You will be very pleased with the significant benefits from such a modest investment. The only thing that you need to do now is to take the first step.

Helpful Government Websites

Health Information for the Public

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/>

Publications for Health Professionals

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/pubs/pub_prof.htm

Health Assessment Tools

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/other/index.htm#tools>

National Institute of Health

<http://www.nih.gov/>

NOTICE: Although the above websites have been operational for years, as you know, that could change tomorrow. If that is the case, simply Google the organization for a revised address.

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