

Leaders

in health & wellness

YOUR PERSONAL AND
PROFESSIONAL CHOICES



FIRST IN A SERIES

THREE FACTORS KEY TO WORKPLACE WELLNESS

This year, employers will pay about \$9,600 for health insurance per worker — an increase of 6% over 2008, according to Towers Perrin's annual Health Care Cost Survey. But companies that offer their employees high-performing onsite health and wellness programs will spend an average of \$1,200 less, a substantial savings over time.

According to Towers Perrin, these companies are encouraging employees to take better care of themselves by building a culture of health and wellness, educating them about optimal use of their health plans and sponsoring

health-boosting activities.

But motivating employees to make the lifestyle changes required to significantly reduce healthcare expenditures — most notably increased physical activity and a more wholesome diet — is notoriously difficult. The key ingredients of a high-performing program are senior management involvement, flexibility and accessibility,

says Peter Hotz, president of Take Care Health Employer Solutions Group, a Walgreens Health and Wellness Company.

Senior management involvement: Top executives need to show that fitness is important to them, says Hotz, who has joined office teams in activities such as a triathlon and a 45-mile charity bike ride. "It has to start at the top," he says. "Senior management has to believe in it, has to live it, has to model it." Take Care Health Employer Solutions Group, part of the Walgreens family since May 2008, provides employee health and wellness programs as well as onsite healthcare in the form of primary care, pharmacy and occupational health services. Many of its top executives "live" the fitness mission, at least one of them hitting the stairs to Take Care Health's 14th-floor offices every day.

Flexibility: A flexible program, Hotz says, takes into account the fact that a company may employ both ultra marathoners and people for whom climbing a few flights of stairs is a

challenge. You need to offer programs that meet the needs of both ends of the fitness spectrum.

Accessibility: Lastly, Hotz says an accessible program offers many different ways for employees to participate, from offering an onsite gym and wellness programs or simply endorsing noontime walks for time-pressed employees who might otherwise not feel they can get away from their desks.

A successful program, says Hotz, "depends on where the company is in their evolution of health and wellness," which starts with awareness of the benefits of good health and identification of individual health risk factors with an annual health assessment. It goes on from there to educate workers on how to mitigate those risk factors through participation in health and wellness activities.

Take Care Health Employer Solutions' results speak for themselves. One worksite that uses its wellness programs and other services was able to identify more than 300 employees with high blood pressure, a major risk factor for many conditions. Now, a year later, almost half of those employees have achieved normal blood pressure.

Hotz says every company is different and requires a customized program to suit its unique workforce, something he says sets Walgreens apart from others in the marketplace. In addition to its worksite health and wellness centers, Walgreens is helping organizations achieve positive outcomes through its broad portfolio of capabilities that span from in-store clinics to specialty pharmacy and infusion services.

Whatever the approach a company chooses, Hotz says to expect cultivating a culture of health and wellness to take several years. "You can't just snap your fingers and expect behaviors to change overnight," he says. "You have to do it as a long-term investment. It is a process and a journey."

~ Story by Mary Van Beusekom

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