

## **Case Study: Employee Health and Wellness**

### Introduction

In today's world most companies are striving to be the best with the best employees. Companies are beginning to understand that if they keep their employees healthy they could spend less on medical costs. U.S. News published an article that stated, "...companies can save anywhere from \$3 to \$15 for every \$1 spent on health and wellness programs within 12 to 18 months of implementing a [workplace wellness] program (Workplace Wellness Seems to Really Work , 2009)." Not only are companies saving money by creating and implementing health and wellness programs, but they are also seeing an increase in productive employees. Now-a-days most Americans are not working just a 40 hour work week. This reduces the time that employees would have to spend on wellness (Benefits of Wellness Programs, 2010). Since the amount of time Americans spend on wellness is reduced, it is raising the amount of chronic conditions they are now dealing with.

### Information about Health and Wellness Programs

Wellness can be defined as "the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal" (Kyrillos, 2007). Wellness does not include just being physically active; it also includes a person's nutrition and their lifestyle choices. In 1960 approximately 50 percent of jobs required a moderate amount of physical activity, since then that number has changed to less than 20 percent (Gray, 2011). Not only has the amount of activity a person is getting changed, but their nutrition and lifestyle choices have changed as well. People are not as effective in their day-to-day activities after making poor nutrition and lifestyle choices.

In order for this type of program to become successful companies should put together a health and wellness committee made up of employees. These committees can provide guidance for others on improving their lifestyle choices and becoming more productive during the work day. Some responsibilities that can be given to the health and wellness committee are: evaluating current services and policies at the office, determining what the needs of are the employees, develop an operating plan which includes vision statement, goals, and objectives, and implementing the program with different activities (Wellness Committees, 2010).

Health and Wellness committees typically come up with creative ways to get employees active and moving during the day. It is also important for Health and Wellness committees to make sure they are encouraging employees to see a doctor regularly for check-ups. These check-ups can help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, depression, substance abuse, and

obesity. It is also beneficial because employees can receive updated immunizations if they see their doctor for regular check-ups (Kyrillos, 2007).

There have been different types of programs put into place depending on the size of the company and what the company is truly looking to change in their employees. Some programs can include just weight loss, exercise/fitness, and stress management (Kyrillos, 2007). Other programs include health education, tracking health records, and drug and alcohol awareness information. Johnson and Johnson put together a wellness program for companies to use. This program can save an employer up to \$225 per employee per year over four consecutive years (Kyrillos, 2007).

### Benefits Associated with Health and Wellness Programs

The benefits that come with creating a health and wellness program for companies are endless. Not only do companies save money on healthcare by implementing wellness programs, but they also see a weight loss in their employees, increased activity, decreasing stress levels, and a possibly increase in the employee's self-esteem (Benefits of Wellness Programs, 2010). Employees are less likely to get hurt or sick when they are healthier, and in return this reduces the amount of sick leave. The USA Department of Health and Human Services found that Health and Wellness programs "lowered short-term sick leave by six to 32%" (Benefits of Wellness Programs, 2010).

When individuals have more self-esteem and less stress they increase the amount of work they get done during the day. The USA Department of Health and Human Services also reported there was "increased productivity by two to 52 percent" (Benefits of Wellness Programs, 2010). Employers are also now offering incentives to employees who succeed in the program. This also gives participants not succeeding a reason to increase their participation. Some incentives that are being given are cash, extended benefits, and reimbursement on gym memberships. It was stated in the Huffington Post article that the way one company looks at it is paying their employees to be fit and active.

### Conclusion

Health and Wellness programs benefit companies in ways that cannot be replaced by anything else. Obesity rates are increasing in Americans and it is not only hurting those individuals but the companies they work for as well. Health and Wellness programs can be seen as either positive or negative. Creating Health and Wellness programs are great ways for companies to encourage their workers to become physically active and make improvements to their lifestyles.

## Questions

1. What do you think about companies giving their employees incentives to lose weight and change their lifestyle?
2. What would you include in a Health and Wellness Program if you were creating one for the company you worked at?
3. How would you encourage employees to go along with this program?
4. Should employees be charged more for their health insurance if they are not part of a wellness plan in the workplace? Why or why not?

Written by: Mallory Volocyk

## **Works Cited**

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