

Certification Part II Creating ROI With Strategic Wellness

By **Brian M. Huxford**

In the July-August issue, we discussed the first four steps of the 10-step wellness certification process offered by the Wellness Council of Indiana. Below are the six additional steps to guide your company in implementing a wellness initiative that truly works for you and your employees.

Step 5: Having a strategic plan means looking ahead up to two years

There are multiple reasons why having both a detailed and conceptual 18- to 24-month plan is important. A vital one is that your insurance renews every year. If you are going to become strategic with wellness, then you need to begin thinking now about moving long term into rewarding employees with incentivized health outcomes that meet standards or show significant improvement. In short, you cannot wait until open enrollment for insurance to let people know they will earn money for living a healthy lifestyle. What's more, after you have given your people time and resources to make the positive changes, the health care incentives should start to kick in.

Believe me, do this correctly and you create high morale, engagement, excitement and success. If you do this incorrectly, you will crush morale, engagement, excitement and your wellness program will struggle – and most likely fail. The key: Understanding that getting people healthy means helping them see the need to make changes in their personal lifestyle. If one is to make long-term lifestyle changes, they have to truly believe in what they are doing.

Step 6: Promotions and communications

Getting off on the right foot with promoting and communicating a program begins with having that strategic, detailed plan to follow.

The good news is that the HR department personnel who are vital to this cause live in a world of detail and are great communicators, so build on that. Focus them on the simple aspects of the program, with promotions designed to catch one's attention, create excitement and get an employee to want to ask for more – engage them.

The program promotion efforts should include all levels of people on your wellness team. The events should be fun, exciting and highly visible.

Step 7: Incentives for success

If you have followed the above steps, the amount you will need to spend to get people engaged will be lower. There are many ways to incentivize; some are effective, some are not.

Bottom line, if you want to be strategic with wellness, then I highly recommend making connections to your health insurance premiums. This can be done in a variety of ways, including participation in a health screening and ongoing program thereafter. Plus, it should be focused long term on the individuals reaching healthy outcomes.



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Step 8: Connection of safety and wellness initiatives

I often see smaller companies or organizations get this right first. Meanwhile, large organizations often have a separation of “health benefit” and “safety.” But in order to maximize productivity and more positively touch the lives of your workforce, a connection between the two needs to be made.

Step 9: Supportive environment

In creating a supportive environment, I recommend taking a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, one can look back at top level support. Will the boss be mad at me if I choose to take that 20-minute walk on my lunch break or do the culture and unwritten rules have me work straight through lunch?

Or, if I bring up wellness while in a meeting on overall productivity and the company's bottom line, will that be supported or pushed to the side?

A supportive environment also can mean more accessible workout areas, nutritious foods in the vending machines and fresh fruit Fridays instead of doughnuts. What form it takes and the level of support, again, all start with top management.

Step 10: Evaluate everything

Creating the correct plan with strategic targets and then having a system in place to track your successes and failures is essential. It is amazing to me the additional views and ways to evaluate success that open up when the correct data is being tracked.

Evaluating your program will also ensure that it has sustainability for long-term results. Remember, wellness is a journey, not a destination!

INFORMATION LINK

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