

Maximum Gains

Five Star AchieveWELL Companies Share Journey

By Symone C. Skrzycki

The power of positive thinking – and proper training – inspired 225-plus employees to participate in Franciscan Alliance’s inaugural “Anyone Can Do a 5K” walk/run in 2012.

You’ve built a successful workplace wellness culture and all it took was a few brainstorming sessions and fitness-themed events. Wouldn’t it be nice if it were that easy? Creating – and sustaining – a thriving wellness culture won’t happen overnight, but a little hard work and creativity can go a long way toward motivating employees and producing results. And while customizing your initiative is essential, exploring winning strategies at other organizations can help you get started.

The Wellness Council of Indiana’s AchieveWELL analysis and recognition program assists employers in creating successful workplace wellness initiatives. Companies must meet standards at each level – Three Star, Four Star and Five Star – before qualifying for the next.

What does it take to earn a Five Star designation? Step inside five workplaces to see how they got their wellness initiatives off the ground and keep the momentum going. The consensus: How sweet it is!

Begin with the basics

Draper may be a global company, but it’s never strayed from its small-town roots.

Founded in 1902, it manufactures window shades, gymnasium equipment, projection screens and lifts for projectors and displays. Draper is headquartered in Spiceland, approximately 40 miles east of Indianapolis. It has 516 workers.

“We’ve never had a layoff,” declares safety and wellness director Linda Brinson. “It’s a great company that truly cares about its employees and community. I think that’s a huge reason why we’ve been able to be so successful with the wellness initiatives. It was easy to develop a culture that surrounded and supported wellness.”

SIHO Insurance Services, a Columbus-based employee health care benefits company, challenges staff members to complete 12 “universal” wellness goals. Examples include participating in a community-based fitness event, utilizing preventive health benefits and maintaining a healthy blood pressure.

“People try to achieve as many as they can,” says wellness coordinator Amy Phillips. “Each goal has a monetary incentive attached to it.

“On top of those universal goals, we designate our employees into program tracks (completing a tobacco cessation program, striving to reduce their weight by 10%) based on health status – things that are a little bit more difficult and life changing.”

New this year is a four-week tobacco cessation “post-support” program emphasizing one-on-one coaching. Each session includes health screenings, such as an evaluation of carbon monoxide levels in participants’ lungs. SIHO provides nicotine patches and gum throughout the course.

Word of mouth plays a big role in sustainability, especially with recently launched efforts.

“When you implement something new, people might be a little apprehensive,” Phillips notes. “(But it helps when) people who went through the course the first time (it was offered) share their success and positive experience with other folks.”

Consistency – and providing incentives – is also crucial.

“We had to show employees that it wasn’t the flavor of the month,” stresses Brinson when describing how the company has sustained successful initiatives. “Employees have to see that this isn’t going to die off and be forgotten about. Each year, we raised it to the next level.



SIHO offers quarterly health coaching to help employees meet their wellness goals. The company recently broadened its annual wellness screenings to include diabetes and tobacco testing.

“We just kept building on that to where it’s truly the culture now. There’s not a single day that goes by that I don’t hear a success story.”

At Draper, a health coach works closely with employees to develop goals based on their annual health risk assessments. If they meet those initiatives, they receive an extra vacation day.

Butler University’s Healthy Horizons program features free health screenings, disease management resources, educational tools and more. Launched in 2005, it’s operated by the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences’ pharmacy faculty.

“We do goal setting with all of our patients – even if it’s a maintenance goal,” shares program director Dr. Carrie Maffeo. “We want to keep our low-risk employees healthy.”

Monthly lunch and learn sessions also promote positive habits. Topics range from financial wellness and vegetarian cooking to emotional eating and health and fitness apps.

Earlier this year, Butler was among three institutions chosen statewide to participate in a cancer screening pilot. The university will focus on colorectal screenings. Butler’s goal is to develop screening strategies based on results of a survey completed by staff and faculty members.

Make it a family affair

Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana (TMMI) employs approximately 4,500 people at its four-million-square-foot Princeton facility.

A trio of focus areas – health risk assessments, community and family – drives the company’s wellness program. An annual benefits open house, aka Fall Family Day, spotlights each.

Festivities include health screenings and flu shots, children’s races, obstacle courses, bounce houses and a tractor pull. The goal is to engage workers and their families in physical activity, and to “capture where they are (health-wise) and what kinds of changes they need to make to encourage a



Wellness starts early at Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana as fifth graders learn about nutrition and exercise during an annual Live Well event. In addition, an on-site child care center features physical education classes for preschool children.



Individuals make strides in reaching their wellness goals at Draper’s five-acre fitness park.

healthy lifestyle,” explains Tim Hollander, general manager of human resources and safety.

Mishawaka-based Franciscan Alliance expanded wellness efforts in 2012 by introducing a WELLCARE program at its family of five hospital campuses in northern Indiana.

“We’ve been working very hard on wellness for a number of years, realizing that part of our mission is not only to take care of our patients we’re privileged to serve, but also our staff,” reflects Tom Gryzbek, president of Franciscan St. Margaret Health, which has campuses in Dyer and Hammond.

All employees have their own online wellness portal that features daily challenges (hydrating properly, reducing stress), nutrition and exercise resources, and an opportunity to interact with wellness coaches and employee assistance program counselors.

“It’s pretty robust,” declares Sharon Sporman, regional director of wellness at Franciscan Omni Health & Fitness in Schererville. “Our main goal is to evaluate and manage the risk factors of our employees.”

Another popular benefit: discounts to the hospitals’ on-site fitness centers or off-site locations in Schererville and Chesterton.

Send the right message

You’ve developed a solid wellness plan. Now what?

Communication is vital. Describe offerings and how to utilize them. Seek input.

“Survey. Survey. Survey. That’s a big one for us,” Phillips stresses. “Making sure you really understand the culture your organization has is the first step in breaking through to your employees and making sure they get the message.”

“Our employees have a very active voice in our program, and I feel that has a huge impact in our success and engagement.”

Taking risks – and admitting when an initiative didn’t catch on – is also important.

“Having top management support, being consistent and recognizing when things are not working so you don’t keep trying something just for the sake of doing it (have contributed to the success of Draper’s wellness program),” Brinson observes. “I’ve monitored the participation rate closely – you have to kind of watch over that and be creative.”

Maffeo seconds that.

“You’ve got to be persistent. It takes time to build trust, decrease skepticism and build understanding.”

Employers also must clarify their role in the wellness process.

“In terms of health coaching, it’s (about) helping the individual find their own strengths and build upon those to lead a healthier lifestyle,” Sporman asserts. “We’re not trying to be experts. We’re trying to coach them to utilize their strengths

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to do what they need to do to be healthier.”

Measure the impact

An easy way to evaluate whether your wellness initiatives are working is to look at the numbers.

Personal success stories help illustrate the accomplishments of SIHO’s program, which kicked off in 2007. Two examples: The percentage of employees with an elevated coronary risk decreased by almost half, and the company’s rate of overweight and obese team members has dropped nearly 10%.

TMMI offers at least 12 wellness activities each month as well as personal training and wellness coaching. Eighty-three percent of workers and 17.5% of dependents participated in one or more programs during the 2013 fiscal year.

“We’re always trying to engage people in wellness activities – whether they’re in-house or in the community,” Hollander emphasizes.

“Sustainability is the key. You don’t want (your wellness program) to be perceived as a flavor of the month activity, so you have to be committed to it. You have to go into it with that commitment and overall support at all levels of the organization.”

Talk about an incentive! Draper team members lost a combined 526 pounds by taking part in a yearlong Walk to Hawaii contest.

Participants received pedometers (to qualify, they had to walk at least 2.4 million steps) and the winner (chosen from a random drawing at the company’s annual employee meeting) received an all-expense paid trip for two.

A total of 251 people took part. Today, eight have discontinued medications for treating high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes, and one no longer uses a sleep machine.

Statistics, however, are only part of the big picture. External recognition – such as earning the AchieveWELL Five Star designation – also lends perspective.

“It validates that we’re doing the right things, that we’re on the right track,” Hollander contends. “I think it shows internally to our team members and externally to our community where we live and work that we’re committed to

this for the long term.”

Adds Phillips, “This certification provides our employees with a sense of accomplishment and a sense of pride, which fuels their energy and motivation to stay in the program. Having this certification definitely sets a great set of standards to make sure we’re not only at the industry standard, but going above and beyond.”

Watching peers reach their wellness goals also is a huge motivator.

“They understand that it’s about making you (the employee) healthy, but it’s also about making the bottom line healthy and that makes them feel more secure in their jobs,” remarks Draper’s Brinson.



Butler University’s Dr. Carrie Maffeo comments on what makes its wellness initiative unique: “Our program is delivered by clinical pharmacy faculty members and we have training programs (related to providing those services) for our pharmacy residents and pharmacy students.”

TMMI’s Hollander agrees. “As an employer, obviously it’s a big investment – not only financial, but also a time investment and commitment,” he acknowledges. “But as you have a healthier workforce, people are generally going to be happier. They will be more active.”

“There’s a strong business case that the cost and commitment of the program will pay for itself over time.”

Sporman sums it up. “We have some heart-wrenching stories – we call them ‘mission moments’ – from our employees about programs we’ve offered that have enabled them to conquer something or feel better. Those individual stories, in addition to the overall ROI and numbers and outcomes we watch, are priceless.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Linda Brinson, Draper, at www.draperinc.com

Tom Gryzbek, Franciscan St. Margaret Health, at www.franciscanalliance.org

Tim Hollander, Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana, at www.toyota.com

Carrie Maffeo, Butler University, at www.butler.edu/healthyhorizons

Amy Phillips, SIHO Insurance Services, at www.siho.org

Sharon Sporman, Franciscan Omni Health & Fitness in Schererville, at www.franciscanalliance.org/omni