



# Wellness At The Workplace



## Incorporating wellness programs into business practices results in a healthier, more productive staff

**T**oday's business owners are constantly thinking of creative ways to promote a healthier, happier work force and reduce turnover — all the while keeping expenses in check. One idea that many Arizona companies are catching on to is to implement wellness programs. Wellness programs are part of the health care costs for employees, but should be seen as an investment rather than an expense. Over time, these programs are proven to reduce costs due to a healthier staff, as well as offering employees unique benefits that put the company a step ahead of the competition.—JENNIFER ROBINSON

When researching a wellness program, businesses should start by carefully evaluating what components of the business are being affected by health-related issues. For instance, do employees frequently miss work due to illness? As a result of unhealthy employees, is there a noticeable decline in work productivity? Is there an increase in health insurance costs as a result of frequent employee-physician visits? Are the stress levels of employees high? Is there a large percentage of smokers on staff? Is the staff a younger, high-energy work force? Answering

these questions the company and its insurance broker choose a wellness program that fits the employer groups' needs.

Some of the services offered through wellness programs include:

- ◆ Having a personal trainer visit the office once a month and give an exercise tutorial.
- ◆ Programs to help employees quit smoking.
- ◆ Having a nutritionist visit the office where employees can talk to them one-on-one.
- ◆ Online diet and exercise programs tailored to each individual employees' needs and goals.
- ◆ Having a massage therapist visit the office periodically and give 15-minute chair-massages.
- ◆ Videos on how to manage stress that are e-mailed to each employee or shown on TVs throughout the office.
- ◆ Behavioral health programs designed to ensure the mental well-being of employees.



Other wellness programs include regular blood pressure and cholesterol screenings for employees. These types of regular screenings are extremely important and could help prevent future health problems. High blood pressure is a contributing cause of stroke, heart attacks, heart failure, kidney failure and atherosclerosis, according to the American Heart Association. High blood cholesterol levels can result in heart diseases or heart attacks, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Providing employees with accessible opportunities to have these important tests shows a level of concern for the health and well-being of employees, and can counter higher-costing treatments later on.

For companies looking to engage in a large-scale wellness program, a wellness fair might be something to consider. Wellness fairs can be all-encompassing, as they might feature on-site health coaches, educational materials and booths, disease-management information, blood and cholesterol screenings and more. There are Arizona-based companies that can plan a wellness event or they can assist the company in coordinating the event or health fair.

Incorporating wellness programs on a minimal level can be beneficial to a business as well. A wellness newsletter distributed via e-mail to all employees is a casual way of gauging the interest of employees into the topic of wellness. Some businesses even will pay for employees' gym memberships to motivate an active lifestyle.

While there may not be one definitive solution for preventing health-related issues from affecting the workplace, wellness programs do encourage employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle through education and active participation. Overall, businesses that embrace a healthier lifestyle are taking a step toward a healthier, more productive work environment. For instance, healthy employees typically take fewer sick days and are more apt to perform their job functions at a productive level. Businesses that incorporate wellness programs also can sometimes reap financial benefits. Healthy employees usually require fewer physician visits and prescriptions, which results in a decrease in long-term health insurance costs.

Wellness programs come in many different forms. When choosing a health care partner to provide these services, choose one that will take the time to analyze the firm's needs and work with employers to develop a long-term plan that will keep costs down in the long run. Most importantly, partners should have a comprehensive offering to ensure that the company's needs are being met. Wellness programs not only make a significant impact on the work environment for employer and employee alike, but they also are a great investment for a happier and healthier business. **AB**

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