



## Get Motivated

### *How to help your employees stay healthy*

Preventive care is all the rage in today's health care world, and for good reason. Staving off chronic disease can not only save money for both employers and employees, it also creates a healthier and happier population.

"In-office fitness centers can contribute to that equation," says Michael Boyle, manager of Healthy Connections Wellness Center, National Institute for Fitness and Sport, which manages 19 in-office fitness centers for Anthem, Inc. "It's no secret that corporate fitness is a growing business, healthier employees take less sick time and have more energy, leading not only to more productivity but also to cost savings."

#### **How can employers motivate their employees to stay healthy?**

Employers can do several things to motivate employees to take part in health programs and stay healthy. Depending on time and resources, these strategies can be as elaborate as running a company-wide contest, or as simple as placing stickers on the stairs to show how many calories are burned with each step.

The key to successfully motivating employees is to keep participation easy and straightforward so as not to interfere with their already-busy work schedules.

#### **What are some examples of the more complex programs employers can use to motivate employees?**

One great program that can be really impactful for employees is a "Know Your Numbers" program in which employees receive incentives and/or discounts if they meet certain health requirements. These requirements can be customized by the employer and include things such as being a certified non-smoker, meeting body mass index, or BMI, requirements or receiving a flu shot.

Another example of a more involved program that employers can implement is participating in Global Employee Health and Fitness month (GEHFM). This international observance of health and wellness in the workplace, which takes place in May each year, was created by two nonprofits with the goal of promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle to employers and their employees.

Companies of all sizes are invited to participate in GEHFM by challenging their employees to create healthy habits. Employees can log, track and share their activities on the GEHFM website throughout the month.

While many employers use incentives to encourage employees to participate in programs, the incentives don't have to be elaborate or cost a lot of money. The main goal for some employees may be to earn the prize, but the employer's goal should be to promote

a healthy lifestyle in efforts to help employees form healthy habits that they will be able to sustain for years to come.

#### **Are there programs that are a good fit for employers who are worried about the time and resources needed to engage employees?**

Absolutely. Lunch and Learns are very easy to implement with minimal time and resources. Simply invite employees to spend their lunch hour learning about healthy living topics such as how to prevent neck and back injury, or the importance of taking breaks and staying active during the workday.

Starting a walking club is another great use of a lunch hour or an afternoon break and takes little time or effort to get started.

#### **Is there anything else employers should consider?**

Being healthy is not just about physical health, it includes mental health as well. With volunteer opportunities including gardening at local schools, working in the food pantry and volunteering with Special Olympics, giving back is a great way to keep people positive and encourage healthy living.

Employers should consider community service and team building activities when appropriate.