Workplace Wellness Programs: Increasing Employee Participation

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Unless employees in the workplace are interested in participating in workplace wellness programs, the addition of these programs to the health care benefit plan will not be effective in reducing corporate health care costs.

State-of-the-art fitness equipment only works when it is used, and exercise facilities are only beneficial when they are visited regularly by members and employees. The same can be said for workplace wellness programs; the key to an effective workplace wellness program is participation.

Decision, decisions, decisions… How can employers increase employee participation and how can they make workplace wellness programs more attractive to employees of varying health and wellness through all the ranks?

EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES

The single, sure method of increasing employee participation in workplace wellness programs is to learn what motivates your employees; what would incent them to engage and participate? By requiring them to complete a Health Risk Appraisal, individual specific health risks can be identified and you have the opportunity to identify what incentives your employees find motivating.

Workplace wellness programs do reduce health risks, as long as the employees with health risks agree to follow the wellness plans and actively pursue an improvement in their own health. Employee engagement is crucial to success and increasing employee participation will maintain the new health status which produces a return on the investment in the workplace wellness program for the employer.

RECOGNIZING PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

Typically, increasing employee participation is harder after the onset of the workplace wellness program. New participants are enthusiastic and interested in the initial phase, but after the novelty has faded so does employee participation. This is a turning point for the introduction of stronger motivators.

Several strong incentives are money, time-off from work, reduced portions of the co-pay or a point system in which points accumulate to greater and greater values for merchandise, money or reduced health care premiums. As noted above, Health Risk Appraisals can help to address which incentives the employees identify as motivating.
BREAKING ACHIEVEMENT INTO SMALLER STEPS

Increasing employee participation can be done by breaking the criteria for wellness into smaller steps in order to add more frequent rewards. Creating opportunities to save up smaller rewards for a chance at a reward of greater value is another option for increasing employee participation. Self-selection of incentives is crucial for motivation to be meaningful to the individual participating in the workplace wellness program.

The possibility of further rewards for maintaining the new level of health is another solid method of increasing employee participation. Successful workplace wellness programs increase the value of the reward in tandem with increased employee participation rates. This type of reward system works especially well with health risks that involve breaking an addictive cycle.

INCREASING EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION SAVES MONEY

Increasing the value of rewards for participation can deter some employers with limited financial resources from making a commitment to workplace wellness programs. The fear that larger incentives for increasing employee participation will break the bank costs companies valuable time.

An astute workplace wellness program design will back the resources of the company. Unless a one hundred percent participation rate is achieved, employees who are not successful are going to be paying the full contribution amounts; whereas, the savings generated by the participating employees will be recycled by the health care costs.

Incentives should be aimed at increasing employee participation and maintaining engagement. Anything that minimizes the good will of, or places a negative connotation on the wellness program, is a detriment to its success, whereas effective incentives will support this.

Contact Sullivan Benefits to explore various ways to increase your employee wellness program participation.

Congratulations, just taking the time to read this article is a positive step toward introducing wellness and the benefits available from a healthier lifestyle. Thank you for your time and THINK WELLNESS!

Source: Wellness Proposals