



# How to Create a Sustainable Wellness Program



## Why Establish a Culture of Health?

There may be no better opportunity to foster a healthier population than by focusing on the workplace. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists heart disease, smoking, and substance misuse and abuse on its top 10 list of public health concerns — all of which can also adversely affect business costs. By promoting a culture of health, employers can positively impact both their employee populations and their bottom lines.

Creating a culture of health can help lower medical and disability costs, and improve workforce health and productivity delivering benefits that go well beyond cost savings. According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, there are five important reasons employee wellness is worth the investment:



1. **Healthy, active employees incur lower health costs**



2. **Employees who take advantage of wellness are more productive**



3. **Physically active employees are healthier**



4. **Wellness programs inspire important behavior changes**



5. **Small business owners may be able to take advantage of tax incentives for workplace wellness programs<sup>1</sup>**

To establish a strong foundation, however, you must choose the right wellness programs and a health strategy that fits into your workplace culture.







## Understanding What a Wellness Program Is — and Is Not

While many employers have taken steps to promote better employee health, it takes more than gym memberships and health screenings to bring about lasting results. A one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't match the way people want and expect to manage their health. Solutions can't be siloed or address one factor of wellness. Instead, they should be holistic, with the ability to drill down and support each person's wellness goals.

For wellness programs to take hold and produce lasting behavior change, employers need a sustainable engagement strategy based on a clearly defined culture of health, leadership buy-in and strategic communications.

Today's wellness programs should provide the tools, insights and offerings that allow employers to support the needs of their workforce better. To be effective, a program must offer "health equity" — providing every employee what they need to be healthy. Working with an expert who can move you from concept to implementation will help you build the proper foundation for a culture of health in your organization.



## Components of a Successful Wellness Program

Promoting wellness in the workplace requires engaging people in healthier habits. That's a challenge for most employers — even for those actively committed to wellness initiatives. For wellness programs to take hold and produce lasting behavior change, employers need a sustainable strategy that keeps people motivated.

Employers can increase engagement by using data to drive uniquely personalized wellness experiences for their employees. You can accomplish this by choosing:

- ✓ **The right PROGRAMS.** Personalized roadmaps to a customized experience help engage employees and improve their health.
- ✓ **The right CHANNELS.** Take a multi-touch, multi-modal approach to engage individuals how, when and where they want. Use integrated tools and resources — from mobile apps to on-site coaching.
- ✓ **The right INCENTIVES.** Effective incentives can increase wellness program participation and improve morale. Incentives should generate awareness, give employees the “nudge” they need to get started, and reward them for efforts toward behavior change.







## Take a Person-Centered Approach

The key is to move away from a traditional program-centric approach to a person-centered approach. First, understand each employee's health attitudes, preferences and goals. Then, design a wellness program with options that address their health goals in a way that's cohesive and relevant to their needs. Understand, too, that employees need help navigating their individual health journeys. They're looking for:



**Convenient and engaging health and wellness options.** They want seamless experiences, programs tailored to their individual needs, and digital tools that provide easy access to information, tests and resources.<sup>2</sup>



**New care delivery models.** More than half of consumers say they're willing to receive care in non-traditional settings like telehealth, retail stores or pharmacies if it's less costly and more convenient.<sup>3</sup>

Creating wellness programs that feel natural and supportive will spark interest and promote sustained participation. It takes communication, motivation and intervention — all working together in a custom configuration to help each employee reach their potential. With the right, experienced help, you can establish wellness programs that effectively engage employees and change behavior.

## AVOID THESE COMMON WELLNESS PROGRAM PITFALLS

- **Too complicated.**  
Make your wellness program simple and appealing, so employees see its value right away.
- **Lacks incentives.**  
A culture of wellness promoted by incentives is a big part of establishing change.
- **Weak communication strategy.**  
Make your communication creative and constant, and continually evaluate its success.
- **Wrong data.**  
In addition to registration rates and active registered users, measure and analyze the data you're collecting in support of both current and future program goals.
- **Undue stress.**  
Leverage behavioral economic principles to make wellness the easier and more enjoyable choice.

Muldoon, Christine. "6 Wellness Program Pitfalls and How You Can Avoid Them." <https://www.webmdhealthservices.com/2015/12/04/6-wellness-program-pitfalls-and-how-you-can-avoid-them/2015>

## Evaluate Your Current Wellness Program

### *The Importance of Metrics*

A strategically planned wellness program can help employers achieve business goals by:

 **Saving on costs (such as those related to health care)**

 **Raising employee productivity**

 **Improving the workforce through better employee attraction, retention and morale**

Yet no single wellness strategy will work for every business. Just as a personalized approach to wellness initiatives can boost employee engagement, it's also important to acknowledge the importance of personalization at the organizational level.

The best wellness programs are supported by an organizational culture that not only promotes better health from the top down, but that also recognizes the distinctive needs of the individuals within the specific organization. Since no two organizations are completely alike, each one must come up with its own unique strategy to encourage employees to be healthier and more productive.<sup>4</sup>

Regular evaluation of your wellness program metrics is a critical step in ensuring its continued success and viability. Frequent evaluation not only enables greater agility in adjusting your program for better outcomes, but also provides more accurate information about your program's strengths and weaknesses.

Unfortunately, the most meaningful metrics often are buried in reports and data tables. Finding them sometimes requires sifting through health assessment, biometric screening and clinical outcomes data — all of which can be overwhelming, disconnected and confusing.

What's needed is a single metric to simplify, aggregate and describe the health of a population. That's why we developed the Active Health Index. It's a single-value metric — on a scale from 1 to 100 — that reflects the health of an individual or a population based on an assessment of 10 dimensions of health. It addresses three fundamental questions:

1. What is the health of your population?
2. What are the opportunities to improve their health?
3. How much did their health improve between two points in time?



The Active Health Index is an outcomes tool, as well. Using claims and population health data, we can help identify which members may have a greater risk of getting sicker, what health conditions could most affect them, and the potential costs of treating those conditions.



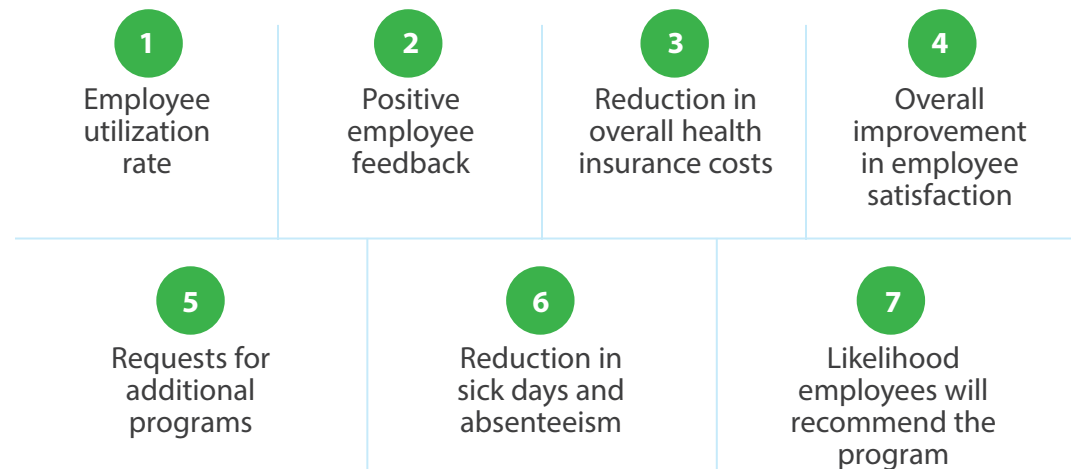
“As people act on their opportunities for (health) improvement, we can see it,” says Paul C. Mendelowitz, MD, MPH, Senior Medical Director of Health Informatics, ActiveHealth Management. “We can measure the change over time, and we can report on it at a population level to our clients. It gives them a simple, aggregated picture of the health of their employees. From there, they can create the population health solution that will have the most impact on the health and wellbeing of their employees.”

*Mendelowitz, Paul. "What's your number? The quest to quantify health." 2019*

## 7 metrics to assess your wellness program



There are several ways to measure a wellness program’s success, but these seven key metrics can help you get started:<sup>5</sup>



## Citations

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tools, adept care management and advanced analytics. We deliver them through a multitude of channels that allow members to engage in ways that fit their lives and needs.

**For more information on how you can build a strong wellness program for your organization, please visit us at [activehealth.com](https://activehealth.com).**

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