

Step 3: Promoting

Once your program is planned you should let employees know about it. Let them know early and often about this new opportunity. Your messages should be focused and highlight the value to the company and the employees. Be sure your Champion is involved in promoting the program, and in getting the company's leadership on board as well. The more visible the leadership is promoting the activities, the more likely the employees will want to take part.

Tips for Successful Communication or Marketing

If your company has any kind of marketing, public relations or communications staff, use them to help get the word out to employees. Use established methods of communications. If possible, use more than one form of communication.

Include messages from senior leadership. Have the President or CEO send an e-mail encouraging employees to be active. If you are unionized, have a union leader endorse the efforts. Encourage leaders who promote physical activities to take part as well.

As a rule of thumb, most adults need to have a message shared with them at least 3 times and ideally in 3 different ways, for it to be adequately reinforced—the marketing “Rule of Three.”²

Besides sharing information on the programs, be sure to have a way to solicit and receive feedback from your employees. Their continued input along the way will help ensure that the program meets their needs and interests, and can lead to more sustainable programs.

Ways to Promote Your Programs:

- Brief announcements at staff meetings.
- E-mails.
- Letters/flyers sent home.
- Company intranet, Web site, or social media.
- Paycheck stuffers.
- Signs in the break room.
- Articles in company newsletters.
- Word of mouth.

2 Krugman, H. “Why Three Exposures May Be Enough.” *Journal of Advertising Research* 12, 6 (1972): 11-14.

CASE STUDY

Getting the Message Across: Gwinnett Medical Center Spreads the Word

When you have an employee base of more than 4500 people that work around the clock, it is difficult to get messages out, especially when not everyone has access to e-mail or the company Web page on a regular basis. Tim Gustavson, a Health Education Specialist at the

Gwinnett Medical Center, realized the difficulty he faced when promoting the center's physical activity and wellness programs.

He and his colleagues found that they needed multiple ways to get the message out. When promoting their physical activity programs, they sent out mass e-mails to all staff at the medical center. In addition, these emails were posted in the center's wellness intranet site. Knowing that not all staff has the same access to e-mail and the Internet, flyers were also made to post at different locations around the medical center campus. But most important has been the use of the Health Quest Ambassadors.

Each department at the Gwinnett Medical Center has a representative to serve as a Health Quest Ambassador. This individual works with the Employee Wellness Department to promote the programs and

activities to their department. The Employee Wellness Department makes use of email and interoffice mail to get the information to the Ambassadors and the Ambassadors ensure their departments are informed of the goings-on.

However, the communication path is not one-way. The ambassadors also serve as a source of information to survey their individual departments to bring feedback and input back to the wellness department and provide guidance on employee wants and needs. They meet on a quarterly basis to share the input and to plot a course for the coming months.

Not everyone at the Gwinnett Medical Center takes part in the physical activity programs, but it is not because they do not know about the programs. When it comes to getting the message across, their multifaceted approach ensures everyone is aware of what is going on.

Steps to Physical Activity - Step 3: Promoting

Incentives

Incentives for participation get people interested and get them to step up and take part. They also send an important message to employees. It shows that the company is committed to the program.

Different incentives can be used throughout your programs. For example, pedometers can be given to employees who sign up for a walking program. T-shirts can be given to those who complete the program, and a prize can be given to the person who walked or improved the most over the duration of the program. In addition, consider subsidizing some or all of a fitness center membership.

If you are considering using incentives, it is important to solicit feedback from employees to determine which incentives will truly motivate them to participate. After hearing suggestions, determine what the company is able to provide for the program.

Try to find incentives that work for all. Not all employees work in the same location and have access to the same resources at their worksites. Realize those who work part-time or swing shifts may not have the same opportunities to participate in physical activity during their own workday. Be sure to be fair about the types of incentives being offered.

If you do use incentives to encourage participation, be sure to work with your colleagues from human resources and legal to ensure all incentives are appropriate. Some rewards, such as cash prizes, paid time off, or insurance reductions may have tax implications.

Types of Incentives:

- Employee recognition.
- Promotional items (e.g., water bottles, t-shirts, pedometers).
- Reduced insurance premiums.
- Additional paid time off.
- Money.
- Reduced or free fitness club memberships.

In this step...

- A champion lends his or her name to the program and helps to ensure the word gets out to the employees about the importance of increasing physical activity in the workplace.
- The wellness committee promotes the programs or activities to their fellow employees through a variety of means and looks for incentives to get them on board.

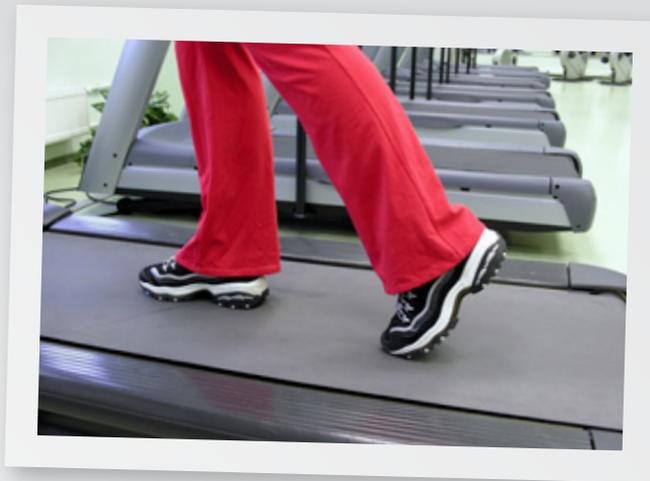
CASE STUDY | Incentives: Increasing Rewards, Increasing Participation

When Meredith Corporation, a national media and marketing company, decided to invest in wellness programs in 2006, the wellness team knew an important part of its success would be providing employees with incentives to participate. It started with an insurance premium discount for those who participated in a company-wide Health Risk Appraisal (HRA). Employees who voluntarily completed the HRA received \$300 toward their portion of the health insurance costs. From there, the incentives have only grown.

To increase the level of physical activity among its employees, Meredith reimburses for fitness club memberships on a sliding scale — the more you go to the gym, the more you receive toward the monthly membership fee. They offer reimbursements for weight loss and nutrition programs, and pay up to \$750 per employee for tobacco cessation programs. Meredith employees are encouraged to bicycle to work and those who do receive a \$20 per month incentive to be applied toward cycling gear, including helmets, reflective vests, locks and general bike maintenance.

Recently, they started their “Wellness Bucks” program to engage employees throughout the year. Each

physical activity or wellness program the employee takes part in or completes is worth a certain number of Wellness Bucks. For example, an employee may earn five Wellness Bucks for each Wellness Bingo card completed, or a bicycle commuter may earn one Wellness Buck for each week of commuting. Wellness Bucks are stored in an employee “account” and may be applied toward qualified purchases—shoes, shirts, shorts or other workout gear, fitness and wellness trainers, massage therapy, and other pre-approved purchases up to the amount of Wellness Bucks they have earned.



“We found that incentives such as water bottles or shirts do not appeal to all,” says Tim O’Neil, Manager of

Employee Health and Financial Wellness at Meredith. “What one person likes does not work for all, with the Wellness Bucks, people have more options and can get what they truly want or need.”

The results have been impressive. Since initiating the Wellness Bucks program, and letting employees choose their own rewards, participation in the company’s wellness programs has increased dramatically.