



CDC Workplace Health  
Resource Center  
Make Wellness Your Business

## ***A Culture of Health Is Key to Success: Edwards Lifesciences***

Edwards Lifesciences takes a comprehensive approach to promoting workplace health. The company, founded in 1958, has built a culture of health through leadership commitment; a focus on patients, employees, and their families; strategic communications to raise awareness and encourage staff participation; and dedication to program measurement and evaluation.



Edwards

### **A Culture of Health Without Borders**

Edwards leaders decided to create a wellness program because medical costs were rising every year, at one point increasing by 30 percent. The program launched in 2003 and started small, with a limited budget. Initially called *Take It to Heart*, the program included weight loss programs, physical activity challenges, educational seminars, and preventive screenings.

In 2011, the company expanded its approach and changed the name of the program to *Total Wellness* to reflect its research on the top areas shown to improve overall well-being, or these six key pillars of health:

- **Prevention.** Includes flu shots, health risk assessments, and biometric screenings
- **Nutrition.** Includes weight loss programs and healthy foods in on-site café
- **Physical Activity.** Includes fitness challenges, on-site gyms, group fitness classes, basketball courts, and a walking track

#### **Edwards Lifesciences At a Glance**

**Locations:** Headquartered in Irvine, CA, with more than 40 offices and manufacturing centers in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia

**Size:** Approximately 4,000 employees at headquarters, and 12,000 globally

**Industry:** Patient-focused medical innovations for structural heart disease, critical care, and surgical monitoring

**North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Sector:** Professional Services



- **Education.** Includes webinars on different topics such as sleep, diabetes, and heart health
- **Financial Wellness.** Includes on-site seminars and financial planning services
- **Community Service.** Includes activity/steps tracking device challenges to boost charity donations, community volunteer opportunities, and corporate matching program

*Total Wellness* is available at all Edwards locations with 100 or more employees, representing 85 percent of all company worksites. Aside from standard offerings such as biometric screenings, locations can tailor the program to meet their needs based on staff, resources, and budget. For example, smaller offices with 30 to 99 employees are encouraged to focus their resources on the one pillar of health that is most needed.



Edwards Lifesciences' *Total Wellness* program focuses on six key pillars of health: prevention, nutrition, physical activity, education, financial wellness, and community service.

#### Workplace Health Awards

- Well Workplace Award (Silver Level), 2017 (Sponsored by the Wellness Council of America)
- Workplace Health Achievement Recognition (Gold Level), 2017 (Sponsored by the American Heart Association)
- CEO Cancer Gold Standard Accreditation, 2011-2018 (Sponsored by the CEO Roundtable on Cancer)

## Leadership Support Is the Core of Program Success

Leadership's commitment to health and wellness is apparent in every aspect of the company—from values, policies, and practices to the supportive physical and social environment. The Edwards credo includes "creating a community unified in its mission to improve the quality of life around the world." Said CEO Mike Mussallem, "The company is built on patients. They're the most important value. Their success is driven by how much our employees care."

*If employees are happy and healthy then their quality of work goes up. So why shouldn't we have a role in their well-being?*

~ Mike Mussallem, CEO

Chief Financial Officer Scott Ullem said that what matters is not only employees' health but the health of their families, which affects everyone's performance and well-being.

## ***Designing a Supportive Physical Environment***

Mussallem takes his wellness role seriously and is personally involved in the design of new buildings. He wants to make sure the company's physical environment supports health. Healthy choices and behaviors are designed to be the easiest and default option in different ways, such as having:

- A smoke-free campus that prohibits traditional and electronic cigarettes
- Stairwells near building entrances to encourage their use, with elevators located further out of the way
- Healthy foods in the café (at headquarters), with point-of-purchase nutritional education signs to encourage healthier choices. The café also offers healthy grab-and-go dinners at the end of the workday
- Open spaces to foster “casual collisions”—opportunities for employees to take walks or breaks, engage with one another socially, share ideas, and spark creativity
- Conveniences to support healthy practices, like towels in the gym and secure bike lockers



Nutrition education information is displayed at the on-site café.

*Total Wellness keeps me motivated, makes me conscious of what I put in my body. I have more energy now and am doing things I wouldn't have thought I could do, like bike 200 miles.*

~ Jade, Senior Digital Asset Representative

Mussallem also serves as a role model for healthy behaviors. He admitted to “taking the stairs and racing the person who’s taking the elevator up.”

*Wellness information is posted everywhere and people are encouraged to get the support they need. It's part of the formula.*

~ Rich Lunsford, Vice President of Healthcare Solutions

## ***Providing a Supportive Social Environment***

In addition to creating a healthy physical environment, Edwards provides social support and care for patients who use company products, as well as for employees and their families.

Weekly conversations that managers hold with teams welcome personal sharing of wellness updates. Whenever employees experience a health issue, leaders at all levels reach out to rally around the employee and provide access to the support and care they need. “It’s not just about us, but about our families, too,” said Rich Lunsford, Vice President of Healthcare Solutions.

Edwards also ensures employees know the value of their work. For example, each of the heart valves it sells is handmade by a team of 12 to 14 people. They put in up to 20 hours of labor on each valve, including hand-sewing the device. The finished product is traceable to the individual employees who produced the heart valve. Patients are encouraged to come to company headquarters to meet the team behind their heart valves. These meetings are tearful and joyful for both patients and team members.

This deep sense of purpose contributes to the company’s low employee turnover, according to senior leaders.

### Employee Testimonial: Support to Employees and Their Families

Nolan, Senior Director of Communications, described how the CEO and other Edwards leaders responded after hearing that his young daughter suffered an eye injury. They helped Nolan and his family find the best care possible. Edwards used its access to and knowledge of medical care to support the physical and emotional needs of the family.

## Strategic Communications: Constant and Consistent

Communicating about employee health is part of the company’s culture. Communications about various aspects of the *Total Wellness* programs, events, and resources are distributed via email, electronic signs, posters, meetings, brochures, word-of-mouth, and more.



Electronic sign with rotating health messages in a hall at Edwards Lifesciences

Edwards values two-way communication between senior leaders and staff members. The importance of health is often discussed at meetings. Mussallem makes sure to emphasize the company’s commitment to *Total Wellness* at quarterly all-employee town halls. For example, as part of the “Ask Mike” program, employees submit questions to the CEO on wellness and other topics. Mussallem answers every question either during the town hall or via the intranet.

## Using and Managing Data for Program Improvement

Edwards monitors the effectiveness of its wellness program through a variety of data on topics such as health risks, medical costs, participation rates, health behaviors, and employee satisfaction. This information also helps the wellness team see where the program can be improved. For example, health insurance provider reports showed that many eligible employees were not receiving recommended preventive screenings. The wellness team created new educational materials on the importance of preventive screenings and implemented biometric screenings. As a result, the number of employee preventive screenings increased.

Edwards relies on tools such as the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#) to track progress, set annual goals, and look for ways to improve. It also seeks employee feedback to refine *Total Wellness*. The company uses aggregate biometric reporting and conducts detailed surveys every two to three years to inform major decisions about the program. In addition, it takes the pulse of the program at least once or twice a year using smaller, focused surveys and verbal input from employees. This helps the team make small changes to ensure that the program aligns with their employees' health needs.

These multi-pronged efforts to capture information related to the *Total Wellness* program created a need for a centralized way to track information. A dashboard with key metrics helps the *Total Wellness* team monitor progress toward annual goals. The dashboard tracks:

- Biometric health risks
- Frequency and scope of health education efforts (e.g., blogs, seminars, and webinars)
- Participation rates in program activities
- Business unit goals (e.g., budget adherence and charitable giving)

Positive trends among employees between 2014 and 2017 included a 43 percent decrease in tobacco use, a 12 percent decrease in glucose risk, and a 5 percent decrease in high-cholesterol readings.

### Employee Testimonial: Motivation to Get and Stay Healthy

*After my annual biometric screening at Edwards, I decided to make a change. Our Total Wellness program helped me maintain my commitment to a positive mindset. I lost 80 pounds, kept it off for over a year, and have now completed two Spartan runs. My annual biometric screenings help reinforce my commitment to health year after year.*

~ Heather, Vice President, Associate General Counsel, Transcatheter Heart Valves

## Future Plans

Looking ahead, the Edwards headquarters will continue to expand, and to promote employee health. An on-site health clinic is set to open in 2019, and planning is underway to enlarge the on-site café space. Edwards will also focus on improving its programs. As an example, Mussallem aims to have 100 percent of employees participate in community service in 2018.

To better understand successes and areas for improvement, Edwards will enhance its data dashboard. The wellness team plans to explore other metrics, such as employee productivity, and to collect more data at the company's international sites.

## Advice for Employers

Edwards leaders recommend employers focus on open and meaningful communications with employees. This helps build trust and pave the way for program improvement.

They also suggest:

- Offering diverse program choices
- Being a workplace where people want to be to attract and keep talent
- Designing space that encourages productivity by providing environmental and social supports to drive cooperation and creativity

CEO Mussallem offered one final piece of advice: “It is okay to start small and learn from employees. Don't be afraid to get started.”

## Recommendations for Action

- Nurture a [culture of health](#), from leaders through frontline staff, that embraces and promotes the health and well-being of everyone in the company.
- Assess employee and organizational needs to guide the design of your program and where you can improve or expand.
  - CDC's [National Healthy Worksite Program \(NHWP\) Employee Health Assessment \(CAPTURE\)](#) survey measures current health status, health behaviors, readiness to change health behaviors, needs, and interests on worksite health and safety.
  - CDC's [NHWP Health and Safety Climate Survey \(INPUTS\)](#) is designed to provide an overall assessment of workforce attitudes on the physical and psychosocial work environment, including factors that support or detract from a healthy worksite culture.

- Design work spaces to support, inspire, and engage employees in achieving their health and wellness goals.

The **CDC Workplace Health Resource Center (WHRC)** is a one-stop shop for organizations to find credible tools, guides, case studies, and other resources to design, develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain workplace health promotion programs. Visit the WHRC (<https://www.cdc.gov/WHRC>) to find more case studies of workplace health programs in the field.

<https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/initiatives/resource-center/case-studies/case-study-edwards-lifesciences.html>