Engaging Remote Employees in Their Health and Workplace Wellness Programs

Research shows that higher levels of work-related engagement contribute to improved employee and customer satisfaction, safety, and overall job performance and company profits.\textsuperscript{1,2} Yet in 2016 more than 22% of the US workforce reported doing some or all work from home,\textsuperscript{3} and 43% of employees worked in different locations from their employer and coworkers.\textsuperscript{4} For some, this can create a lonely workplace. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for any wellness program trying to attend to the needs and interests of a dispersed workforce. Wellness programs need to reach all employees—no matter where they work.

Strategies and Considerations

Well-being is the ability for individuals to address normal stresses, work productively, and realize their highest potential.\textsuperscript{5} As companies strive to improve their workplace culture and environment to promote health and well-being, remote employees often cannot access or benefit from these changes. Therefore, it is important for employers to use additional strategies to engage remote employees in their work and health.

- **Create Personal Connections.** Like employees who work on-site, remote employees can benefit from personal interactions and communications.
  - Use multiple channels—such as e-mail, webinars, training videos, and phone conferences—to communicate about the job, the organization, the wellness program, and other benefits.
  - Connect and build relationships with remote employees through regular, one-on-one conversations to check in about their job and to share information on health and wellness topics.

- **Flexible Work Schedule.** Flexible schedules can benefit all employees, whether on-site or remote. The flexibility allows additional time for sleep and exercise, which promotes good health and creativity.\textsuperscript{6} Employers can encourage remote workers to
use flexible work schedules to address their health and well-being needs—whether to exercise, meditate, volunteer, or go to a doctor’s appointment.

- **Connect to Technology Resources.** Employers can use social media and other technology to engage remote workers in their health and well-being, and in their job.
  - Create a challenge so remote employees can participate on a team and monitor physical activity through an online tracking system. This can create value and team-building for employees who are otherwise isolated from their coworkers.
  - Set achievable goals and rewards to help motivate remote employees to participate in health and wellness campaigns throughout the year.
  - Encourage remote employees to participate in walking meetings through mobile technology, which can be helpful for a company’s innovation and health. Also, encourage employees to participate in calls while standing, walking on a treadmill, or riding a stationary bike.
  - Use blogs and other social media to share examples of healthy living stories of remote employees and provide inspiration.

- **Health and Wellness Without Walls.** Employers can support remote employees by reimbursing all or part of their fitness center memberships, at-home exercise equipment, fitness trackers, and or healthy food delivery services.
  - Include a wellness event when employees come together to meet for annual or quarterly events. This may include a health screening, a walk/run to raise funds for charity, and an outdoor social event.

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 CDC Workplace Health Resource Center website to learn more about strategies for employee engagement.

**References**


6. Oppezzo M, Schwartz DL. Give your ideas some legs: the positive effect of walking and creative thinking. 