



Working Group: Creating and Maintaining Employee Engagement in Health and Wellness Programs

Hosted by ILR Conference Center
New York | March 14, 2019

Participating Organizations:

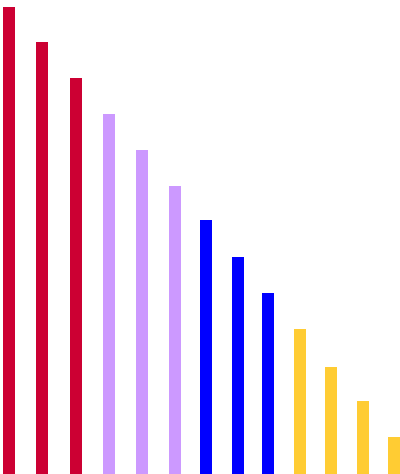
Boehringer Ingelheim
Bristol-Myers Squibb
CDW
Cornell University
Ingersoll Rand
Johnson & Johnson
Merck
MetLife
Protective Life

Key Takeaways:

1. The scope of companies' health and wellness programs has expanded beyond physical health to include a growing focus on emotional/mental health, financial health, and a number of emerging areas, such as energy/stress management, career wellness, and community/social health.
2. Health and wellness programming has become much more holistic and integrated in recent years. Companies recognize that the different forms of health and wellness are intertwined and are thus shifting to provide employees with more integrated solutions and experiences.
3. A variety of media and methods are used to communicate health and wellness information to employees, including regional leaders/champions, technology (e.g., website, webcasts, podcasts), and employee testimonials. Technology is also increasingly being used to provide more personalized health and wellness information.
4. Some companies have taken steps to engage family members in select health and wellness initiatives so as to bolster employees' support network — although both legal and cost issues continue to present a barrier to such efforts.
5. Companies are increasingly linking health and wellness participation data to outcomes such as employee performance, engagement, and even corporate sustainability goals. Scorecards and site certification programs grounded in health and wellness metrics are also being used to promote greater visibility and leader accountability.
6. Design thinking provides an interesting framework and set of tools to better identify challenges, problems experienced by unique groups of employees, and to involving these employee groups in brainstorming potential solutions.

HR leaders are increasingly interested in the topic of employee health and wellness in light of concerns regarding health care legislation, cost of health care, employee productivity, and employee engagement. In response, many organizations have implemented or are thinking about implementing new programs, policies, and activities focused on the health and well-being of employees.

Prior CAHRS working groups on this topic have revealed that many of the employees who are most likely to engage in wellness programs are those who



are already healthy or strongly interested in maintaining their health and wellness. While engagement strategies such as incentives and competitions can help increase the number of employees participating in these programs, employees who could most benefit are often less likely to stick with the program or engage in the first place. Thus, the current working group was convened to uncover best practices that can be used to engage the right employees in the right wellness programs and to sustain their participation over time.

Scope and Structure of Current Health & Wellness Programs

The group started the day with a discussion about the scope and structure of their current health and wellness programs. What programs and services are included and excluded? Where does health and wellness sit within the organization's structure? Although there were nuances from one company to the next, there were also some consistent trends that emerged during the discussion.

- In most companies health and wellness sits within total rewards and/or benefits. However, there were some exceptions. In one company, for example, health and wellness is a standalone unit within HR. In another company, it is part of global health services, which is itself separate from total rewards/benefits.
- It was most common for the health and wellness lead to report to the company's chief medical director. However, there were cases where health and wellness reported directly to the CHRO or to another HR leader (e.g., Head of Total Rewards).
- Health and wellness in most companies is relatively centralized, with programs and services developed within the Center of Excellence and then pushed out to employees with the help of managers, regional leaders, and champions. That being said, there were clear differences in the extent to which companies structured their diffusion efforts. On one end of the continuum, for example, a company had dedicated wellness operational leads in each region. On the other end, a company relied on relatively unstructured, grassroots efforts to drive engagement throughout different parts of the company. Still another company contracted much of their health and wellness operations to an outside provider. Where companies fell on this continuum seemed to correlate with the maturity of their programs; more developed programs often relied on more structured diffusion and engagement mechanisms.
- The breadth and depth of health and wellness programs offered by companies has increased in recent years and is likely to continue to expand in scope in the years ahead. Most companies currently offer programs focusing on physical, emotional/mental, and financial health and wellness. In addition, companies have recently launched or are considering programs focused on energy/stress management, career wellness, and community/social health.
- Probably one of the biggest changes to emerge in recent years is that health and wellness programming has become much more holistic and integrated. Previously, programs focused on different aspects of health and wellness and tended to be siloed and disconnected. Today, however, companies recognize that these different forms of health and wellness are intertwined. For example, financial health creates security that enables people to better engage in healthy eating programs. As a result, companies are shifting to provide employees with integrated solutions, rather than isolated programs.

Getting the Word Out

Communication is an essential component of any health and wellness engagement strategy. The group spent some time discussing the different media and methods they use to communicate with employees about health and wellness.

- As noted in the prior section, many companies rely on middle managers, regional leaders, and/or champions to help communicate health and wellness information. For example, leaders may be asked to incorporate health
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and wellness messaging into their town halls.

- Technology is also increasingly being leveraged to communicate health and wellness information. Common platforms include webcasts, podcasts, and dedicated channels in the online learning system.
- Companies are also moving toward more personalized health and wellness communications. For example, remote workers receive communication about options that are available specifically for those located off-site. Technology is also helping to facilitate this personalization process. At several companies, for example, the health and wellness website can recognize employees' locations when they login and provide customized information on options that are available at their site.
- The group noted that storytelling and testimonials can serve as powerful communication tools because they present people and examples that employees can more easily relate to. At the same time, testimonials are not without their challenges. It can be difficult to secure the necessary legal approval and there is also the potential for employees to push out misinformation.
- It is important that the content and timing of the communications are aligned with the rhythm of the business. If, for example, a business unit is in the midst of a reorganization, it is probably not a good time to launch a wellness challenge. Health and wellness leaders can gain this insight by partnering with HR Business Partners that sit in the businesses.
- Several companies have found that onboarding process is a good time to make employees aware of the health and wellness benefits that are available to them.

Engaging Family Members

Evidence suggests that family support can play an important role in determining whether employees engage in health and wellness programs, particularly among those individuals at greater risk. Thus, a number of the companies have taken steps to try to engage employees' family members in their health and wellness initiatives. One company, for example, allows employees' partners and children/dependents up to the age of 18 to participate in certain incentive programs and to access the company's online health and wellness platform. Another company allows employees' partners to come to the corporate campus for screenings. Although these efforts have shown some success, legal issues are often a barrier to more extensive communication and engagement with family members. Also, companies are often strict about who has access to health benefits because of the costs involved, but may provide more open access to wellness programs.

Measuring Success

It remains challenging to measure the success and impact of health and wellness programs. Nonetheless, the companies noted that this is an important area of focus for them and that they are making strides in this area. Most companies start by measuring participation: how many employees are accessing online resources, participating in training programs, engaging in challenges or competitions, etc. Many have also taken the next step of linking this participation data to other outcomes of interest, such as employee performance, engagement, and even corporate sustainability goals.

There are also some efforts underway in some companies to try to compare health and wellness metrics across different employee segments. For example, one company compared biometrics across its office-based and remote employees and found, for example, that Body Mass Index was higher among its remote workforce. The challenge is figuring out what to do with these results since they can only be examined in the aggregate; they cannot be linked to individuals and data on the programs and services that they are accessing.

Some companies are also using scorecards and site certifications to hold leaders accountable for the health and wellness metrics of their workforces. These efforts send a strong message that health and wellness is valued by the company and create transparency, which can motivate leaders since they don't want to let their site lag behind.

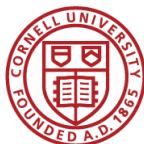
Potential For Design Thinking as Useful Tool in Health and Wellness Programs

Multiple participants noted the challenge of getting the least healthy of their participants to partake in programs or effectively engaging employees that are not located on sites with larger numbers of employees. Part of the challenge here seems to be in designing health and wellness programs that are a fit to the needs of these employees, engage them more effectively, and help to overcome the specific challenges that they may face. One interesting idea that the group talked about briefly was the idea of using design thinking tools to bring in the voice of the end user to (1) identify key challenges to overcome, (2) brainstorm programs or activities to help address these unique challenges, (3) identify more effective ways to communicate information about programs to these target audiences. Design thinking provides an interesting framework and set of tools to better identify challenges experienced by unique groups of employees and to involving these employee groups in brainstorming potential solutions. Importantly, design thinking methodologies are also effective for building commitment and engagement by involving the end user in the process of problem identification and solution identification.

This Summary Report was prepared by Brad Bell and Chris Collins for participants of the Creating and Maintaining Employee Engagement in Health and Wellness Programs Working Group.

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Cornell University
ILR School
193 Ives Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853



ILR School

Phone: 607-255-9358
Fax: 607-255-4953
E: cahrs@cornell.edu
W: cahrs.ilr.cornell.edu