



The Art of Implementing A Great Worksite Wellness Program In A Small Businesses Setting

Introducing WELCOA's Small Business
Workplace Wellness Initiative

By David Hunnicutt, PhD





Small businesses matter to the American economy. In fact, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration, a staggering 99.7% of all businesses in the U.S. are small businesses. What's more, small businesses employ 50% of the entire working population in this country. Even for the most numerically challenged, it's crystal clear that as small businesses go, so goes the fate of the rest of working America.

The simple fact of the matter is this: a LOT of people get up in the morning and go to work in small business settings. And for anyone who's ever been part of a small company, it's understood that—if you expect to make it—you better bring your "A" game every single day. Indeed, even though there are fewer people and, more often than not, fewer resources to go around in a small business setting, ironically, there are just as many priorities to accomplish as what you'd find in a big business.

Now here's the kicker, despite the fact that small businesses comprise 99+ percent of all the businesses in the U.S., employees in these settings often have access to fewer benefits than do the employees who work in larger business settings. This means that a lot of people who work in small business settings don't have legitimate access to healthcare—and with a rapidly aging population, that's a precarious situation at best.

Thus, given the enormous number of people who work in small businesses and the relative lack of access to benefits and healthcare, health promotion programs are rapidly gaining momentum.





One Size Does Not Fit All!

When it comes to designing and delivering an employee wellness program in a small business setting it is important to understand that one size does not fit all—from experience, we know small businesses are unique and distinctly different than larger-sized companies. As a result, there are several significant and important differences in the way that wellness programs are set up and administered in small business settings as opposed to larger ones.

The information contained in this article—and in the rest of this issue of *Absolute Advantage* for that matter pertains primarily to small businesses. Certainly, there's no argument that a lot of what is presented here could also easily apply to medium and, in some instances, even larger-sized companies. But to be truly effective, the workplace wellness approach presented here should be considered appropriate for small business settings only.

If you are a medium or larger-sized company and are interested in learning more about the art and science of implementing a results-oriented wellness program, be sure to check out WELCOA's seven benchmark model at www.welcoa.org.

The Present Dilemma of Keeping Employees Who Work In Small Business Settings Healthy

There's an old adage that says, "It doesn't take a sharp ear to hear thunder"—and that's definitely the case when it comes to the need for addressing the health and well-being of employees who work in small business settings. There's just one catch. We really don't know a lot about how health promotion programs should work in these settings. Sure, there have been a lot of articles published in recent years demonstrating the effectiveness of workplace wellness programs, but, unfortunately, the vast majority of them have been focused on larger and, more recently,

medium-sized companies. Indeed, there have been very, very few studies conducted in organizations that employ fewer than 50 people.

Thus, despite the need for better understanding the art of developing and implementing health promoting programs in small business settings, business leaders are in the unenviable situation of having very little information to draw on.

And that's why we've developed this initiative—there has to be a starting point whereby small business leaders can take what we currently know about the very best wellness programs currently being conducted in small business settings and implement it in their own unique settings. And, WELCOA's initiative presents that starting point.



Introducing WELCOA's Small Business Worksite Wellness Initiative

In an effort to help small employers successfully implement more health promoting activities, WELCOA is introducing an easy-to-understand blue print to help small business leaders implement and sustain a solid wellness program that will keep their employees healthy and productive.

10 Essential Things Small Businesses Can Do To Promote Better Health

In this article, we'll outline 10 important things that small business leaders can do to improve the overall health and well-being of their employees.



Issue a letter of support from the CEO

It seems like such an obvious thing to do but many organizations fail to let their employees know that workplace wellness is a priority to the CEO. By issuing a letter or communiqué, employees better understand that there is support from the very top—and that helps to set the tone for the entire initiative.



Designate a company wellness leader

Once wellness has been communicated as an important priority for the organization, it's essential that a company-wide wellness leader be appointed. To be sure, the wellness leader can be identified from within your already-existing group of employees. Many times, it's appropriate for your Human Resource coordinator to take on these responsibilities—but that's not necessarily a hard and fast rule. Indeed, there are plenty of instances where the wellness leader is an administrative assistant or a passionate employee.



Conduct an employee health interest survey

Once the owners and managers have bought into the concept, and a company wellness leader has been designated, the next undertaking is to conduct an employee health interest survey. In addition to garnering buy-in, the health interest survey will provide your

company's wellness leader with important insight as to what specific programs employees are most interested in. By conducting an employee health interest survey, small businesses can learn a lot from their own people—and virtually guarantee that the wellness program will be embraced by all.



Provide an opportunity for health screening

This step is a critical one for small businesses because it provides employees with an important opportunity to assess and better understand their own personal health status. Without an opportunity to participate in an annual health screening, many employees will not adequately understand their "numbers" such as blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, etc. And if your employees don't understand their own health status, they place themselves at greater risk for experiencing problems—many of which could have been prevented.



Administer an annual physical activity campaign

If you want to have healthier employees, it's critical to get them up and moving—and an ideal way to do it in a small business setting is by administering an annual physical activity campaign. Specifically, incentive campaigns are designed to increase the amount of time your employees are physically active during the day by creating a series of mini-challenges. And, if employees complete these challenges, they receive certain incentives. Fun and easy to coordinate, incentive campaigns should be considered an essential part of any small business wellness program.



Hold lunch and learns

We believe that small businesses would benefit greatly by offering their employees healthy eating seminars. Not only are these seminars informative, but they can be a lot of fun as well. For example, imagine how your employees will respond when you bring in a healthy cooking chef that prepares a special meal right before their very eyes. Using healthy—but common—ingredients, the chef can educate your employees on how to prepare the dish, how to make it taste good, and how to make it nutritionally sound. Trust us on this one, this seminar will be a homerun.

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—Dr. David Hunnicutt, WELCOA President





Small Businesses In America

Small businesses matter to the American economy. Consider the following facts regarding small businesses in the United States:

- » In 2003, there were approximately 23.7 million small businesses in the U.S.
- » 2003 estimates indicate that there were 572,900 new small businesses opened.
- » In 2000-2001, small businesses created ALL of the new net jobs in the U.S.
- » Small businesses employ 50% of the working population in the U.S.
- » Small businesses represent 99.7% of all employers.
- » Small firms employ half of all private sector employees.
- » Small firms pay 44.3% of the total U.S. private payroll.
- » Small firms have generated 60-80% of net new jobs annually over the last decade.

“...small businesses com



Establish an in-house wellness library

Because good health is predicated on sound information, small businesses can take a significant step toward promoting better health by providing their employees with opportunities to learn more about prevention right at the workplace. A good library will include things like medical self-care books, health magazines, instructional DVD's, audio books, and a variety of newsletters, pamphlets, and behavior change guides. To ensure that the information gets read, it's a good idea to put the lending library in a commonly traveled spot. Comfortable chairs and good lighting are also highly recommended. Remember, the key is to get people comfortable and reading and/or watching and listening.



Disseminate a quarterly health newsletter

Regular health information can greatly assist employees in their quest to become healthier. A good health newsletter will cover a variety of topics like physical activity, weight management, stress reduction, tobacco cessation, and medical self-care. It helps if the newsletter is available in full-color and is easy-to-read—preferably a 6th or 7th grade reading level. To make sure that the newsletter gets absorbed, you may want to consider offering a brief quiz that asks a variety of questions about the information contained in the actual newsletter itself. The participant can put their name on the quiz and submit it to be registered as part of a drawing for something special. For example, if you have 45 employees, you could very well get an 80% response rate to your health quiz and the winner could walk away with something like dinner for two at a healthy eatery.



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—U.S. Small Business Administration



Implement health promoting policies

Because company policies can have an enormous impact on employee health status, we would recommend implementing healthy policies and procedures into the actual policy manual. By incorporating healthy policies and procedures into your business operations, your company further demonstrates its commitment to the concept of providing a safe and healthy workplace for all.

Specifically, every small business should consider four basic policies at a minimum. These policies include: mandating a tobacco-free workplace, promoting an alcohol/drug-free environment, requiring seatbelt use by all, and formulating safety/emergency procedures in the event of a disaster.

Although not traditionally thought of as important, healthy policies should not be overlooked by small business leaders who are attempting to improve the health and well-being of their company.



Promote community health efforts

A final way that small businesses can promote healthier behaviors is by supporting community events.

Needless to say, there are numerous events like fun-runs, health fairs, and educational seminars (just to mention a few) that can be promoted and communicated to your employees. This is very important just due to the simple fact that most community health events are usually best kept secrets. By establishing a listing of health promoting events each month, small businesses can take important steps toward increasing the health and well-being of their most valuable asset—their employees.

The Time Is Now

In the next two issues of *Absolute Advantage*, we'll dedicate our energy to expanding and providing more in-depth information related to the 10 things small business leaders can do to promote healthier lifestyles within their organizations. And because health and well-being is an important driver of organizational success, we encourage every small business leader to warmly embrace the information presented here and begin—in any way appropriate—establishing a culture of wellness. ★



About David Hunnicutt, PhD



Dr. David Hunnicutt is the President of the Wellness Council of America. As a leader in the field of health promotion, his vision has led to the creation of numerous publications designed to link health promotion objectives to business outcomes.



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Suggested Citation: Hunnicutt, D. (2008). *The Art of Implementing A Great Worksite Wellness Program In A Small Businesses Setting*. WELCOA's *Absolute Advantage Magazine*, 7(1), 3-9.

