

By Symone C. Skrzycki



GETTING PHYSICAL!

Employers Encourage More Movement

Listen closely and you'll hear the sounds of progress at workplaces throughout Indiana.

Beyond the normal tapping of keyboards, a treadmill hums quietly. Nearby, a wellness coach describes the benefits of smoking cessation. And hear that? It's the undeniable crunch of a crisp apple – coming from a break room stocked with healthy fruits and vegetables.

Wellness – it's all in a day's work.

Businesses of all sizes and industries are encouraging their employees to boost physical activity and nutrition during the workday in an effort to reduce health care costs, increase productivity and employee morale, and reduce absenteeism. Smaller companies, as you'll see, aren't letting modest – or even nonexistent – budgets stand in their way.

Making wellness a priority

Adopting successful initiatives are possible for virtually any organization, emphasizes Wellness Council of Indiana (WCI) Executive Director Chuck Gillespie:

"It comes down to desire and commitment."

To help assist Hoosier businesses looking for guidance with their workplace programs, the WCI will provide on-site, personalized consulting services to a select number of companies each year through a five-year contract with the Indiana State Department of Health. The initiative focuses on physical activity, nutrition and tobacco cessation.

The contract is a natural fit for WCI, which is already assisting member companies around the state with their wellness initiatives. Staff will share strategic advice and best practice scenario coaching, and provide in-depth assistance in developing operational

plans for the management and execution of a workplace wellness strategy.

Employers will receive guidance in advancing through the WCI's AchieveWELL analysis and recognition program. They will have access to tobacco cessation tools through the WCI's online QUIT NOW Tool and the Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission's Quitline.

"If you want to make a wellness program sustainable, it has to be simple and consistent," Gillespie declares. "Encourage your employees to get up from their workstation and walk around twice an hour. Stand up to take a phone call. Take the stairs



One Click Ventures employees unwind during a co-ed softball game.

instead of the elevator. It's about providing flexibility in their day and determining whether your culture supports or hinders that."

Battling it out

Clearly in the support column: Nancy Larson, human resources director for Delaware County government. She played up the friendly rivalry between city and county employees with a 12-week Get Well in 2012 challenge.

Larson didn't have an operating budget for Get Well in 2012, but that didn't stop her. She worked closely with sponsors who shared her passion for wellness.

Participants tracked weekly food/beverage intake and physical activity. They earned points for eating healthy, losing weight, exercising and taking part in activities such as educational classes (topics included stress management, and core training and flexibility) and hands-on wellness sessions (e.g., boxing, Pilates and yoga).

A total of 78 people completed the program, which concluded with an awards ceremony.

"The program was set up so that anybody could do it," Larson remarks. "We have truck drivers. We have older people. We have younger people.

"You can drink more water. You can eat more fruits and vegetables. There were weekend and evening opportunities (for involvement). If you didn't do it, there was no excuse."

One Click Ventures is home to 55 employees, a customer service call center and warehouse at its Greenwood headquarters. The ecommerce company operates a variety of online brands in industries such as eyewear (sunglasses) and fashion accessories (scarves, ties and handbags).

Among wellness goals for 2014 is increasing the number of employees who take part in 150 minutes of physical activity per week (or 30 minutes a day) based on the surgeon general's guidelines.

Short on time? Have a walking meeting. Want to stretch? Take part in a free Pilates class. Eager to secure bragging rights as the office ping pong champion? Head to the on-site game room during lunch.

"These people are drenched in sweat when they're done. The turf that looks like grass in our game room is worn down completely because employees are running around," talent and culture manager Terra Hamilton says with a laugh.

The benefits extend beyond the employees as each year the company hosts a CharityPong tournament to raise money for the ALS Association of Indiana.

Jumping in

RCI, the worldwide leader in vacation exchange with more than 4,000 affiliated resorts in approximately 100 countries, is part of Wyndham Exchange & Rentals and the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands. It promotes a variety of wellness outlets.

Human resources director Stephanie Bramel works at the company's Carmel office, which employs approximately 1,000 associates.

"We want our associates to be engaged. In order for them to want to participate, we strive to have programs that are innovative, fun and really interactive so they can be truly involved," she stresses. "If you're someone who wants to get healthy, we try to provide those channels. If you're someone who's already extremely fit, we try to provide programs that fit where you're at on your wellness journey."

The company's 21-day ReNew You challenge focuses on three areas each day: nutrition (avoiding added sugar and drinking three liters of fresh, clear water), movement (10 minutes to three hours) and meditation (enjoying five minutes of silence or guided meditation).

Anderson-based Private Fleet Backhaul (PFBH) also encourages employees to refuel. The third-party, non-asset based logistics company has 15 employees.



Let the games begin! Delaware County's Get Well in 2012 Challenge (top) included a dodge ball family outing, while RCI treated associates to life-size chess, bungee jumping and more at its 2013 Summer Camp event. Wellness coach JP Patterson (below) teaches shoulder exercises to Jonathan Reding, information systems manager for Private Fleet Backhaul.



Short walking or stretch breaks can benefit employees without costing the company a penny.

“Sometimes I go to a vacant office and do yoga to get blood flowing,” reflects Dana Lembcke, who works in business development.

PFBH offers educational sessions as well as reimbursement for smoking cessation and gym memberships (up to 50% if employees go at least four times a month).

“We’ve had some employees lose 15 to 20 pounds,” Lembcke comments. “People have stopped smoking and several have started incorporating clean foods (fruits and vegetables versus processed options) in their diet.”

When it comes to sustainability, she notes that the key is “continuing to have options available and mixing it up to keep people interested.”

Craving healthy choices

Time to shake things up!

Smoothies are seconds away in One Click Venture’s break room, where a blender sits alongside various fruits, yogurt, spinach and healthy recipes.

In addition, the company offers free

breakfast and snacks every day. Hamilton is striving to ensure that more than 50% of food and beverage choices available at catered meals, pitch-ins and in the break room are healthy options.

RCI helps associates set their sights on wellness with an eight-week, web-based program called Health Trails. They choose a destination stretching at least 400 miles (such as the Appalachian Trail) and take a virtual journey. To advance, they track minutes of exercise, a healthy breakfast and a random act of kindness each day. Pictures, historical facts and healthy tips greet them along the way.

“It lets them see the world from their computer,” remarks HR specialist Leigh Dillon, who works with Bramel at the company’s Carmel office.

RCI has experienced continued success with its wellness programs.

“If you approach wellness holistically and provide something for everyone, it gives you an opportunity to allow all of your associates to participate in what interests them the most and provides us as an organization with a healthy, happy and engaged workforce,” Bramel asserts.

That’s critical to the success of an organization.”

Hamilton agrees.

“Being happy at work is a big thing for us. And there’s a true business purpose for that. If they’re happy at work, they’re loyal and will do good work for you.

“Communication is really big,” she adds. “It’s fun when you announce a program, but it can lose steam if you don’t keep that communication open. For us, (strengths are) communication, leading by example and friendly competition.”

All these examples of healthy habits sound great to Gillespie.

“To get to that point, it all starts with leadership buy-in, setting objectives – whatever they may be – that make sense for your organization and then following through on how to reach those goals in an encouraging manner that makes staff want to take part.

“The Wellness Council is here to help companies throughout the state strategize the best ways to make that happen,” he mentions. “Get that framework in place and you’re well on your way.”

RESOURCES: Chuck Gillespie, Wellness Council of Indiana, at www.wellnessindiana.org | Nancy Larson, Delaware County government, at www.co.delaware.in.us | Stephanie Bramel and Leigh Dillon, RCI, at www.rci.com | Terra Hamilton, One Click Ventures, at www.oneclickventures.com | Dana Lembcke, Private Fleet Backhaul, at www.pfbh.com