

No More Smoking

Companies to Benefit From New Software Tool

By Tom Schuman



“Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders and suicides combined.”

It might seem strange at first to say there is good news and bad news when the topic is smoking in Indiana. Yes, most of the statistics are bad – really bad – but there are a few good indicators. And there is a new tool being developed to help turn more of the “bad” into “good.”

Good news: Indiana’s adult smoking rate declined by 6% (27% to 21%) from 2001 to 2010.

Bad news: More than one million adults in the state smoke and nearly 10,000 Hoosiers die each year from the effects of tobacco.

Miranda Spitznagle, director of the Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission (TPC) at the Indiana State Department of Health, says there has been a “leveling off” locally and nationally in recent years of the trend of reduced smoking. “That just reminds us of the need to reinvigorate our efforts. And that’s happening.”

Good news: More individuals want to quit smoking. TPC sees it, as do organizations actively working to help their employees become healthier and more productive.

Bad news: It’s not easy to reverse what has often been a lengthy practice. “The biggest hurdle is mainly habit,” offers Angie Kleinhalter, director of human resources for National Office Furniture. “It doesn’t happen overnight. It’s hard to quit.”

And it’s not always easy for companies to assist their workers while balancing the desire to respect their individual rights. But the Wellness Council of Indiana, through a grant received from TPC, is developing project management software that will provide step-by-step instructions and video assistance to guide employers through the process of managing smoke-free workplace policies and tobacco cessation programs.

Having a plan

Chuck Gillespie, program director for the Wellness Council since it became affiliated with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce in January 2011, explains:

“Going smoke-free is a disruptive policy. It will disrupt the environment and the culture of a workplace,” he says, listing dress code changes, pay scale adjustments and moving from defined benefit to defined contribution plans as other examples of disruptive policies.

“One of the keys to avoiding that is to get top managers to agree what happens prior to implementation of the policy, what happens the day of implementation and even during new hire orientation. Human resources managers have identified this need and the grant will allow us to develop the software to assist companies.”

Spitznagle: “The content, the steps involved with helping a business go tobacco-free, that work has been built and refined over the last several years. What’s nice about the (software) is that it really takes that process and develops it into a sustainable tool that will be accessible to more and more.”

She adds that it also will complement other TPC resources such as the Indiana Tobacco Quitline and the Quit Now Preferred Employer program. The Quitline provides near round-the-clock access for those wanting to stop smoking and the employer network has grown to 800 organizations throughout the state in just over two years.

The software will be available at no cost for all interested companies. Additional resources will be able to be accessed through the Wellness Council, which has increased its membership by more than 400% over the past 18 months and is assisting Indiana organizations and their employees with comprehensive workplace wellness programs and solutions.

Smoking by the Numbers

Nationally

- 46 million adults smoke
- 443,000 deaths each year
- \$96 billion in direct medical expenditures
- \$97 billion in annual productivity losses

Indiana

- 1 million-plus adults smoke
- 9,700-plus deaths each year
- \$2.2 billion annual health care costs
 - ◆ \$1,137 billion (hospital)
 - ◆ \$372 million (prescription drugs)
 - ◆ \$318 million (ambulatory)
 - ◆ \$215 million (nursing home)
 - ◆ \$138 million (other)
- \$3,391 cost per employee (\$1,760 in lost productivity and \$1,623 in excess medical expenditures)

“It’s a nice, natural fit since the Wellness Council is really engaged with employers around the state. We’re pleased to have the Wellness Council as a partner,” Spitznagle affirms.

Kevin Brinegar, Indiana Chamber president, is a strong advocate of this latest addition to the wellness toolkit. “We’ve already seen the Wellness Council make a significant difference for Indiana companies and their employees. I look forward to many more taking advantage of the opportunity to help reduce the smoking rate, improve individual health and make overall wellness a top priority.”

Company outreach

The Wellness Council is seeking to work directly with 100 companies as part of the grant, which expires at the end of 2013. (The software program will be one of the benefits of Wellness Council membership after that time, with a smoke-free workplace becoming one of the criteria necessary to earn an AchieveWELL Workplace Wellness certification). The program will be piloted this fall with 10 to 15 businesses.

Indianapolis Fruit, which also operates Piazza Produce and related companies, hopes to build on recent efforts and be part of the pilot. Lauren Drew, who works for Spectrum Health, serves as on-site wellness coordinator for an Indianapolis Fruit operation that includes office and warehouse workers, as well as delivery drivers.

She relays that the company has had a wellness program since the mid-2000s with a “bit more teeth” added each year. Drew previously provided telephone assistance for tobacco users prior to coming on location in 2011. Testing for tobacco use was incorporated this year.

“At first, the program was voluntary. Now, if people don’t participate (or test positive), they are not eligible for health care premium discounts,” Drew confirms. “The biggest hurdle is the preconceived notion that people think they’re going to be told what to do – going to be lectured. They come in kind of defensive. I tell them the goal is not to be perfect, but we want you to be a healthier you. We provide resources and

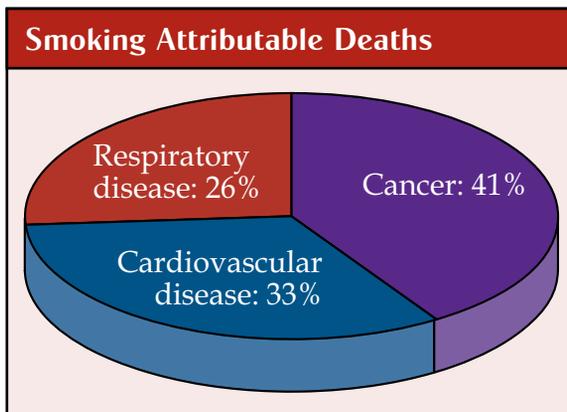
tools, and make sure there is an open dialogue.”

Drew reports that 14 staff members quit smoking in 2011 between the first screenings and the end of the coaching

sessions. Improvements in other areas such as job satisfaction and lower stress levels indicate potential smoking declines among others.

As with other workplace initiatives, Drew notes strong organizational leadership is crucial. She says the company is constantly evolving its wellness efforts and sees the software program as another tool in the battle to reduce smoking and enhance employee health and productivity.

“Even if it’s just one person we can help, that’s really motivating.”



Food service	45%
Construction trades	43%
Maintenance/groundskeepers	39%
Transportation/moving	39%
Mechanics/repairers	37%
Factory workers	37%
Sales	30%
Office/administrative support	28%

Never give up

National Office Furniture, based in Jasper and with nearly 1,200 employees at multiple locations, has utilized varied approaches to the smoking challenge in the last three years. The emphasis has also been on nutrition and fitness.

“There’s much more awareness,”

Kleinhelter shares. “Look at the programs we are offering. If people exercise right and eat right, they will stop smoking – hopefully.”

Among the initiatives:

- National presenter Rick Stoddard, who shared the emotional story of his wife dying at age 46 from lung cancer caused by smoking
- Partnership with Jasper Memorial Hospital on a tobacco cessation program
- A Cold Turkey Day (Subway sandwiches, stop smoking materials and more) the last two years during the Great American Smokeout event

National Office has a smoke-free campus and biometric screenings show more employees are abstaining from tobacco use. The efforts will continue.

“We’re keeping information in front of them, letting them know about the benefits (of quitting),” Kleinhelter concludes. “You hope someone will come up and say, ‘Yes, I’m done.’ We can’t give up. It’s our responsibility to not give up, to keep carrying the torch.”

Smoking’s Bottom Line

Total employees (X)	Indiana smoking rate x (0.21)	Costs per worker who smokes x (\$3,391 per year)
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Example:

(500 employees) x (0.21) = 105 employees who use tobacco;
 (105) x (\$3,391) = \$356,055 per year in costs associated with smoking.

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Wellness Council of Indiana at www.wellnessindiana.org

Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission at www.in.gov/isdh/tpc

Sources (for all charts within this story): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services