



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Employers Savor Successful Wellness Efforts

By Symone C. Skrzycki

Time for a dose of tough love.

That’s one way Steve Sanner, president of Jiffy Lube of Indiana, inspires employees to develop healthy habits. The key is to provide motivation that hits home.

“We’re a lower-income, lower-wage employer, so financial stress seems to be the biggest issue for our guys,” he remarks. “I think where we’ve had the biggest impact is when we tie (our wellness initiatives) back into money.

“I tell the guys, ‘If you’re looking for places to save money (consider this). If you smoke a pack a day, you’re spending \$40 a week on cigarettes – that’s \$2,000 a year. So that’s (quitting smoking) one simple way to save \$2,000 a year. You’ll get healthier – but you obviously don’t care about the health part of it yet. Let’s talk money.’

“I talk a lot about tattoos. My line is, ‘Until you’re making \$50,000 a year, don’t get another tattoo. That’s not a place to put your money until you’re financially stable. Don’t get a tattoo until your kids are sick and tired of eating fresh fruits and vegetables.’”

If there’s one tenet successful workplace wellness programs share, it’s this: Make it personal.

To offer insights and discuss efforts at their organizations are the following:

- Steve Sanner, president of Jiffy Lube of Indiana (Fort Wayne), www.jiffylubeindiana.com
- Jim Steinberger, CEO of Steinberger Construction (Logansport), www.sciteam.com
- Paul Kirchgraber, vice president global testing services and medical affairs, general manager of the Americas, Covance (Indianapolis), www.covance.com. He was unable to participate on the day of the discussion but offered his perspectives in a subsequent interview

‘We’re true believers’

Grab the proverbial bull by the horns.

They represent vastly different companies, but that’s the sentiment imparted by Sanner, Steinberger and Kirchgraber when it

comes to gaining buy-in from the top.

Steinberger Construction implemented a wellness program, an offshoot of its award-winning safety initiative, eight years ago. The organization, which focuses mainly on steel and concrete work, has about 60 employees spread throughout Indiana and – at times – Michigan and Illinois.

“We’re true believers,” he emphasizes. “(A devotion to wellness) needs to be a guiding principle for your company. How do you make that a priority? It’s just like any other priority – whether it’s safety or customer service. Wellness has to be one of the (priorities) on the short list.”

Sanner agrees, describing his hands-on approach to driving engagement in Jiffy Lube’s Growing People Through Work program. Launched earlier this year, it revolves around physical, mental, social, community and career wellness.

“We have a three-hour seminar that I teach along with our top operations guy. Every employee (approximately 350 employees at 47 locations around the state) has to come to that,” he explains. “We’ve held 16 of them so far. We have about 12 more to do to get to everybody in the company. We challenge them to set goals and to figure out what wellness means for them.

“We started by bringing all of our managers together and let them know that we were going to be rolling this out to everybody so that we could get them on board.

“I’ve been pretty happy with most of them, although we’ve had a few managers who left those meetings and went back (to their jobs) and apparently were not positive about some of what they heard. That translates down (to other employees); we’re correcting that now.”

Kirchgraber of Covance, one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive drug development services companies, takes it a step further.

“At the end of the day, you have to have some (type of) employee buy-in (at all levels) or it will just be a person standing up in front of people who aren’t interested,” he asserts.

“The big thing for me, as a physician working for a health care company, is that I think we have an obligation to improve the health and wellness of our employees. That’s kind of how it’s all tied together.”

Kirchgraber helped create a wellness initiative at Covance when he became general manager of its central laboratories division in Indianapolis three years ago. The division employs 1,200 and the Princeton, New Jersey-headquartered business has 12,000-plus employees throughout more than 60 countries.

In partnership with Hendricks Regional Health, Covance conducted voluntary health screenings and surveys earlier this year that revealed high stress levels among many workers. The company responded by offering weekly yoga sessions during the lunch hour and stress reduction webinars.

“We’ll bring them (medical staff) back before the end of the year to do the same survey and see if we moved the needle on that,” Kirchgraber comments. “We won’t have a direct financial return, but hopefully we’ll be able to say that we spent a couple thousand dollars to have them in and employees’ stress levels went down.”



“The big thing for me, as a physician working for a health care company, is that I think we have an obligation to improve the health and wellness of our employees. That’s kind of how it’s all tied together.”

– Paul Kirchgraber
Covance

Making the connection

Digest this: One Snickers candy bar is healthier than a granola bar.

Gulp.

This example, part of a demonstration that compares the effect of proteins versus carbohydrates, is clearly one of Sanner’s favorites.

“We do that at every seminar. The guys are having a lot of fun with that because they buy convenience food all the time!”

“That stuff impacts. Just putting out the food that we’ve all eaten at convenience stores at some point in our lives.”

Steinberger relates to the challenge of “on-the-go” meals.

Diet has been an issue for workers in the field, whose short lunch breaks and long days make convenience food all the more tempting.

“We’ve had healthy lunch (sessions) where a nutritionist will go onto a job site and say, ‘Here’s what I brought and here’s why this is a healthy lunch,’” Steinberger offers. “‘Because of the line of work you’re in, you need to make sure you get plenty of protein. You should eat a good breakfast because you’re burning calories all day long.’”

He’s quick to point out another defining characteristic of the company’s culture: the connection between safety and wellness.

“I’ve always looked at it like, what good does it do to be safe at work – to not get hurt at work – if you’re killing yourself with your bad habits or lack of sleep or exercise? Or, what good does it do to be safe and healthy, and retire and not have any money?”

Beyond the doors of their individual workplaces is a desire to make a difference in the community.

Kirchgraber is particularly proud of Covance’s role in sponsoring day-long pop-up clinics, which provide free medical services to uninsured and underinsured patients.

“We did it in Dallas in 2012, New Orleans in 2013 and Madison, Wisconsin in 2014,” he notes. “We fly to those locations. We’ve seen between 900 and 1,200 people where we maybe provided their first eye exam, health screenings, referrals to physicians in the community, wrote prescriptions (and more).

“It’s a good community event. It helps the community get health care, and it helps our employees connect with the community on a wellness theme.”

Sanner also fuels a passion for giving back, noting that Jiffy Lube allows employees



“I’ve always looked at it like, what good does it do to be safe at work – to not get hurt at work – if you’re killing yourself with your bad habits or lack of sleep or exercise? Or, what good does it do to be safe and healthy, and retire and not have any money?”

– Jim Steinberger
Steinberger Construction

who coach youth sports, for instance, “to schedule time away during practice and game times. We have that ability; we’re open 71 hours a week, so we can get your 40 hours in all kinds of different ways.

“That’s part of wellness – giving back to your community.”

Plans are underway for a Jiffy Lube Cares Fund, which will provide an opportunity for employees to assist their own.

“Everybody will be encouraged to make some kind of weekly donation out of their paycheck into this fund,” Sanner shares. “We’ll match that in some capacity.”

Sweetening the deal

The most creative, the most viable wellness programs are destined to fail without employee engagement.

One approach is to cast a wide net.

“We put together challenges, whether it’s – this challenge is going to be that everyone wears a pedometer and we see how many miles you walk in the next four weeks. Or we had a ‘Rethink Your Drink’ (competition) where employees cut back on pop and caffeinated beverages,” Steinberger recalls.

“On any one of those, you’re lucky to get 25% participation. But you just keep trying. Some of them seem to be more popular, so we’re more likely to do them again. We try to throw things out there, knowing that not everyone’s going to be interested in every one of them.”

Equally important, he observes, is a lesson learned.

“You can’t try to force (wellness) on anybody. With smoking, at first we said, ‘The only way you’re going to get this incentive is to quit tobacco.’ Well, some people aren’t ready to quit and they can’t – it’s addictive.

“... (Now) we’re saying, ‘Here are the reasons you should quit, and we’ll help you every way we can when you’re ready. But in the meantime, there are still a lot of other good things here within this program for you.’”

Kirchgraber seconds that.

“The big message so far is that not everyone will want to participate. For someone who’s enthusiastic (about wellness) like myself and our health and wellness committee, sometimes it’s hard to take, but you have to realize that the culture change will take a long period of time. As long as we’re getting more people in – not everyone will be an early adopter or embrace the culture, but we’re getting there. We’re starting to turn the corner.”

It doesn’t hurt that a number of Covance employees thrive on competition. One outlet is the Indiana Sports Corp.’s Corporate Challenge and a web-based program called Shape Up.

“(Shape Up) allows us, corporate-wide, to set up competitions,” Kirchgraber comments. “You form teams online and challenge other teams to lose weight over a certain period of time or walk a certain number of steps over a certain period of time and we give awards.

“Having some type of award system engages people, but the competition is almost better than the award. We found that it’s equally important – if not more important – than the awards themselves. People kind of

come to expect an award and it loses its value, but competition is something that people enjoy.”

Tipping the scales – what’s working?

Radical. That’s one word Steinberger uses to describe the impact of his company’s wellness programs.

“We’re seeing a big payoff now,” he declares. “After eight years, we’re finally starting to see a big impact and fewer insurance claims. We’ve been able to reduce tobacco use – things like that.

“Not only that, but we have fewer risks even though everyone’s eight years older now. And you’re fighting that inevitable losing battle, I guess, of aging. To even be able to stay even as you get older is a big win.”

Anecdotal stories also illustrate achievements, which is especially inspiring since providing a return on investment – from a financial standpoint – isn’t always possible.

“One thing that’s helped us is success stories,” Steinberger contends. “(Employees are) hearing it from their peers. We’ve had people say, ‘This is the best I’ve felt in 30 years.’”

“I think we’ve had some really radical examples of huge changes in lifestyle in a couple of cases, (such as) here’s a guy who lost 70 pounds and now he’s doing triathlons.”

Sanner characterizes his wellness journey thus far as “eye opening” in how it’s illustrated “all the different things that are affecting people’s wellness.

“Being able to help, it feels great. How do you track that? Maybe by how well I sleep at night.



“If you smoke a pack a day, you’re spending \$40 a week on cigarettes – that’s \$2,000 a year. So that’s (quitting smoking) one simple way to save \$2,000 a year. You’ll get healthier – but you obviously don’t care about the health part of it yet. Let’s talk money.”

– Steve Sanner
Jiffy Lube of Indiana

“It’s exciting and it’s top of mind for a lot of our guys. So, the question will be, where are we two or three years from now? I believe as committed as we are from the top that people will change and get with the program or they’ll get with someone else’s program somewhere else. It’s a cultural change. We’ll touch it in every way we can and keep it sustainable. That’s the plan.”

Steinberger concludes with a parting thought: “If there are companies hesitating because of the concern about the cost, they really need to think about, ‘What’s the cost if you don’t do it? What’s the cost without wellness?’ To me, it’s got to be one of the best return on investments you could possibly make in your workforce.”

Wellness Council Available to Assist

The Wellness Council of Indiana is the only statewide not for profit specifically dedicated to worksite wellness. Organized in 1988, the Wellness Council of Indiana is one of the largest state councils in the United States.

The Wellness Council brings together Indiana employers interested in combating the ever increasing costs of health by helping employees, their families and their communities cultivate a culture of health and wellness. It promotes healthier lifestyles for all citizens of Indiana through health promotion activities at work.

It makes no difference whether you have five employees or 5,000, the relative impact is the same. Employees spend one third of their waking hours at work, so the workplace offers a logical opportunity to provide employees with information, encouragement and support for making lifestyle changes that result in better overall well-being.



The Wellness Council serves as the clearinghouse and resource center on corporate health promotion for Indiana. It assists members by providing the tools to allow their wellness programs to grow. If you do not currently provide health promotion programs at your worksite, the Wellness Council can provide you with the information to assist you in getting started the correct way.

If you already have a wellness program, let the Wellness Council help tell your story and provide well-deserved recognition as an AchieveWELL organization.

The Wellness Council believes that the quality of life of any community is measured, to a large degree, by the health of its people. It is our vision to make Indiana a model state by improving the quality of life of its employees and at the same time enhancing the competitiveness of their workplaces in a global economy.