

Journey to Wellness

New Leader Tells His Story



Chuck Gillespie

With a career in various human resource roles under his belt, Chuck Gillespie became the program director of the Wellness Council of Indiana earlier this year when the organization moved under the Indiana Chamber of Commerce umbrella. *BizVoice*® recently sat down with Gillespie to learn more.

When did the concept of wellness hit home to you personally?
“That ‘ah-ha’ moment was when I was watching Lance Armstrong win his first or second Tour de France and got to talking about wellness with my sister (Jane Ellery, of the Fisher Institute for Wellness and Gerontology at Ball State University). I learned if cyclists crash, they generally get back up and start racing again. My sister asked me if I was coming down a hill at 20 miles per hour and fell, what was I going to do? I replied, ‘Probably wait for the ambulance to arrive.’”

“That’s when I understood that the more fit you are and better health you are in, the more chances you have of being able to handle an accident or injury – and even the better chance you won’t injure yourself to begin with.”

What wellness activities do you incorporate into your daily work routine?

“The one I do the most is when I receive a phone call or have to make a phone call, I simply get out of my chair and stand up for the call. It’s a basic activity but at the same time it gets my heart rate going. I have enough room in my office that I can actually pace back and forth a little. I also participate in as many wellness activities – like walking club or the educational sessions – as I can here at the (Indiana) Chamber. I also try to take the stairs instead of the escalator as well as walk to meetings in the downtown area. As a stress reliever, deep breaths or long pauses for three to five seconds throughout the day have been very helpful.”

Wellness is a lot more than...

“Just eating right and being active. Reducing stress is a big part of it. And the number one cause of stress is money concerns. So workplace offerings – like classes on financial planning or managing your money – are very appropriate. Workplace wellness is about helping employees become better personally so they can be better at doing their jobs for the company.”

What are the elements of a good workplace wellness plan?

“If you don’t have two elements, you might as well save your money. The first is you have to have leadership support and, in my opinion, not just support but participation. The second is that you’ve got to have a strategic plan that aligns with your business plan.”

What workforce trends have you noticed lately?

“I see companies that have budgeted some money for activities

like health screenings or a “Biggest Loser” competition. Those are a great place to start, but those are wellness pieces and not a consistent and comprehensive wellness initiative. What are they doing with the health screening information? Do they have a plan to help those who have lost the weight keep it off?

“Are they looking at adapting their HR policies and the company environment – to make it more conducive to being healthy and active? What is the smoking policy? Do you have healthy options in your vending machine? What do your catered meals look like?”

What can the Wellness Council do for a business?

“The most utilized service is our workplace wellness certification. We certify workplace wellness initiatives through our three-star, four-star and five-star programs. It can be for companies just starting out with their wellness program as well as organizations that have done this for many years. We evaluate that the best practices are being implemented and that their business plans align with their wellness initiatives.

“Additionally, we have resources – including a best practices binder of information, coaching and a wellness helpline – available to all members.”

Name your favorite things to do away from the office.

“My wife loves to garden; we spend a lot of time taking care of all the plants and bushes. I’m also my daughter’s soccer coach. Personally, I love swimming – and even spent time as an amateur competitive water skier. I must admit that I was the worst skier on the best ski team.”

You have also spent time in the classroom as an adjunct professor. What classes have you taught?

“Business communications, HR management, HR technology and entrepreneurship. I’ve taught at IUPUI, Indiana Wesleyan and Purdue.”

What book are you currently reading?

“I just finished *Tribes* (about leadership) by Seth Goodin. I’ve also got to admit that I’m a comic book/superhero kind of guy, so give me Marvel Comics.”

INFORMATION LINK

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