

Workplace Wellness: Climbing to the Summit

Practical Ideas, Networking Stand Out

By Zonya Foco

I found the two-day Indiana Employee Health and Wellness Summit to be jam-packed with practical ideas. I appreciated suggestions to encourage a positive culture of wellness in the workplace. For example, earnestly asking employees what they want assures that they see programming as something being done FOR them, instead of TO them, resulting in a better partnership.

I was reminded that a subtle language choice can make wellness more inclusive: encouraging “healthier” versus “healthy” goals provides accessibility to those who may consider an appreciable step in nutrition and fitness overwhelming. Ideas for higher-level approaches to keeping employees engaged in wellness initiatives were also helpful. These included linking an individual’s wellness accomplishments to their performance review and launching group fitness competitions using high-tech pedometer-type devices (e.g., Fit Bit and Jawbone Up). Truly the gamut of latest ideas!

Additionally, I was pleased with the opportunity to network with other wellness professionals. I heard some share how their “biggest loser” contests often seem highly participative and successful, yet struggle to see long-term weight and health improvements. (Many report the same people losing the same



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Setting the Stage for Workplace Success

By Peter Dunn

Change has to begin somewhere. And when report after report highlights the health issues of Hoosiers as compared to other states, change needs to happen now.

While several organizations have risen to the challenge to help fellow Hoosiers take control of their well-being, the Indiana Chamber has decided to affect change by reaching Hoosiers while they’re in the workplace.

The Wellness of Council of Indiana, in cooperation with the Indiana Chamber, is an organization dedicated to helping Hoosiers achieve total wellness, via workplace programming.

Wellness is so many things and fortunately the Wellness Summit addresses all of them. There were discussions revolving around physical wellness, emotional wellness, financial wellness and more. Observationally, the Wellness Summit is a very positive environment. Wellness experts gather to share best practices and corporate leaders who have cracked the wellness code encourage others to take up wellness initiatives. Ideas are exchanged, results are highlighted and seeds are planted.

One of the major hurdles in wellness programming is the perceived “nosiness” of the programs. It might seem as though discussing things like weight, financial well-being and mental health are taboo in the workplace, but that simply isn’t the



Peter Dunn



Dr. Jo Lichten (left) delivered an energetic keynote presentation at the Indiana Employee Health and Wellness Summit, while attendees learn more at the Delta Dental of Indiana booth.

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weight over and over!) Yet, by networking, these coordinators learned how they can add integral educational components to their program to improve the sustainability of health improvements, as well as how to follow up with measuring and reporting these changes. Now we're talking wellness!

I empathized with fellow conference attendees who lamented, "I can influence healthy choices at work, but with bucket-sized portions of addictive foods at every corner, and a culture of sitting all evening at home, we are at war with something that's so much more." And that is indeed the fight. Our objective as wellness professionals is to teach individuals how to make the healthy choice the easy choice – by using educational, motivational and even humorous means – so that they find success at home and in the workplace.

As a Michigan-based wellness professional, I very much enjoyed making the trek down to Indiana where I learned a great deal from worksites on the right track to wellness!

INFORMATION LINK

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case. Ignoring major wellness issues is far more inappropriate than having complicated conversations with your workforce. The Wellness Summit did a great job of empowering corporate wellness leaders to have these vital discussions and, more importantly, how to have conversations with company executives to emphasize the impact of wellness programming in general.

In spite of its relatively small size, Indiana has always been a national leader. And I'm encouraged that Indiana is headed in the right direction in regard to workplace wellness. There are numerous economic benefits to wellness programming in the workplace, including increased productivity and reduced health care costs.

But the Wellness Council and the Chamber have turned the focus to something more important: Helping people become well is just the right thing to do. Our workplaces are our communities. If we want to improve our communities and life in the Hoosier state, then we must help our community members become well.

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