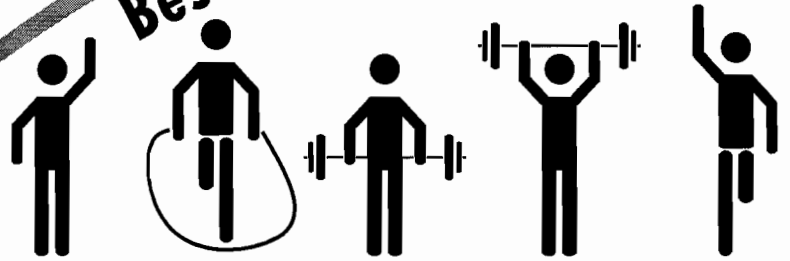


On-Site Initiatives Improve Employee Wellness, Bottom Line

Best Practices In Wellness



Who: Moen Incorporated

What: Offers an on-site wellness center and related programs

Results: For every dollar spent on wellness initiatives, the company saves \$3 to \$4 in reduced time away from work and healthcare cost savings.

When Moen Incorporated opened a fitness center at its headquarters more than a decade ago "as a feel-good type of service, it was good for employee morale, retention, and recruitment," says manager Chad Hanzlicek of L&T Health and Fitness, Inc., a Falls Church, Virginia-based consulting firm that runs the center for the plumbing products manufacturer.

Since that time, however, its wellness initiatives have had a significant impact on the company's bottom line, says Hanzlicek. A 2005 internal study found that for every dollar that Moen (www.moen.com) spends on its wellness programs, it saves \$3 to \$4. That savings can be attributed to reduced time away from work and healthcare cost savings, he explains.

Variety of Programs Offered

Moen's Wellness Center is located at the company's North Olmsted, Ohio, headquarters. About 280 employees, referred to at Moen as "associates," are members of the center—or about 56 percent of the workforce in that location, according to Hanzlicek.

The company subsidizes the expense of running the Wellness Center. Membership costs \$15 per month for each associate and includes access to fitness equipment and related programs. The center is open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and many associates are allowed to work flexible hours and visit the center during the workday.

Moen sponsors a variety of programs to help associates lose weight and/or maintain a healthy lifestyle, including massage therapy, personal training, yoga, kickboxing, health screenings, and monthly lunch-and-learn educational sessions. Some programs are available at no charge to associates, while a subsidized rate applies to other programs.

One of Moen's most popular programs is "Maintain, Don't Gain." About half of Wellness Center members participated in this yearlong program when it was introduced in 2005, Hanzlicek reports. The program targets associates who are satisfied with their current weight and want to maintain it.

Maintain, Don't Gain participants are encouraged to use the Wellness Center at least three times each week, and they earn points for each visit and again at monthly weigh-ins if they maintain their weight. Last year, about 20 participants received fleece jackets with the company's logo for logging in three weekly visits every week and for maintaining their weight throughout the year, he says. T-shirts and other prizes were awarded to participants who reached other milestones. Those who visit at least three times in any given week are recognized with a "star" displaying their name.

Another popular initiative is the 9-year-old "Fat Bowl" Incentive Program, currently modeled after the television show, "The Biggest Loser," a team-based approach to losing weight that kicks off each January—when many people set a New Year's resolution to lose weight, he says. Eighty Moen associates took part in this 12-week program last year.

Teams of four associates earn points for exercising, eating healthy foods, and drinking water. Each team is weighed weekly, and the two teams with the most points and the most weight loss move on to the Moen "Fat Bowl." The top team is crowned "The Biggest Loser" and awarded prizes.

This year, Moen plans to launch a new program, "Exercise at Your Desk." "Not everyone can make it to the Wellness Center for 30 to 60 minutes" during the workday, Hanzlicek says.

For example, the customer service team can't take a long break from answering phones to work out, so Moen will bring 10-minute strength training programs to them. "We're going to target those types of departments first" and then reach out to all employees.



continued on page 4

Making the Case

'Health Coaching' Helps Wellness Programs Pay Off

For the last few years we've waited, and it seems to be here at last: Disease management and the drive toward consumerism are beginning to work.

Rather than another huge increase in premiums, some companies are seeing their premium level for the first time in many years. Wellness, it seems, pays off. Michael Mulvihill, president and CEO of Leade Health (www.leadehealth.com), is one of many experts in the field who believe that an individualized, intensive approach to wellness is the most effective way to get people healthy. Leade Health calls it "health coaching" and says it involves much more than a blurb in the monthly newsletter about the dangers of smoking and excess weight. Health coaching, he says, is more of a partnership. "Our major objective," he says, "is to facilitate lifestyle change and behavior change."

"We know that individuals who are at high risk, who smoke, and who have diabetes, for example, are driving medical costs," Mulvihill says. "And we know that if we don't help them with their health issues, they are going to move into chronic disease." The goal is to keep people in the low- and medium-risk categories by coaching them long term about healthy living.

Most people understand that they need to exercise and eat healthy foods. The medical model of seeing people once and telling them to go home and get on a diet simply doesn't work for most people, Mulvihill says. Rather, he says, a one-on-one approach incorporating

education, encouragement, and accountability is the basis for a successful wellness program.

And while healthcare costs are the main target of this kind of attack, on-the-job productivity benefits, too. "We know that if an individual is in poor health, not only are their medical costs higher, but their productivity is lower," he says. "It's not enough just to have the person at work; we have to have them productive while they're at work. If their health is poor, and they're preoccupied with various symptoms, they're not going to be as productive."

Mulvihill recommends a comprehensive wellness approach that includes four components: a health risk assessment, a health screening, health coaching, and incentives.

"Those four components make up what we refer to as a best practices program," he says. "When you institute a best practices program, the return on investment is in the range of \$3 for every dollar invested."

"The research on that is very strong and compelling. Not everyone agrees on exactly what is 'comprehensive,' but there is mostly a consensus that you have to have the initial assessment of risk, then some follow-up to that which includes measurement of your biometrics—blood pressure and cholesterol—an intervention, which we call health coaching; and an incentive of some kind to get involved and stay involved." ~

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continued from page 2

Tips for Success

Hanzlicek attributes the success of Moen's Wellness Center to the variety of programs offered and to its ability to staff the center with professionals in the field. But he says you don't have to invest in a wellness center to promote wellness among your employees. "Anything is a step in the right direction. You don't need a fitness center to have a wellness program."

He offers the following tips to consider:

- **Gauge interest.** Use employee surveys and focus groups to determine what types of wellness programs employees are interested in.
- **Keep it simple.** "People don't want real time-consuming types of programs," Hanzlicek says. Make it convenient for employees to participate.
- **Get buy-in from top management.** "If that support isn't there, it's going to be difficult to get anything accomplished," he says. ~

