



Nature of Organization

Public Sector with 6,500 employees working in urban and rural geographically dispersed offices and worksites. Some communities were primarily French speaking, others were English speaking and some were bilingual. There were also multi generational employees ranging from early 20s to late 60s. The average age of employees was 44 comparable to the national average. The organization developed a compelling business case for implementing a 4-year comprehensive workplace wellness initiative, the first of its kind. Initially the initiative focused on using a Wellness Profile Assessment Tool which would benefit both employer and employees with the following objectives: increase individual awareness of personal risk and reduce modifiable risk factors; decrease high prevalence of chronic disease; improve employee wellness; enhance employee morale and job satisfaction; provide a method to measure aggregate information for selected employee groups; and, provide a basis for targeted implementation of wellness programs and activities. The organization developed a strong marketing strategy to encourage participation that was promoted as voluntary and ensuring privacy and confidentiality, as only aggregate reporting would be used without ever being able to identify personal information. This proved to be highly important in not only achieving high participation rates but also in having employees repeat their annual wellness profile. The annual personal and confidential wellness profile would produce a comprehensive report on employee personal health and lifestyle practices, organizational health and mental fitness and resilience. This initiative was employee driven with regional steering committees all of which were overseen by key wellness champions and led by key wellness professionals.

Description of Program

This was a 4-year comprehensive corporate wellness program delivered through a customized and branded intranet portal in both official languages based on the organization's built systems and practices. Each participating employee was given a unique identifier for login and eventual aggregate reporting. All data were stored in secure Canadian external servers. Selection of the corporate wellness company was based on a rigorous RFP process with the following scope of services

- Comprehensive Communication Plan, prior and throughout program launch, to inform and encourage employee participation.
- Interactive Online Scheduler to manage biometric clinics and/or schedule challenges and other company events
- Incentives and rewards program based on improvement in employee participation.
- Annual Health Risk Assessments (HRA) through single-sign-on on the customized Portal, that included completion of online lifestyle questionnaire, customized to company needs, and collection of biometric clinical data such as blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose and Body Mass Index.
- Variety of wellness challenges, goal trackers, monthly newsletters, and educational articles and videos.
- Telephonic or online wellness coaching via the Creative Wellness Solutions' private and confidential coaching platform.
- Annual aggregate reporting (corporate and departmental when statistically feasible)

What was Achieved

Each employee received a personal and confidential report of their individual HRA results showing comparisons from year to year. The organization received annual aggregate executive summary reports stratified by region and by department as required. Total participation rates were overall 42% after 2 years (66% female and 34% male). Overall wellness score was 72/100 with 3+ risk factors. It was shown that with improved lifestyle practices, employees could add 7.3 years of life. The top 4 health issues overall were: weight management (67% overweight/obese), physical inactivity (54%), stress at work (27%) and inadequate amount of sleep <7 hrs (43%). Results after only two years were significant in overall wellness scores, with increase in good and excellent categories (from 32% to 39%), and with decreases in fair and poor categories (from 64% to 56%). 25% improved their physical activity to the recommended level of 4+ days per week. 18% improve their whole grains intake to recommended levels 3+ cups per day. 10% went from reporting continuous or high levels of stress to reporting minimal levels of stress at work and at home. 13% feel they now have support at work to balance work and personal life and 18% quit smoking.

These improvements resulted in significant savings as well. Absenteeism was reduced overall by .5 day per employee (estimated savings of \$600,000). Use of prescribed medications was also analyzed by the organization's primary private health insurer with reductions in anti-depressants, cardiac, cholesterol gastro-intestinal, type 2 diabetes and asthma medications (calculated savings of \$2 Millions +). This represented a reduction of 28% in health claims and early detection of illness (heart, cancer, mental health) an overall reduction in stress levels, improved blood pressure, healthier weights, increase in wellness scores, reduction in absenteeism and a Return On Investment (ROI) of \$2.50 - \$4.50 per \$1 invested in as little as 2 years. Benefits were significant to both the employer and employees with the expectation of increased participation in following years.