3. Employee Wellness
   Popular Employer Wellness Programs Offered in Canada

6. Wellness Initiatives
   A Best Practice Model for Workplace Wellness

7. Wellness Checklist
   OHS and Wellness Program Integration Checklist

8. Wellness Statistics
   Save With Workplace Wellness Programs

9. Wellness Case Study
   Wellness Program Saves Employer Over $600,000

14. Missing the Boat
    Employers Missing Opportunities to Encourage Wellness in the Workplace

16. Psychology of Discipline
    Positive Psychology and Workplace Discipline
Employee Wellness

Popular Employer Wellness Programs Offered in Canada

Before the recession in 2008, the primary motivation for Canada’s top employers was to offer employees health and wellness programs in Canada was to increase employee satisfaction and productivity more so then driving down health related costs (reported by Medisys Health Group based on a survey of Canada’s top 100 employers). At that time, these employers expected less than half of their employees to participate and most did not track the effectiveness of their wellness initiatives. Today, employers are a little more interested in the bottom line of keeping or driving down costs, but they still appear to be interested in providing employees with health and wellness initiatives for the sake of their employees and company culture.

The economy today is not the same as it was back in 2008, yet it has not seemed to take a significant bite out of employers desire to offer wellness initiatives. According to 2011 National Wellness Survey, 91% of employers surveyed reported offering wellness initiatives to their employees. When asked about the impact of the economy on their programs 65% indicated the economy had no impact and 30% reported it had somewhat of a negative impact.

“75% of Employers Offer Wellness Programs for Employee Morale”.

According to the research, the top reasons why companies in Canada offer Wellness programs included Organizational Culture (53%).
When asked what motivated them to offer Wellness programs they responded further to: Improve Employee Morale (75%), Enhance Organizational Culture (70%) and lower short and long term disability costs (55%).

**C-Suite Involvement Makes a Difference in Success**

An interesting finding to keep in mind as you roll out your health and wellness initiatives is that, when initiatives were spearheaded by C-level executives programs achieved 75% participation (93% when corporate HR leadership lead the initiative). Without C-level participation the numbers dropped to 37% and below.
A list of the top 9 wellness initiatives plus 4 additional ones offered by employers:

- On-site Fitness Programs
- Fitness Subsidies
- Nutrition Education
- Awareness Management Programs
- Communication Information
- Staff Appreciation
- Flex Time
- Time in Lieu
- Ergonomics
- Employee Recognition
- Flu Shot
- First Aid/CPR
- EAP Initiatives

A list of the top 5 wellness initiatives based on regional reporting:

- Staff Appreciation
- Employee Recognition
- First Aid/CPR
- Flu Shot
- EAP Initiatives
Wellness Initiatives
A Best Practice Model for Workplace Wellness

You’ve no doubt heard it before: a healthier workforce reflects positively on an organization’s bottom line.

Yet, knowing how to implement workplace wellness initiatives can be confusing. What are the components? And where can you expect to see the benefits?

This best practice model, adapted from Physical Activity Line (PAL), a British Columbia counselling service, provides the information you need to understand workplace wellness so you can create a successful program.

Why Workplace Wellness?

More than 60 percent of the population is in the workforce and they spend much of their working day during a typical week working as well as commuting to and from their workplace. The competing demands of today’s life mean there is less time and energy to be engaged in health promoting behaviours leading to physical, mental, and emotional health issues.

The majority of benefits costs can be attributed to these disease categories: Cardiovascular, musculoskeletal,
respiratory, digestive, cancer, and stress. Because of the amount of time spent at work, the worksite is a great place to influence a large portion of the population.

Healthier employees result in:
- Improved productivity
- Improved employee morale
- Reduced absenteeism
- Lower turnover rates, and
- Lower health-care claims/costs.

**What Is a Best Practice Approach to Workplace Wellness?**

A comprehensive approach consists of elements from the following categories:

1. **Health Practices**: enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles, behaviours, and coping skills.
2. **Physical Environment**: addressing the health and safety of the work-site.
3. **Social Environment and Personal Resources**: enhancing the culture of an organization.

Each of these categories involves a variety of strategies across the following areas:
- Increasing awareness and education
- Assisting behaviour change and skill building
- Providing a health promoting environment
- Mobilizing and building capacity

**How Do You Create a Successful Program?**

These steps are instrumental for a successful program:

1. Serious commitment and involvement from senior management.
2. All levels of staff are involved with planning.
3. The focus is on employees needs.
4. Use of on-site experts and facilities.
5. The mission, vision, values, and goals are supported by policy.
6. Integration of lifestyle choices, social conditions, and work environment.
7. Individualized to the needs of the worksite.
8. Ongoing evaluation of key indicators, measures, and outcomes.
9. Long term planning and commitment.

**OHS & Wellness Program Integration Checklist**

Use this checklist to guide the process of integrating your company’s OHS and wellness programs.

Download Checklist
Wellness Statistics

Save With Workplace Wellness Programs

A recent report from the Conference Board of Canada, “Making the Business Case for Investments in Workplace Health and Wellness,” cites three broad strategic reasons employers should invest in workplace wellness programs:

1. To control the financial costs associated with an unhealthy workplace and to gain the benefits of a healthy workforce;
2. To build the organization’s profile as a good and socially responsible employer; and
3. To demonstrate legal due diligence toward employees.

When it comes to financial costs, the numbers are indeed staggering. The Conference Board of Canada references research from the World Health Organization that shows, in 2005, Canada lost approximately $500 million annually in national income from premature deaths due to chronic disease – and these losses, which escalate each year, are projected to reach $1.5 billion annually by 2015.

As the Conference Board report notes, many chronic conditions are preventable—and are linked to lifestyle behaviours that can be avoided. For example, the number of obese Canadians continues to increase. Physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking, and heavy alcohol use also contribute to chronic disease.

How does your organization support wellness?

Loss of National Income in Canada from Premature Deaths Due to Chronic Disease

- 2005: 500
- 2015: 1,500

3X The Loss

Annual Cost (in $1,000,000)
Wellness Case Study

Wellness Program saves Employer Over $600,000

A multi-year journey to wellness fuelled by cleverly designed incentives for employee participation has resulted in over $615,000 in cost avoidance plus a major boost in employee engagement for property and casualty company The Economical Insurance Group (TEIG).

TEIG has about 25,000 employees in 18 offices across Canada. The average employee age is about 42 and the workforce is 65% female.

When the wellness program was first introduced in 2008, key objectives were to:
- Build employee awareness of individual health
- Enhance employee engagement
- Reward employees for a broader range of wellness behaviours
- Enhance organizational health.

A longer term goal was to see cost avoidance results in group benefits experience and absenteeism over three to five years.

Year 1: 2008
To get baseline data and build employee awareness, biometric screening clinics were held in all 18 TEIG locations. In the first year, 48% of employees participated in the voluntary clinics and by 2011, the participation increased to 54%.
Each employee who signed up for testing had a confidential 15 minute appointment with a registered nurse to look for six heart disease risk factors. Random glucose levels, cholesterol, blood pressure, body mass index and body fat were measured and benchmarked against ideal ranges.

“What we heard from our employees is that they had had physicals before but they had never been counselled on their particular measures,” says Jennifer Allen, TEIG’s VP HR and Communications. “So this was a prime educational session for our workforce.”

In some cases these sessions were also life-changing. For example, people who were formerly unaware they had high blood pressure were encouraged to see their own family doctor immediately. In addition to providing individual data, aggregate employee test results were made available to the company. TEIG already knew that the majority of their employees were sedentary, but they discovered that they were also overweight.

The second important 2008 initiative was confidential, online wellness assessments through TEIG’s benefits carrier Sun Life Insurance. Employees were asked to answer 32 questions about 10 health risks (i.e., health habits, readiness for change, culture, productivity). Employees got a personal report on problem areas plus improvement tips and again, TEIG received an aggregate report.

### Sustaining wellness through incentives at TEIG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign component</th>
<th>Design Objectives</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biometric Screening Clinics</td>
<td>Enhance awareness</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Points in team challenge</td>
<td>Points in team challenge</td>
<td>Points in team challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness assessment</td>
<td>Enhance awareness</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>Did not do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall team wellness challenge</td>
<td>Create action</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring walking challenge</td>
<td>Create action and sustain</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** THE ECONOMICAL INSURANCE GROUP
In 2008, 54% of the company’s employees completed a wellness assessment questionnaire. Participation topped out at 66% in 2010, and the company decided to only run this program every two years going forward.

Because the goal in year 1 was to enhance employee awareness, employees who completed a questionnaire received $300 in “wellness credits” deposited to a taxable wellness account that is part of the flexible benefits program and administered just like medical claims by the benefits carrier.

Wellness credits can be used to claim reimbursement for expenses such as fitness and sports equipment and activities plus recognized weight management programs.

**Year 2: 2009**

By year 2, the primary focus of TEIG’s program moved from educating employees to encouraging and rewarding actions that addressed risk areas through the Team Wellness Challenge.

Teams were formed of about 10 employees and they got points for doing things like at least 20 minutes of physical activity a day, eating fruits and vegetables, getting at least 6.5 hours of sleep, drinking enough water and/or avoiding caffeine. An online tool was used to track individual results based on the honour system and points were awarded – e.g. one point/minute of exercise with a 20 minute minimum and a 60 minute maximum.

In order to refocus employees on 2009 program goals, incentives were modified. The $300 in wellness credits offered in 2008 for completing a wellness assessment questionnaire was reduced to $150 and an additional $150 was awarded to employees participating in the fall Team Wellness Challenge. In addition to wellness credits, small prizes were also awarded to challenge winners at the team and individual level.

“Over 70% of our employees have participated in the team wellness challenge each year,” says Allen, proudly.

**Year 3: 2010**

The company objectives in year 3 shifted from education and action in the early years to ongoing sustainment of the program. Employee feedback from the Team Wellness Challenge revealed that they wanted to be involved in group challenges more frequently than once a year.

As a result, TEIG added a spring Team Walking Challenge to its already robust offerings. This four week program simply encouraged people to walk and track the km they covered on an online system developed in house.

“In 2011 1,724 participants travelled 107,886 km despite the coldest May weather ever,” says Allen.

Again, incentives were linked to program goals with $100 in wellness credits allocated for each of: completing a wellness assessment, participating in the fall Wellness Assessment and taking part in the spring Walking Challenge. As the Wellness Assessment was not conducted in 2010, $150 incentives could be earned for participating in each of the fall and the spring team challenges.
Program communications have been consolidated and enhanced by branding the program as the CORE Centre for Wellness at TEIG. The “core crew” of wellness ambassadors also help sustain participation in wellness initiatives. These are interested people at all of the TEIG locations who volunteer to answer questions and champion local wellness activities because they are passionate about healthy living.

Measuring results
Allen says the program cost of about $350/employee each year continues to be a great investment. Year over year employee attitude surveys reveal significantly improved employee engagement. Furthermore, employee testimonials confirm many people have made lifestyle changes and are beginning to reap the rewards.

Cost avoidance to TEIG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biometric clinic measurement category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>$54,366</td>
<td>$3,396</td>
<td>$91,692</td>
<td>$149,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cholesterol</td>
<td>$64,041</td>
<td>$42,921</td>
<td>$107,644</td>
<td>$214,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random glucose</td>
<td>$44,460</td>
<td>$57,798</td>
<td>$29,640</td>
<td>$131,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure</td>
<td>$15,066</td>
<td>$27,371</td>
<td>$17,829</td>
<td>$60,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body mass index</td>
<td>$15,125</td>
<td>$16,684</td>
<td>$20,463</td>
<td>$54,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total improvements and cost avoidance</td>
<td>$195,067</td>
<td>$152,180</td>
<td>$269,279</td>
<td>$616,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: THE ECONOMICAL INSURANCE GROUP based on Cost Avoidance Criteria and Study Information from Sun Life.
Cost avoidance to the company was calculated based on aggregate TEIG employee data tracking employees who move out of risk categories plus cost avoidance criteria and study information from Sun Life. So for example, over three years employees who stopped smoking saved the company health and other related-costs of almost $150,000 with over $615,000 in total improvements and cost avoidance.

**What’s next for wellness at TEIG?**

Allen says the company wants to continue initiatives that improve the physical health of employees, but layer a focus on mental health on top. “We’re seeing a lot of our longer-term medical absences related to mental health and we think there are some things we can do to give both our leaders and our employers the tools and resources to better deal with these issues.”

---

**10 Tips for Workplace Wellness**

1. Understand the current state
2. Build the case for change.
3. Set objectives.
4. Gain support from key stakeholders.
5. Partner with great service providers.
6. Use rewards to motivate behaviour change.
7. Do what you can with what you’ve got.
8. Leverage all the data.
9. Link program design to objectives.
10. Ensure the program fits the organizational culture.
Missing the Boat
Employers Missing Opportunities to Encourage Wellness in the Workplace

According to the 2011 National Wellness Survey Canadian employers consider work-related stress the most important health risk facing their employees (56%) and 72% of employers reported offering at least one specific wellness initiative intended to improve employee health or well-being.

Employee wellness initiatives can be excellent tools to improve employee health, build morale, retain and attract employees. However not every employer is providing employee an effective slate of wellness programs in their organization.

We recently asked: To what extent does your organization encourage employee wellness?
Our results showed that 38% of you offer no wellness initiatives. What you told us was:

- We have an onsite fitness centre or we offer employees gym memberships. (10%)
- We offer an array of benefits, including gym memberships/fitness centre, nutrition counselling, wellness seminars, and more. (19%)
- We offer many of the benefits listed above and we provide incentives for healthy lifestyles. (10%)
- We take the approach that employee health is a personal matter and don’t get involved. (38%)
- Other (23%)

2 types of simple health and wellness initiatives you can offer in your workplace

1) Information and Resources

The Government of Canada, Provincial Ministry of Health offices, Regional health offices, local wellness institutes and even health insurance providers often provide information and tips you can share with your employees, saving you the time to create materials yourself. Try the “Healthy Canadians” website and you will find information, tips, and ideas for activities you can bring into your workplace.

2) Create a Monthly Schedule of Workplace Initiatives

Select one day or a week a month to celebrate or recognize a health and wellness initiative. Consider variations of these 3 common examples:

a) Healthy Eating – a week when all junk food is ‘banned’ in the workplace and you supply healthy food for your employees on the last day of the initiative

b) Fitness Challenge – A week where you ask employees to track their physical fitness activities and award the employee with the most ‘activity points’ a small reward such as a $20 gift certificate at a fitness store.

c) Stress Management Awareness – Bring a speaker in to talk to your employees about identifying and managing stress.

Other examples include:
1. A Week of Walking Challenge
2. Meditation and Mindfulness Day
3. Heart Health Activities Day
4. Try a New Sport or Activity Week
5. Volunteer in the Community Month
6. Commuter Challenge Contest

In the 2010 Sun Life Canadian Health Index Report, 60% of Canadians indicated they believed that employers have some responsibility in helping employees achieve better health. It is important for both employers and employees to work together for the health of their workplace. Employee wellness initiatives can be fun and useful tools to create a positive and healthy workplace. Start today and involve your employees in the process of identifying and participating in important health and wellness initiatives.
Psychology of Discipline

Positive Psychology and Workplace Discipline

Try these 3 strategies that focus on positive performance improvement

Positive thoughts and emotions increase our ability to be resilient and to learn. In a popular TED presentation titled, ‘Shawn Achor: The happy secret to better work’, psychologist Shawn Achor shares the story of how a positive focus leads to more success; a brain ‘on positive’ mode performs better than a brain ‘on negative’ mode.

Any number of situations provide opportunity for employees not to perform up to standards. When an employee does not perform up to standards, it triggers reactions in both employer and employee. The impact of one poor performance resonates throughout an organization.

Progressive discipline is a common employer response to workplace performance problems. Unfortunately, the word discipline itself has a negative connotation and by referencing the term an employer may be creating a negativity bias that can infect the entire process. Instead of focusing on the ‘negative’
during the process of addressing change there are times when the positive can be a more effective strategy to enable change.

**Positive Discipline?**
Positive discipline is not an oxymoron. By referencing ‘Positive Intervention’, or ‘Performance Improvement Intervention’ you focus on improvement. Imagine having a workplace performance discussion with your employee. To begin the discussion, instead of using the phrase, “we are implementing discipline”, use the phrase, “we are providing intervention to improve your performance”. The subtle change in phrasing may reduce a defensive response.

**3 Components of Positive Performance Intervention**

1. **Focus on strengths and reduce opportunities for weaknesses:** When an employee has been informed about a performance problem, he or she might feel fear, surprise, disbelief, anxiety or even anger. None of these emotions are conducive to positive change. These emotions can be used for motivation. In order to focus on intervention and strength enhancement, consider shifting short-term work tasks elsewhere so that your employee focuses on work tasks that he or she is good at. With a strength based focus, your employee is more likely to have a positive mindset, and therefore, will be more receptive to change.

2. **Create opportunities for praise:** Setting an employee up to succeed may enable this employee to achieve further success. During the first few days or weeks of ‘discipline’, create achievable goals and milestones. Minimize opportunities for failure. Upon achieving the goal, your employee will receive praise and build stronger and more trusting relationships with supervisors or HR.

Does this sound like rewarding bad behaviour? Not at all. By removing opportunities for failure in the short term, you increase your ability to reward positive behaviour. You reinforce the behaviours you want to reward.

3. **Generosity can be it’s own reward:** Creating opportunities for an employee to ‘give back’ can be an excellent way to increase your employee’s positive investment in the organization. You have to think this one through to find the right type of opportunity. Assign your employee the task of working on a community or charity related project, taking part in an event planning committee, or deciding about a new logo design. To decide upon assigned tasks, you must understand the nature of the person’s discipline problem. If the person has a personal behaviour based problem, ask them to volunteer at charitable event where they will work directly with the public.

Positive intervention must still include well laid out performance improvement expectations, with goals, measurement details and timelines. Positive psychology may help employee improvement come quicker and stick.
Contact us

102-501 Main Street
Penticton, BC

Phone +1 800 220 9547
Email info@hrinsider.ca
Web www.hrinsider.ca