



## health- headlines

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### CORPORATE HEALTH REPORT / MAY 2009

*Industry insider information to help YOU do your job better, faster and smarter*

#### **Industry insider (exclusive): Know your audience**

Transparency and accountability are keys to the success of your wellness program, according to Sharon Covert, MA, Executive Director of the Wellness Council of West Virginia, an affiliate of the National Network of Wellness Councils. In a recent talk she gave this advice for corporate health managers:

- **Beware of stereotypes.** Understand that your workforce is different from others. Your corporate culture is different from others. What works for one company may not work in your company.
- **Use culture audits and employee satisfaction surveys** to identify what's going on and to pinpoint trouble spots. Assess the health and morale of your employees through HRAs (every 1 to 2 years depending on turnover) and with surveys every year. Then post the results. If employees can see the results, they can own it. Posting tells employees, "We heard you." Just as a company monitors sales, you need to monitor your wellness program. If something is not working, retool and readjust (you'd do it for a product that wasn't selling).
- **Make managers responsible for your wellness program.** Put it in their job description. Help them make a sincere effort to support it and hold them accountable. If they aren't role models of support, their employees won't be either.
- **Work on the "happy."** Antidepressants are most likely the most used drug among your employees (they are for most companies). Stress is the culprit, and it shows up as smoking, overeating, and drinking. Use your EAP to address the stress.

#### **Bottom-line business**

##### **Change the workplace, prevent obesity**

Can simply posting signs reminding employees to make healthier food choices or take the stairs reduce obesity and other health risks? Positive health effects were noted after a large chemical company made similar changes in the workplace, according to a study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. The company, for example, stocked vending machines and the cafeteria with healthy food choices, marked walking

paths, and placed signs promoting increased physical activity at certain sites (and not at other company locations—the control). After a year, data on more than 3,000 employees found small but significant health improvements at the sites with workplace changes. Lead author was Ron Z. Goetzel, PhD, of the Institute for Health and Productivity Studies at Emory University, who said, “Overall, our analysis revealed a modest effect on population health risks when environmental interventions are introduced at the worksite.” Next: Further studies to see if changes affect productivity and use of health care services.

## RESEARCH BRIEFS

- **Employee engagement is not the same as job satisfaction.** Researchers in *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* view employee engagement as leading to unusually effective employee behavior that leads to organizational success—defined as the positive feelings employees have about their jobs as well as the motivation and effort they put into their work. The authors say that employees will feel—and act—engaged when their employer creates conditions that permit them to do so. Engagement, they say, connotes energy and not satiation (having enough), while satisfaction connotes satiation and contentment but not energy.
- **The truth about truth.** The nation’s largest youth smoking prevention campaign called the *truth*® saved \$1.9 billion or more in health care costs associated with tobacco use, according to researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the American Legacy Foundation. The results were published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Launched in 2000 by the American Legacy Foundation, the *truth* campaign aims to capitalize on the desire of young people ages 12 to 17 to be rebellious and independent. Fewer young people started smoking and will avert future health care costs, according to the researchers.
- **Drug costs.** Medications that help lower cholesterol, control diabetes, and control weight accounted for \$38 billion of the \$208.1 billion that Americans spent on drugs in 2006, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Five therapeutic categories of prescribed drugs accounted for more than 60% of consumer spending on drugs. The others: heart drugs \$33 billion, pain meds \$28 billion, psychotherapeutic drugs \$17.5 billion, hormones \$14 billion.
- **Costly personal health habits.** A large study of the 43,000 members of the Arkansas State and Public School Employees health plan found that health care costs are higher for employees who report 3 risky behaviors. The average annual increase in costs for unhealthy habits: 13% higher for smokers, 45% higher for obesity, 33% higher for inactivity, 75% higher for both obese and inactive people, 86% higher for all 3 risk factors. The study was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

## FREE-quent flyers

**FREE MyFitness Planner:** A proven program from the Dairy Council of California. A small study of healthy women showed that MyFitness Planner’s individually tailored Internet-plus-email physical activity intervention resulted in 37 minutes of increased walking and 48 minutes of increased total moderate-to-vigorous activity each week. Results were published in *Preventive Medicine*. Tap into this resource at

[www.dairycouncilofca.org/Tools/MyFitnessPlanner/Default.aspx](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Tools/MyFitnessPlanner/Default.aspx).

**FREE position statement** from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. Read *ACOEM Comments on Healthy Workforce / Healthy Economy: The Role of Health, Productivity, and Disability Management in Addressing the Nation's Health Care Crisis* at [www.acoem.org/comments.aspx?id=4714](http://www.acoem.org/comments.aspx?id=4714). Outlines 4 fundamental principles that are critical to address the growing health care and budgetary crisis.

**FREE Rethinking Drinking tools:** Reduce risk for alcohol problems with info from a new Web site and booklet from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Download or order from [www.RethinkingDrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.RethinkingDrinking.niaaa.nih.gov).

**FREE fact sheets on HIV/AIDS:** From the CDC, 8 additional fact sheets at [www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/evidence-based-interventions.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/evidence-based-interventions.htm).

**FREE event planning information:** National Run a Mile Day (May 9) is sponsored by the American Running Association and Youth Runner Magazine. The organizations are seeking community hosts. Info at [www.americanrunning.org](http://www.americanrunning.org).

**FREE guide on children and the outdoors:** From the National Wildlife Federation, a guide on state policy initiatives and model solutions to the growing disconnect between children and the natural world. Download the 15-page guide at [www.nwf.org/nwfwebadmin/binaryVault/State\\_Policy\\_Solutions\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nwf.org/nwfwebadmin/binaryVault/State_Policy_Solutions_Guide_FINAL.pdf).

**FREE children's book:** Great things happen when we invest in kids and science. One such outcome is a science education book called *The NIH Rocket Boys: How NIH Gives Health and Hope to Kids and the World*. Mail requests to Rocket Story, NIH Center for Scientific Review, 6701 Rockledge Dr., Room 3030, Bethesda, MD 20892 or email [rocket@csr.nih.gov](mailto:rocket@csr.nih.gov).

**Still available: FREE e-letter:** A 6-page pdf-format e-letter called *Make ends meet*—a compilation of stories targeted to employees during tough economic times. Stories focus on *how to bounce back*, *2 dozen ways to trim your health care costs*, *crisis management when money matters*, and *how to stress less when "ticker" shock hits*. Email [publisher@health-eheadlines.com](mailto:publisher@health-eheadlines.com) for this free e-letter to distribute to employees.

**Odds @ the end:** Competitors in one of our most popular recreational road races, the 5K, run 5 kilometers, which is longer than 54 football fields laid end-to-end. (US Department of Commerce metric program)

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