



Corporate wellness not just for big firms

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Corporate or employee wellness is a relatively new industry that over the years has had many different definitions.

These definitions have included subsidizing corporate fitness memberships, hosting a lunch and learn, posting newsletters or offering onsite exercises classes to name a few. These types of wellness programs were thought of as a "nice to have" fringe benefit for companies with money, status or size.

Today the industry of corporate wellness is changing and the gap between traditional benefits and wellness is narrowing. Professionals such as company owners, benefit consultants, HR administrators and health and safety specialists are understanding that wellness at the corporate level needs to be a strategic part an overall benefit plan.

Yet there remains a gap between the primary health risks identified and the type of program offered. The contributing factors to a healthy return on a company's investment are ensuring that the program design strategically aligns with the results of the health risk assessment. It is also important that the programs offered support employee needs and interests, along with ensuring employee and management objectives are met.

A successful, results-based corporate wellness plan will offer various programs with the underlying objective of true behavioural change. To achieve the biggest impact, a comprehensive approach should include a healthy balance focusing on both the individual and the group as a whole. Successful programs implement individual, group and awareness initiatives that target the widest segment of the population.

Due to the fact that it is now easier for corporations to see a financial return on better health, the employee wellness industry is growing. The more wellness programs offered that encourage lasting behavioural change, the healthier the returns will be. Healthy employees cost less, period.

The overall goal of a company introducing wellness program should be to work with a third party vendor that designs wellness programs strategically. With the help of an advisor, here's how a company can go about implementing a wellness program:

- Completing a Health Risk Assessment which determines specific risks and interests.
- Implementing a variety of awareness and group programs that support a firm's culture and boost morale.
- Selecting a program that is inclusive for all staff at all locations.
- Identifying programs that target individual employee needs and goals.
- Introducing a way of tracking the effectiveness of the program.

It is obvious that Canadian companies understand the importance of wellness in the workplace. A successful results-based corporate wellness plan begins with a clear strategy that works with the overall benefits offering.

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