

Big Steps For Small Businesses

10 Health Promotion Programming
Ideas Every Small Business
Should Consider

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It's no secret that health promotion programming has been embraced by the business community in a big way. However, even though more companies are participating in worksite wellness now than ever before, many small businesses are still on the outside looking in. In fact, very little has been written specifically for small businesses to help them in their quest to create healthier employees and healthier companies.

In this article, we'll present 10 programming ideas that can make a big difference in any small company.

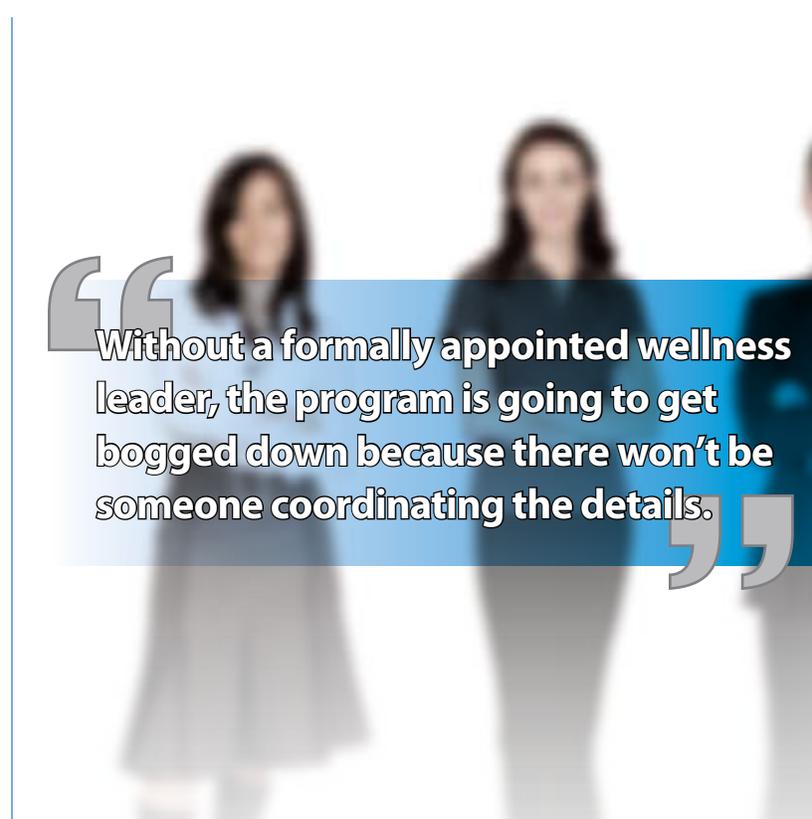
Hold A Management Boot Camp

Believe it or not, this is a great place for small businesses to start. How so? Well, if the CEO/owner and managers can better understand the concept of health promotion programming, there's a much greater likelihood that they'll get behind the idea in full force.

The boot camp can be as modest or ambitious as you would like it to be. Some small companies start with a simple in-service for the owners and managers that lays out the benefits and the specific steps necessary to start a wellness program within a smaller organization. As a result of attending this simple seminar, execs will have a much better idea of what will be required if they choose to move forward with such a program. In this scenario, we would suggest finding a talented and educated presenter on this topic. It's important that the presenter be dynamic and knowledgeable because they'll not only provide an aerial view of the process, but they'll need to motivate and stir the emotions as well. If the speaker you're looking to secure charges a fee, you should consider pooling the resources of several small businesses so that the expenditures won't break the bank.

For the more ambitious, consider taking your execs through a one or two day wellness retreat. More and more communities are offering this type of experience, and they are available through fitness clubs or private consultations. During the course of this retreat, your executives should have an opportunity to experience things like biometric screenings, health risk appraisals, individual coaching, and specific programs like walking or cooking demonstrations. It's not uncommon for many owners and managers to get religion after such an in-depth orientation.

Whichever path you choose, a management boot camp is a great place to begin your wellness efforts.



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Designate A Company Wellness Leader And Provide A Training Experience

Once you have indoctrinated the company's execs in the nuances of worksite wellness, it's time to designate a company wellness leader and get them trained. Both of these steps are essential in establishing a wellness program within a small business environment. In fact, without a formally appointed wellness leader, the program is going to get bogged down because there won't be someone coordinating the details.

Before going any further, it's important to understand that the internal wellness leader doesn't have to be hired specifically to fill this role. In fact, many small businesses have chosen to designate an existing employee who already has a passion for such an undertaking. But passion alone is definitely not enough. That's why it's important to make sure that the wellness leader gets some type of formal training.

The best way to do this is by sending them to a conference or training experience. Fortunately, in this day and age, there are plenty of national, regional, and local training opportunities to take advantage of.





Conduct An Employee Health Interest Survey

Once your owners and managers have bought into the concept, and you've designated a company wellness leader, the next undertaking is to conduct an employee health interest survey. In addition to garnering buy-in, the health interest survey will provide your organization with important data as to what specific programs your employees are interested in.

By conducting an employee health interest survey, small businesses can learn a lot from their own people—and virtually guarantee that your wellness programs will be embraced by all.

Provide An Opportunity For Health Screening

This step is a critical one for small businesses because it provides employees with an important assessment of their own personal health status. Without an opportunity to participate in an annual health screening, many employees will not adequately understand their “numbers” such as blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, etc. And if your employees don't understand their own health status, they

place themselves at greater risk for experiencing problems which could have been prevented.

Administer An Annual Physical Activity Campaign

We know from the research that physical activity may very well be the magic bullet. Indeed, according to Dr. Steve Aldana, people who are physically active delay the onset of disability for more than a decade. With this in mind, you can see why an annual physical activity campaign is essential for small businesses.

If you're not familiar with physical activity campaigns, you don't need to feel bad. But, you do need to know that they are available and are excellent resources to get your employees up and moving. For example, WELCOA offers a number of turn-key incentive programs that are available to members at no charge. Usually, incentive campaigns come in two parts. The first is the Director's Guide which explains how the program works and what you need to do. The second is the Participant's Guide which explains what individuals need to accomplish and how they can accumulate points. By using an incentive campaign, small businesses can get their employees up and moving at low-cost or no-cost.



Hold A Healthy Eating Lunch 'n Learn Seminar

We believe that small businesses would benefit greatly by offering their employees healthy eating seminars. Not only are these seminars informative, but they can be a lot of fun as well. For example, imagine how your employees will respond when you bring in a healthy cooking chef that prepares a special meal right before their very eyes. Using healthy—but common—ingredients, the chef can educate your employees on how to prepare the dish, how to make it taste good, and how to make it nutritionally sound. Trust us on this one, this seminar will be a homerun.

Establish An In-House Lending Library

Because good health is predicated on sound information, small businesses can take a significant step toward promoting better health by providing their employees with opportunities to learn more about prevention right at the workplace. A good library will include things like medical self-care books, health magazines, instructional DVD's, audio books, and a variety of newsletters, pamphlets, and behavior change guides.

To ensure that the information gets read, it's a good idea to put the lending library in a commonly traveled spot. Comfortable chairs and good lighting are also highly recommended. Remember, the key is to get people comfortable and reading and/or watching and listening.

Disseminate A Regular Health Newsletter

Regular health information can greatly assist employees in their quest to become healthier. A good health newsletter will cover a variety of topics like physical activity, weight management, stress reduction, tobacco cessation, and medical self-care. It helps if the newsletter is available in full-color and easy-to-read—preferably a 6th or 7th grade reading level.

To make sure that the newsletter gets absorbed, you may want to consider offering a brief quiz that asks a variety of questions about the information contained in the actual newsletter itself. The participant can put their name on the quiz and submit it to be registered as part of a drawing

for something special. For example, if you have 45 employees, you could very well get an 80% response rate to your health quiz and the winner could walk away with something like dinner for two at a healthy eatery.

Implement Healthy Policies And Procedures

Because company policies can have an enormous impact on employee health status, we would recommend implementing healthy policies and procedures into the actual policy manual. By incorporating healthy policies and procedures into your business operations, your company further demonstrates its commitment to the concept of providing a safe and healthy workplace for all.

Specifically, every small business should consider four basic policies at a minimum. These policies include: mandating a tobacco-free workplace, promoting an alcohol/drug-free environment, requiring seatbelt use by all, and formulating safety/emergency procedures in the event of a disaster.

Although not traditionally thought of as important, healthy policies should not be overlooked by small business leaders who are looking to improve the health and well-being of their company.

Promote Community Health Efforts

A final way that small businesses can promote healthier behaviors is by supporting community events. Needless to say, there are numerous events like fun runs, health fairs, and educational seminars (just to mention a few) that can be promoted and communicated to your employees. This is very important just due to the simple fact that most community health events are usually best kept secrets. By establishing a listing of health promoting events each month, small businesses can take important steps toward increasing the health and well-being of their most valuable asset—their employees. ★



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