

Worksite Wellness Programs:

Building a Culture of Health and Wellness in the Office

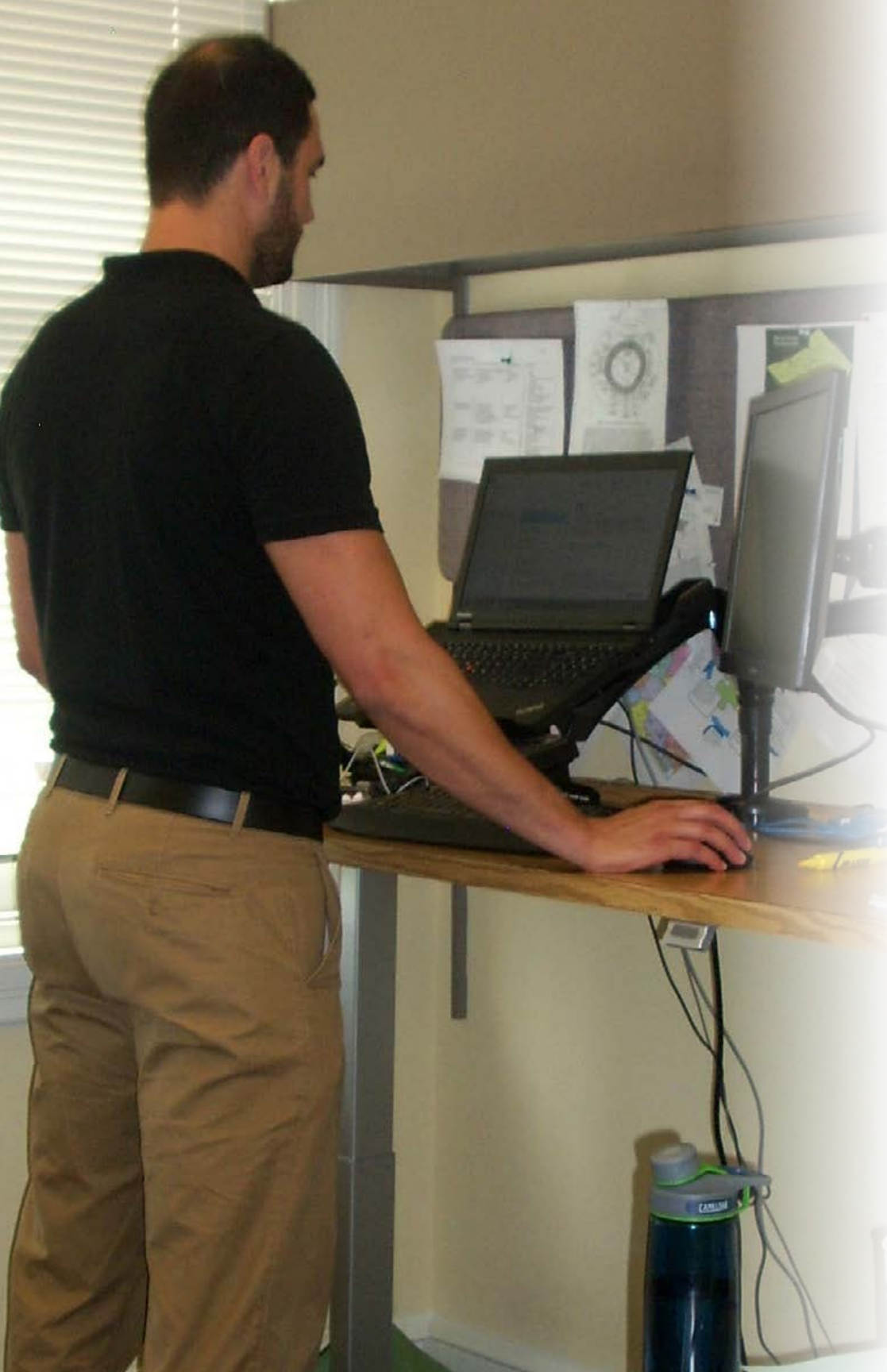


Table of Contents

- Health and the Worksite** 3
 - Why Use a Worksite Wellness Program? 4
 - The Evolution of Worksite Wellness 5
- Types of Programs** 6
 - Taking a Stand 7
 - Transforming the Office 8
 - Healthy Highlight: Victory Bank 8
 - Leveraging Technology 9
- How Wellness Affects Business** 10
 - Getting Healthy Results 11
 - Programs in the Community 12
 - Healthy Highlight: Sealstrip Corporation 12
 - Wellness Initiatives by the Foundation 13
- Implement Your Program** 14
 - Research Programs 15
 - Find a Partner 16
 - Set Goals and Gain Support 17
 - Launch Your Program 18
 - Bring a Healthy Attitude Home 19
 - Begin Your Worksite Wellness Journey 20
- Works Cited** 20
- About the Foundation** 21

Health and the Worksite





Why Use a Worksite Wellness Program?

Full-time employees spend a lot of time at work. Over the years, the way we work can impact the way we live. In fact, our long-term health can be directly affected by the attitudes and practices we take toward our health in the worksite. Decades of sitting, leaning or standing can all take their toll. In fact, more than 75% of chronic disease is related to poor lifestyle habits like lack of activity, smoking and poor diet. And if an entire workforce is engaged in these habits, it can negatively affect a company's bottom line.

Given the amount of time we spend at work, commuting and driving to meetings, it makes sense for employers and employees to team up and build healthy habits together. A worksite wellness program does exactly that—by promoting healthy activity across an organization. When everyone is working toward a healthier mind and body, employees are engaged and focused, and can even improve a company financially.

The Evolution of Worksite Wellness

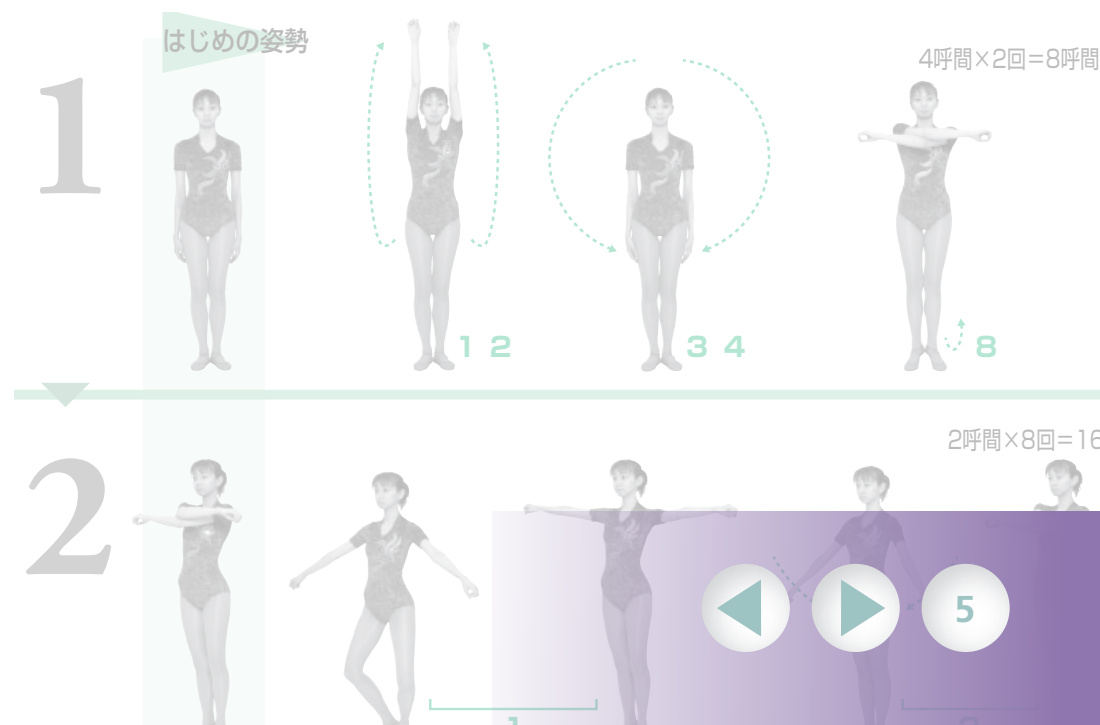
Many employers understand that having healthy employees is a good thing—they contribute more, perform better and help create a more attractive company culture. It's the reason so many employers offer health insurance. But while health insurance helps employees take care of illnesses and injuries, a worksite wellness program is a proactive method to keep employees healthy.

The first wave of worksite wellness initiatives focused on enhancing company facilities to include fitness centers, which gave employees a convenient way to keep in shape. Unfortunately, this was not a solution for every company. Later, companies looked back to their health insurance plans. They found that they could create incentive by offering lower health insurance rates through programs to manage stress better, improve nutrition and/or quit smoking. Today, many wellness programs utilize exercise programs, replace office furniture with more health-focused equipment and leverage technology.

Other world cultures have instituted wellness programs for decades. In Japan, a national exercise called Rajio Taiso is broadcast on radio and TV. The calisthenics movements can be performed at work, at home, at school or even at a local park. Daily warm-up exercises like this help raise the person's energy level, especially when performed in the morning. [Rajio Taiso](#) is even used as a team-building exercise in some Japanese businesses.



Students doing morning Rajio Taiso during the summer



Types of Programs



Taking a Stand

Currently, one of the most popular programs is moving employees away from the “sitting all day” mentality. Because sitting has been linked to everything from certain types of cancers, cardiovascular diseases and stroke to obesity, osteoporosis and diabetes, it’s a perfect target for a new wellness program.

Standing desks allow employees to work as normal, and rest their feet using a bar that sits just off the floor. Some standing desks can be raised and lowered, as needed. There are even treadmill desks—for the ultimate running start to a work day (not recommended for everyone). If desks can’t be replaced, simply sitting on an exercise ball, or switching between the ball and a chair, can help strengthen the body’s core and keep the employee moving.

No money for new furniture or equipment? Try implementing walking meetings or creating a walking group. If employees are willing, you can take the group idea to the next level by planning weekend hikes or biking trips to local parks and trails.



Transforming the Office

Because nutrition is just as important as exercise, your program can focus on promoting nutritious alternatives to employees. For example, offering fresh fruit in the break room/vending machines, in staff meetings or at company celebrations keeps employees away from salty and sugary snacks. For employees who are constantly busy and on the go, having fresh produce available helps them make healthy choices without making a trip to the grocery store.

Adding a gym facility, while not always feasible, is an ideal way for employees to maintain their health. When adding a gym facility isn't an option, partnering with one is the next best choice. Most gyms offer tailored health programs for companies looking to start wellness programs and offer employees free gym memberships or fitness classes.

Some employees are already making nutritious choices and maintaining their health. They just need a quiet space to take a break from the work environment. These employees could benefit from a quiet space or room where they can relax.



HEALTHY HIGHLIGHT: *Victory Bank*

“Worksite Wellness for Victory Bank is now a lifestyle change, not a New Year’s resolution.”

Diana Liriano, Chair,
Worksite Wellness Committee for Victory Bank

Victory Bank’s worksite wellness program involves everyone in their company, all the way up to senior management. The program improved the food choices offered at company gatherings and promotes activities throughout the day. Victory Bank now encourages employees to develop worksite and personal health.

Leveraging Technology

Wearable technology is ushering in a new wave of fitness fanatics, as well as wellness programs. A large oil and gas company recently launched a company-wide program that gives employees access to a health plan with a lower deductible if they are able to take one million steps over the course of a year. Another company hosts "Workout Wednesdays," where employees can participate in several different workouts over the course of the work day.



How Wellness Affects A Business



Getting Healthy Results

“A work place that dedicates time and resources to an employee’s well-being will have a positive impact.”

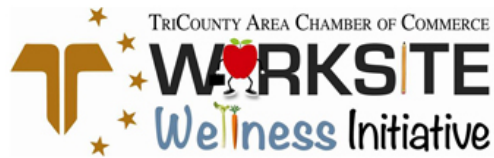
*Eileen Dautrich, President,
TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce*

What results can you expect from a successful worksite wellness program?

On a high level, you could see an increase in energy, attendance, engagement and awareness in employees. There’s also a high chance that stress levels will decrease, which can reduce turnover and increase productivity. Forty-three percent of employers who enacted a wellness program said they were able to lower health insurance premiums.

And as the health of employees improves, the financial health of the company can improve as well. Studies have found that employees participating in a worksite wellness program not only take fewer sick days, but also file fewer workers compensation and disability management claims.

Programs in Our Community



The TriCounty [Worksite Wellness](#) Initiative partners with area businesses to help launch six-month worksite wellness programs that can begin changing a business' culture. The Initiative offers these services to TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce members only, and usually works with businesses of 50 or fewer employees.

A typical program begins with a health fair, where the initial biometric screening takes place. This screening measures employees' cardiac risk profile, blood glucose, blood pressure and BMI. During the fair, employees also receive relevant education materials and presentations from local vendors.

Programs are evaluated based on employee surveys and final biometric measurements. Although results vary among companies, smoking cessation programs have been the most successful. The majority of companies who work with the Initiative have extended their programs past the initial six months.

HEALTHY HIGHLIGHT: *Sealstrip Corporation*



“The [TriCounty Worksite Wellness Initiative] provided us with the tools to turn good intentions and small initiatives into an impactful, sustainable and meaningful Worksite Wellness program that after several years running continues to positively affect our co-workers' lives. Tobacco use is down, healthy food choices and activity levels are up, and we continue to seek out and provide relevant, useful, and fun educational events and programs to our workforce. A focus on co-worker wellness is a key ingredient to employee engagement.”

Heather Chandler,
President, Sealstrip Corporation

Wellness Initiatives by the Foundation

For several years, Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation has used standing desks in the main office. A stool is sometimes used so we can alternate between sitting and standing as needed, all while working on one elevated surface.

We took things a step further in 2013 with the creation of the Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute. This annual event brings together educators who wish to use physical activity as a learning tool to stimulate young minds. Each year, we review the latest research that looks at the relationship between curriculum planning, school-based physical activity and learning. A common recommendation is "brain breaks," where the teacher incorporates movement in the middle of class. By implementing a physical activity at this point, educators can reenergize students so they're more receptive once the lesson resumes.



Implement Your Program





The success of a worksite wellness program depends largely on its planning and execution. For a new wellness program, you will have more upfront work to complete before you can get started. There are few one-size-fits-all programs.

Research Programs

First, discover what health issues affect your company. Are people sitting for most of the day? Are there poor food options available in the cafeteria or break room? Do employees take lots of sick time? Next, determine what kinds of programs your company can support. What funds are available? What room do you have to work with? Will the initiative affect anyone's job? Will it affect the company's hours?

After that, identify employees who can serve as thought leaders or advocates to guide the vision of the program. An internal resource is extremely helpful for giving feedback and encouraging staff participation.

Find a Partner

A consultant or wellness organization is an invaluable asset to any worksite wellness initiative. By leveraging the knowledge of experts, the program is more likely to succeed.

For example, the [Wellness Council of America \(WELCOA\)](#) offers benefits like exclusive training, certifications, resources and product discounts. As mentioned earlier, the TriCounty Worksite Wellness Initiative lets a team of motivated employees from a company meet monthly with a team selected by the Initiative to learn how to launch a program. Local vendors can also team with an employer to talk to employees or host events on almost any health topic, including yoga, meditation, Zumba, time and stress management, smoking cessation, CPR, ergonomics, financial advice, etc.

After this step, you should now be able to choose the program that's right for your business.



Set Goals and Gain Support

Once you know what program you wish to pursue, identify the goals of the program. Think about where you'd like the company culture to be in a year. What goals can individuals set for themselves? Is everyone working toward one goal, or is each person trying to better themselves? What financial or administrative benchmarks can you use to measure results?

Finally, take your proposal to your leadership. Build the case for the program by discussing what you hope to achieve, what results you expect, and what those results mean for the company. Remember, a successful program can positively change the culture of the company. Once you have leadership support, you're ready to launch!



Launch Your Program

Announce the program to all eligible employees, and have your internal resources push for the change. You will need to get adoption of the program to measure employee performance and program results accurately. Communicate clearly and constantly through the lifespan of the program.

At the beginning of the program, and at proper intervals, be sure that the related biometrics are measured (i.e., blood pressure, blood sugar levels, BMI, etc.), so you can track progress toward program goals. Report milestones the program achieves to stakeholders and leadership. For example:

- The program hits the goal participation rate
- Employees start to take less sick time
- Workers compensation claims are reduced



Bring a Healthy Attitude Home

Healthy habits shouldn't stop when you leave the office. The same practices that create a healthier work life can form a healthier home life. For example, after making good nutrition choices at work, it's important to stay consistent by choosing healthy meals and snacks at home. Try substituting sugary snacks with fruits or veggies, or not buying them at all if the cravings are too much.

Also, taking quick breaks (or "brain breaks") is a great idea when you're doing chores around the house—like yard work, paying bills and cleaning. Because chores take up non-work time, we often feel compelled to finish them all at once and move on to our leisure activities. However, just as our body and mind need breaks at work, we owe ourselves breaks at home. Even just stepping away to do some stretches or taking a walk around the block can give your brain and body a nice rest.

If the TV, internet or games dominate your time after work, you might sit as much at home as you do at work. Think about ways you can move more—maybe during commercials or between shows. If possible, add some stretching or cardio exercise. If you use a desk at home, try out a standing desk or exercise ball to keep your body moving.



Begin Your Worksite Wellness Journey

For more resources or information on Worksite Wellness, visit the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce's [Worksite Wellness](#) page, or contact Eileen Dautrich at the Chamber (610-326-2900, eileen@tricityareachamber.com).



Works Cited

2012 Aflac WorkForces Report. N.p., n.d.

"Elevated desks help take a stand for healthy living." The Mercury. 24 October 2015. <http://www.pottsmmerc.com/article/MP/20151024/LIFESTYLES/151029783>

"The impact of wellness programs on America's workforce." The Institute for HealthCare Consumerism. http://www.theihcc.com/en/media_center/editors_picks/the-impact-of-wellness-programs-on-america%E2%80%99s-workf_h2jeegra.html

"View/Review: The Evolution of Workplace Wellness Programs." Baylor Business Review. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 June 2016.

"Wellness Programs - HealthCare.gov Glossary." HealthCare.gov. N.p. Web. 09 June 2016.



About The Foundation

The Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation's mission is to enhance the health and wellness of area residents, providing education, funding and programs that motivate people to adopt healthy lifestyles. Visit www.pottstownfoundation.org for more information about the Foundation. Discover Pottstown area's online community, [Mission Healthy Living](#), an initiative of PAHWF, to learn and share information on how to lead a healthier life. You can also follow Mission Healthy Living on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and follow the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation on [LinkedIn](#) and [Pinterest](#).

More Info:

www.pottstownfoundation.org

Contact Us:

152 E. High St., Suite 500
Pottstown, PA 19464
Phone: 610-323-2006
Fax: 610-323-0047

www.pottstownfoundation.org

Follow Us:

