



Effective Strategies for Workforce Wellness



Healthier Workforce, Healthier Communities

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As we explore who's responsible for leading the Battle Royale against obesity we, of course, look to the healthcare industry (physicians, dietitians, nurses, etc.). In doing so, we have to wonder if these professionals are any different than the rest of us. Are those in the healthcare industry immune to the rapidly growing obesity epidemic?

That answer, unfortunately, is no.

While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that as of 2010, 35.7% of the entire U.S. population is considered obese, researchers at The University of Maryland's School of Nursing found that in a study of 2,103 nurses, 55% were obese. Even more alarming are statistics that indicate healthcare professionals who dedicate their lives to helping

other people and coaching patients to live healthier lives have obesity rates 54% higher than the general population.

What are we missing?

When these nurses were asked what they felt caused this alarming statistic, they pointed to job stress and irregular work hours.

While any behavioral intervention strategy aimed at treating obesity looks at modification of home and work environments, the fact remains that there aren't many ways to "de-stress" a career in the healthcare profession. Overnight shifts, little access to healthy foods in hospitals, running back and forth from patient to patient without time to eat a "real" meal are all realities of daily life for the healthcare professional.

Knowing that we have very little if any control over the work environment or work hours of healthcare professionals, the only way we can begin to address this

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issue is by providing an environment conducive to healthier lifestyles. Even if your workplace isn't quite ready for a full-blown worksite wellness program, here are three key strategies that will help you lead your organization in that direction:

1. Deliver easily consumable educational content:

For a wellness program to work (i.e. for a company to start saving money), learning has to take place. For learning to take place, employees need to be handed easily consumable information in a neatly trimmed box they can open and use right away to immediately improve their lives. Here are the four broad ways your employees can learn information:

- **Written Content:** books, e-books and newsletters.
- **Audio Content:** CDs, teleseminars and downloadable audio programs.
- **Visual Content:** Webinars, DVDs and online videos.
- **Interactive Content:** Lunch and learns, live events/conferences, retreats, workshops or ongoing coaching programs.

If you already have a wellness program in place—are you delivering information that gives employees the chance to consume information in all four methods?

2. Engage employees in the process of healthy living:

To engage employees in this process, you have to get them excited about it. There are three simple ways to get people engaged:

- Make healthy living part of the culture of your organization. Stop talking about exercise, reducing absenteeism and improving morale, and start talking about playing games and having fun with coworkers.
- Help employees see how being healthy is going to help *them* save money (not just the organization). We know that “lean” people, on average, actually earn more than overweight people, spend less in long-term healthcare costs and stay healthier longer,

which translates to having more money to “play with” in retirement.

- Most people will do more for others than they would ever do for themselves. Show employees how being healthy is going to make them a better person. Because of the new knowledge they have, they get to share this information with friends and family and live longer, allowing them to spend more time with their grandchildren.

3. Have a “blow out” event for your employees every year:

Once every year, do something really big for your employees. For the event to be successful, it has to be something that your employees think about, talk about and plan for the entire year.

Here are some ideas on how to make the most of your yearly event:

- **Book quality speakers.** If you get the right speakers, people are going to show up.
- **Find sponsors.** With a great speaker, you will have businesses that are going to line up to donate money to help pay for the event. Talk to local banks, grocery stores, health food stores, health clubs, massage therapy offices, chiropractors – basically any business you think would want to be a part of the event.
- **Bring food and they will come (hopefully paid for by the sponsors).** If you can't get the food paid for, see if a caterer will offer a discount for putting their name down as a “Premier Sponsor.”
- **Get the media involved.** When the media finds out about the event, they're going to want to cover the story; especially if you've secured a great speaker.
- **Have the event offsite.** Book a hotel or confer-

ence room somewhere other than your office. If people are AT work for this event, it's going to feel like work to them.

- **Record the event.** Let's face it – for one reason or another, not everyone is going to be able to attend the event. For the people who can't be there, have it recorded (professionally), and post the lectures on your own website for employees who couldn't be there.
- **Close business for the day.** I know, some of you are cringing right now, but here's what this does:
 - It shows your *customers* that you are trying to make your organization better.*
 - It shows your *employees* that they really matter to you.

**If Starbucks can shut down every single store in the country for a "staff development and training" day to make our experience better, you can do it too.*

The more things your employees are going to see and do and the more great speakers they'll hear, the more likely they'll be to show up. The more people who show up, the better results you're going to see.

If you build a yearly event this way, I promise your employees will line up for it!

Getting employees moving will not only reap tremendous financial benefits (in the form of long-term cost savings on healthcare), but doing so will also lead to a culture of healthy employees that are happier, more productive, and better able to embrace the physical and emotional demands of their work.

For additional resources that will provide the healthcare professional with a variety of solutions that will help lay the foundation for a healthier way of life, please visit ACEfitness.org.



About Adam Bordes, D.C.
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Adam Bordes, D.C., is the Senior Health Strategist with the American Council on Exercise (ACE). A practicing ACE-certified Personal Trainer, Lifestyle & Weight Management Coach, Advanced Health and Fitness Specialist, author, health educator and lecturer for 15 years, he leverages his significant expertise to develop and guide the delivery of high-quality, effective educational and exercise training programs and services to the general public. In addition to promoting ACE's programs among consumers, he oversees efforts to build the organization's relationships with Allied Health organizations, establishing partnership strategies and promoting the use of ACE credentials.

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