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Workplace wellness: Five guidelines for success - by Debra Wein

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Debra Wein
Wellness

Employee wellness programs are here to stay! In 2019, almost 90% of employers with 200 or more workers offering health benefits, also offered a workplace wellness program. These programs include help with weight management, smoking cessation, health screenings as well as lifestyle and behavioral coaching. (KFF Report, Trends in Workplace Wellness Programs and Evolving Federal Standards June 9, 2020) While there is still no standard for how well-being programs are designed, executed or evaluated, one thing is clear, COVID-19 has highlighted the need for organizations to promote employee health as a strategic business initiative. In order to do well-being well and make this a meaningful and strategic part of your benefits offering, consider the following five guidelines.

Make a Plan: You wouldn't roll out a new benefits package without a strategic plan in place, and worksite wellness programs should not be any different. First and foremost, you need to think about the overall goals you would like to achieve.

Gather Data: To develop a successful wellness program, you need to know two things: What areas of wellness your employees are interested in and what health risks are most prevalent in your employee population. Then you need to find a way to marry the two.

Use Technology as a tool, not the entire program: Offering an off-the-shelf, self-directed technology solution is not enough. Too often, employers purchase a technology solution that is not customized to their organization and simply let employees know it exists. Unfortunately, this is not enough to call a wellness program.

Target All Risk Levels: With the coronavirus disproportionately affecting individuals with conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity you need to offer a wellness program that engages ALL of your employees. It is just as important to keep the healthy people healthy as it is to improve the health of those with risk factors.

Customize your approach: Wellness isn't just about exercise and nutrition; it is also about handling stress, mental and emotional wellness, having a healthy family, getting the appropriate preventive screenings and more. Don't get stuck in a wellness rut by offering the same programs every year without any other alternatives or any kind of variety. Vary your content, your approach and length of program.

These are just some considerations for establishing a strategic and comprehensive employee wellness program. Consider speaking with experts in the field for guidance—your insurance provider, benefits consultant or a wellness provider. At Wellness Workdays, we work with clients throughout the U.S. to assess their organization's needs and can provide a free Best Wellness Employer Assessment to identify key areas of strengths and opportunities in your wellness program.

Debra Wein, is CEO and founder of Wellness Workdays, Hingham, Mass.