



3 Key Considerations for the Best Employee Wellness Program

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Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, companies around the world were familiar with the benefits of implementing a wellness program in the workplace, recognizing that supporting the health and well-being of their employees is a win-win for the organizations and individuals alike. As HR consultancy [G&A Partners](#) points out, healthier employees “work harder, are happier, are more willing to help others and are generally more productive.” By contrast, unhealthy employees tend to be absent from work more, have lower productivity, and consume more health care – costing companies more than their healthier counterparts.



Aside from being motivated by the financial costs of unhealthy workers, employers have discovered that a culture of wellness can help attract top talent. If your team is thinking of implementing a wellness program in the workplace, here are some best practices for getting started – and some special considerations for managing wellness programs during and after a pandemic.

1 Define Your Wellness Program Goals and Objectives

Employers have many options when designing a program, with a range of simple to complex options for addressing the top risk behaviors, needs, and interests of employees. Some wellness programs take a broad view of wellness that includes physical, emotional, mental, and financial health.

When crafting your wellness program goals and objectives, start with an assessment* of your workforce. Evaluate current health trends, risk factors for your employee base, and employee interests. Check your current culture, too, to be sure you’re realistic about the starting point for your new program. Be sure to get input from your employees about their interests; you may get ideas you’d not yet considered!

Once you have your priorities, check your resources. Consider the costs of direct program elements (subsidies for gym memberships, healthy snacks at the office, trainer time, workshop leaders, or even student loan payments) as well as indirect elements (program marketing, rewards, and incentives). Consider how many people you’ll need for a wellness committee, how to recruit/select them, how long they’ll serve on the committee, their roles, and time commitments.

Align your goals and objectives with your priorities and resources well beyond the initial launch. Look to at least the next three years.

Goals are meant to be broad and directional. They could include improving workers’ health to reduce healthcare costs and reducing absenteeism or recruiting top talent and increasing retention.

You’ll want multiple objectives for each goal, with specific, achievable, measurable outcomes like these:

- Decrease the number of employees identified as obese by 5% by _____ (date).
- Decrease by 5% the number of employees who identify as smokers by _____ (date).

- Increase by 10% the number of new employees who identify the wellness program as a top 5 reason they chose to work here by _____ (date).

NOTE: Be sure to conduct your assessments in a way that complies with guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) has [this helpful guide](#) for establishing wellness programs, with links to relevant organizations and tools to guide your actions.

2 Create SMART Goals for Wellness Programs During Times of Crisis

Starting in 2020, COVID-19 put a wrinkle into traditional wellness programs, with social distancing requirements suspending access to some of the “standby” elements such as community gyms, on-site weight loss support classes, and workplace perks such as massages. It has also introduced or exacerbated wellness factors such as levels of stress, loneliness, depression, and substance abuse as more people are working from home and missing the social connections and structure of the workplace.

Consider incorporating smart goals for wellness programs that are specific to the challenges and opportunities of working from home and transitioning back to a workplace:

- Sustain overall wellness program participation levels while employees are working from home.
- Maintain employee retention levels through the transition back to work.
- Maintain or improve employee engagement levels.

Then, look for ways to engage with employees around wellness while they’re away from the office or transitioning back to work:

- Redefine existing components to work virtually. “Tuesday Time Outs,” “Wednesday Walks,” “Thirsty Thursdays” could still encourage employees to meditate, exercise, and drink more water
- Keep up monthly fitness challenges, remotely engaging individuals and teams around healthy life choices.
- Offer telehealth and tele-counseling options, so employees keep up with their mental and physical health routines that keep them well – and address new issues while they are still easily addressed.
- Host a virtual wellness fair. Provide workshops and flyers on topics such as maintaining health and wellness while working remotely and how to prevent back pain while working from home.
- Highlight video and on-demand exercise and wellness resources.
- Identify restaurants near work that offer healthy menu options.

3 Tap Technology to Support Your Wellness Program

As with any corporate program with multiple moving parts, technology can help you introduce it, manage it, and engage your employees with the program. Depending on the size and scope of your corporate wellness program, you have a range of technology options to help.

Corporate Wellness Software:

The most comprehensive technology to support wellness is corporate wellness software platforms specifically designed with tools to organize, manage, and administer wellness programs. Such platforms may have health and wellness learning content, health assessment tools, participation tracking, and built-in incentive and reward recognition.

Corporate wellness software is a good fit for a company with clearly established goals, administrative resources, and a committed budget.

Corporate Wellness Apps:

Most enterprise corporate wellness software will have a complementary app for employees to use from their laptops or smartphones, to capture activity and provide feedback right away. There are also many stand-alone apps that individuals and companies use to capture wellness activities – from exercise and habit trackers to virtual guided meditation and group goal collaboration tools.

A single corporate wellness app may be used as the standard across the enterprise to capture data for an enterprise corporate wellness platform. Or multiple apps can be used to allow the flexibility for employees to choose their favorite combinations that fit their preferences and lifestyle.

Most employees will want to use “their own” app(s) to capture progress they can refer to from before they joined a company – and after they leave.

Tools inside existing technologies:

If you’re not ready to implement a new corporate wellness software platform, there may be tools in the software you’re already using to support your health and wellness program goals. For example, some Avilar clients have used our [WebMentor Skills™](#) competency management software to administer self-assessments. Instead of asking about job-specific skills and competencies, they surveyed employees about their health and wellness issues and interests. Other clients have used WebMentor Skills for a daily “wellness check-

in.” Since employees were in the system regularly anyway, it was an easy place to select and communicate a wellness status (green = feeling good; yellow = not feeling myself today; red = feeling bad). The information is easy to monitor and act on – and centrally captured, for future aggregate reports. [Slack emojis](#) could similarly be used to share a custom status – working from the home or office; exercising or meditating; feeling well or sick, etc. In our 24/7 digitally connected world, people are used to sharing a status with others and accepting congratulations or offers of assistance from others as a result.

Whether you’re just getting started or advancing your current corporate wellness programs, now is a good time to assess your employees’ needs, program components, and the tools and technologies to support your work.

Implementing a wellness program in the workplace doesn’t have to be difficult. For ideas about customizing your existing tools and technology, download our [10 Favorite LMS Features](#) guide. Or [contact us](#) to find out how Avilar’s products can support your corporate wellness program.

About Avilar

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