



SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESSES WITH WORKPLACE WELLNESS: THE JOURNAL TIMES

Racine WI

The Journal Times in Racine, Wisconsin began publication as a weekly newspaper in 1852 and as a daily paper in 1856. One hundred twenty employees work around the clock to produce and deliver over 26,000 daily newspapers and provide online news content for Racine County, and these employees still find time for workplace wellness.

Background

In the 1990's, The Journal Times started engaging in workplace wellness conversations and decided to take small steps to create its own wellness program. Even though the company originally planned to start their program slowly, this approach changed once the City of Racine opted to compete for the Well City USA award, offered through WELCOA. In the hopes of achieving a Well City Racine award, The Journal Times, along with 21 area businesses, made a commitment to join the Well City initiative. These businesses helped set the stage for a later award since at



least 20 percent of employers have to be a designated Well Workplace by WELCOA in order to receive the designation. In April 2012, The Journal Times along with other area businesses were recognized for their work to achieve the first Well City Racine award. The approach taken by The Journal Times throughout this process is detailed below.

Health Plan Design & Wellness Programs

The Journal Times' first key step was to strengthen its wellness committee by selecting an inclusive group of employees who would be good advocates to promote wellness initiatives in the workplace. The Journal Times employee wellness program started as a participation-based program. In 2013, the company transitioned to an outcomes-based program based on an employee's total wellness score. An employee's wellness score is calculated using the following criteria: 1) an employee's tobacco and nicotine usage, and 2) an employee's body mass index that is determined by a height and weight calculation. Employees and their spouses or domestic partners covered under one of

the company's medical plans who have zero usage of tobacco and nicotine, as well as a BMI under 30, receive an additional \$840 a year, paid to employees by the company. A second chance opportunity is offered to employees who may not all of the requirements but who make progress during the year, resulting in a monetary award later in the year.

Insurance premiums are not tied to an employee's wellness score; however, the wellness reward they can earn does offset the cost of insurance. Since The Journal Times is only part way through the second year of the program, return on investment has not yet been calculated. "We have buy-in from the top company executives and they know the benefits realized by our employees. We know that it is beneficial and the right thing to do," says Shari Karasek, Human Resources Manager at The Journal Times.

Many employees have expressed interest in managing their weight, thus The Journal Times has responded by offering annual team and individual weight loss challenges. In addition, employees can participate in stress management classes and sign up for wellness activities at the on-site health fair. The Journal Times works directly with local vendors that provide health and wellness services to educate employees about health-related products and services, such as massage therapy. Local vendors come to The Journal Times for free during the wellness fair and provide their services for free or at a minimal cost. These vendors help to educate employees about health-related products and services, such as massage therapy, stress management, nutrition and exercise.

Since sitting for long periods of time at work is detrimental to your health, The Journal Times is encouraging employees to stand more frequently by providing standing workstations. There are now options for people to stand while eating lunch or to stand during work meetings. Karasek says they are trying to make a cultural change that makes standing more the workplace norm.

Participation-based Wellness Program

Either do not require an employee to meet a health-related standard to obtain a reward or do not offer a reward at all.

These programs make up majority of wellness programs.

Outcomes-based Wellness Program

An employee must actually attain or maintain a particular health outcome to obtain a reward. If a measurement or screening is used as part of an initial standard and only those who meet the standard obtain the reward without further action, the program is outcome-based. For example, if an employee's cholesterol is within a healthy range, he or she may pay a lower premium for health insurance. Employees with unhealthy ranges may pay more for their health insurance.

Employee Involvement

Approximately 80% of eligible Journal Times employees participate in the body mass index and smoking assessment since there are financial incentives attached to these assessments. While other wellness activities usually attract a smaller group of participants, many employees are including their spouses and children in these activities. Karasek has noticed an increase in participation especially when she recruits people in person to sign up for wellness programs.

Community Activities

Outside of work, employees participate annually in the Relay for Life event and American Heart Association charity events in the area. Employees at The Journal Times, pictured above, annually participate in the downtown Racine Poker Walk. This walk encourages physical activity by encouraging employers and employees to walk along a designated path and collect playing cards at stops along the way. By the end of the walk, participants that have a poker hand are eligible for awards and prizes.

Looking Ahead

When local businesses join together to apply for a Well City award, they make a commitment to work together to improve the health of their employees and in their communities. Employees at these organizations are given the opportunity to make significant health changes with the support from their employer. The Journal Times counts success in the high percentage of employees participating in its wellness offerings. Several employees at The Journal Times have made life-changing health improvements by deciding to stop smoking, becoming more active and choosing to eat healthy foods. The Journal Times plans to make enhancements to its wellness program and will continue to support the City of Racine's efforts to reapply for Well City recognition every three years.

Advice for Small Businesses

- 1. If you are trying to create enthusiasm about your wellness program, personally reach out to your employees since it is the best way to get a point across.*
- 2. Create a wellness committee and recruit employees that you know will be good advocates in the workplace. After that, just try some things. If something doesn't work right away, try something new. Eventually, you will hit your stride and find programs employees really want.*

Profile prepared by Kayla Brenner. UW PHI, MPH/MPA Candidate. October 2014.