

**Attracting the High-Risk Health Group to the Corporate Wellness Program**

So, you’ve created a number of programs to attract your highest risk individuals. You have marketed them through a series of emails, tweets, and flyers posted in common areas and break rooms. So, why is it when you look to see who has signed up, your folder is empty.

With a high-risk employee population, sometimes it isn’t that easy to get high participation…at first!

Remember with any sales and marketing program, you have to get in front of your potential client more than once. You have to get them to know, like and trust you. You may have to show up in their inbox 5 or more times before you get anything but crickets. However, once you get this group of individuals to participate in your targeted wellness programs, you can make exponential changes in their risk factors and their lives. And, while you are changing the lives of the person who is actually participating in the program, they may (and hopefully will) bring these changes into their homes and introduce these healthy lifestyles to their families – Win – Win!

Let’s take a look at what probably isn’t working, and then what I have found almost always works to attract employees who need the help, but don’t typically participate.

**Mistake #1** – Putting the title of the condition in the marketing and promotion of prevention program. For example:

**Diabetes Prevention 101** – While offering a comprehensive diabetes prevention program might be the best way to help those with Type 1 or Type 2, most employees will not sign up for a program like this. A common reason for this is the fear of being exposed for having an “expensive” condition. Embarrassment and denial are other reasons that people don’t like to talk about their diabetes with anyone – sometimes even their physician.

**Heart Disease Prevention –**Along with the above-mentioned embarrassment, fear of being exposed, and denial, sometimes just the very topic of “heart disease“ causes such negative feelings that the program is doomed before it begins.

**Mistake #2 –** Making all wellness program offerings “one size fits all”. While many companies will have Biggest Loser competitions, the title and the overwhelming aspect of brutal exercise and competitive dieting is a turnoff for most people who are not already healthy – not to mention these programs are unsafe and have no real place in a worksite wellness program.

**What Works:**

Instead of naming the disease or chronic condition, try creating a program that is more inclusive and less likely to cause a stress-response.

**Weight Management 101** – *How to change your weight without changing every single thing you eat and do!* This type of program is geared toward individuals who would like to lose weight (which will change the trajectory of their disease) but don’t want to talk or think about their diabetes or heart disease. Letting them know up front that this is not going to be scary and require a restrictive diet (hat they have likely tried countless times in the past) will help attract those who most need the program.

**Walking While Talking** – Creating some walking meetings will encourage even the most sedentary individual to move with their peers. Walking is typically an inclusive activity and just starting a walking program can change a person’s health.

**Couch to 5K –** This type of program takes individuals who do not consider themselves fit and teaches them, step-by-step, how to participate in a 5K event. There is no emphasis on running the event and it should be clear that if they plan to walk the entire 3.1 miles, they will have plenty of company. Training for something alongside people with similar fitness levels helps individuals achieve a goal and have fun doing so! A couch to 5K has all of the elements of a successful program: Goal setting, small steps to reach the goal, a timetable and a final event to feel that wonderful sense of accomplishment.

**Recipe Makeover** – Many people who are overweight or obese have other chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Often times people are cooking unhealthy meals at home because they simply don’t know that there are some easy tweaks to make a great recipe healthy as well. A fun recipe makeover competition with some nutrition tips throughout will help people start looking at how they can change some of the ways in which they cook and eat.

So, while your wellness program might be a work in progress, reaching the higher-risk employees and making them feel comfortable participating is just a matter of creating the right targeted offer.

If you would like to schedule a consultation or if you would like to receive a sample of one of our online wellness courses, contact us at:

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