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Wellness Trend Report: Wellness Committees and Their Importance

Prepared by the Lawley Corporate Wellness Team

Workplace Wellness Committees

Committees can be among the most important working forces of an organization². By definition, committees are a body of persons delegated to consider, investigate, act on, or report on some matter⁴. Further, they serve as units of the organization, taking work and breaking it into meaningful and manageable tasks. Committee work should be a rewarding experience for both the members and the organization². Efficient committees can improve culture and cohesiveness between team members and across all levels³. They provide an opportunity to collaborate with coworkers outside of one's regular work.

While organizations often have several different committees, one of the most impactful one's to consider having is a workplace wellness committee. Designing and managing an employee wellness program is an important step in improving the health and productivity of employees and potentially improving overall cost of employer-provided health care⁷. Wellness programs can benefit employers by lowering health care costs, reducing absenteeism, achieving higher productivity, and improve employee morale and loyalty. Since health insurances costs are ever-increasing and the importance of employee health and wellbeing continues to be at the forefront, employers should consider implementing a well-thought out wellness program that benefits both the employee's health and the employer's bottom line.

After conducting a needs assessment and obtaining management support, an employer can create an internal, employee-driven wellness committee that helps build and sustain a wellness culture in the organization⁷. This committee will help build organizational support and effectiveness for the

wellness program. When companies create a solid wellness committee, it empowers the employees who take part – inside and outside the committee⁸.

The Function of a Workplace Wellness Committee

The main role of a wellness committee is to communicate, participate, motivate and support the organization's worksite wellness program in order to: Create a healthy worksite and a culture of wellness, foster collaboration and enthusiasm among employees, and provide a communication link between employees and management⁵. Wellness committees have the ability to represent and share co-workers' ideas and concerns, reshape the company's culture to promote healthy living and encourage a positive work environment.

A workplace wellness committee gives employees a sense of ownership of the wellness program⁶. It gives them a sense of control over what is taking place within the organization. Employees are happier and more productive when they feel they have control of what happens at work. Successful wellness programs have a lot of tasks that need to be completed, but the good news is that a wellness committee can help do the work that is required to have a great program.

Important Considerations for Creating a Wellness Committee

There are important considerations for any employer looking to create a workplace wellness committee. In the following sections, you will find information that can be helpful for kickstarting a wellness committee, or refreshing a current one.

Wellness Committee Leader

First and foremost, it is important to identify who within the company will facilitate and lead committee members, otherwise known as the Wellness Chairperson. This individual could be responsible for creating a meeting schedule and sending calendar invitations, creating and emailing out the agendas, facilitating the conversation at meetings, delegating responsibilities to other committee members when applicable, asking committee members for ideas and feedback regarding additional activities and goals, communicating with leadership about major feedback or requests, and collaborating with external wellness consultants or specialists for support, resources and best practices when available (i.e. Lawley Corporate Wellness Consultants, Health Plan Wellness Specialists, Wellness Platform Account Managers).

Employers may also want to address these additional considerations for the wellness committee ⁷:

- Determine in advance how long wellness committee members will serve and how new members will be selected. Employers may want to alternate committee members annually to avoid burnout and to obtain new perspectives.
- Select committee members who can best represent their peers, motivate others and support the implementation of the wellness program. Employers may want to obtain the support of committee

members' supervisors in providing each committee member time to devote to the committee activities.

Recruit Members

Once these considerations are established, recruitment of members can begin. Generally, it is recommended that there be a minimum of three committee members and no more than twelve committee members depending on the size of the organization ⁵. Employers should solicit committee members by invitation or ask for volunteers. It is important to ensure that the committee has cross-sectional representation, such as members from various occupations, levels, locations and demographics to ensure complete representation of the entire workforce population. Recruiting members can be done through a survey link, letter, email or employee newsletter.



Establish Committee Procedures and Ground Rules

In order for the committee to be successful, it is important to establish its procedures. Wellness committee meetings should occur on a regular, scheduled basis. Meetings can take place once a month, every other month, or quarterly for approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on the size of the organization and the established frequency. For instance, if there are 12 committee members across several different locations and the meeting frequency is quarterly, the meetings may be longer (90 minutes to two hours) because of the large amount of content that needs to be covered. On the other hand, if the organization has a well-established wellness program and is much smaller, meetings may take place monthly, but only need to be for 30 minutes to cover all content. A good starting place is having monthly meetings for 45-minutes to an hour and then adjust as needed.

Each meeting should have a formal agenda along with minutes and supporting documents. Building collaboration across the team is important for success. Consider establishing ground rules and responsibilities to establish an environment where committee members feel valued, safe and empowered.

Committee Meeting Kickoff

A kickoff meeting will help set the framework for how the committee will work together and how the planning will be carried out ⁵. When planning the kickoff meeting, ensure invitations are sent at least two weeks in advance, that the time of the meeting accommodates to different time zones and provide participants with options to call-in virtually or attend in-person.

The first meeting can be a great time to discuss the purpose of the wellness committee, introduce



Sample Wellness Committee Member Responsibilities

For the 2022 *Company Name* Wellness Committee, below are the responsibilities and expectations of each member. By completing the below tasks, members will receive a half day of PTO.

- 1) Attend Monthly Meetings:** Committee members are expected to attend 10 out of 12 monthly meetings.
- 2) Take Minutes:** Each member will be responsible for taking meeting Minutes for at least one meeting during the year.
- 3) Execute One Wellness Initiative:** Help plan and execute at least one initiative throughout the year (promote the initiative, collect challenge forms, point of contact etc.,).
- 4) Promote the Program:** Look for opportunities to promote the wellness program to your coworkers and encourage participation.
- 5) Participate in the Program:** Take pride in the program and participate in the initiatives.

committee members to each other, and establish specific roles to keep the committee on track. The kickoff meeting is also a great time to select a name for the committee and develop a mission statement. Think of the first meeting as being a fun way to engage committee members and get them excited about what is to come next, while also ensuring the members are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Once a wellness committee has established goals and action steps, it will be important to meet monthly to report progress and offer feedback on current initiatives. Additionally, consider keeping these important items in mind ⁸:

- **Budget:** Keeping a budget in mind while goal setting is helpful to keep initiatives realistic. Stick to the budget your leadership has approved and draw on additional resources from external resources such as your insurance broker, health plan and other organization partners. Sometimes, partner vendors can provide giveaways or items to support your wellness programming. There are also incentives that can be offered to employees for participating that are not monetary. Be strategic about which initiatives need incentives attached, and which ones do not.
- **Reporting:** It is important to reflect upon feedback and measure employee satisfaction as wellness initiatives expand. Employee feedback can be measured through Employee Wellness Interest Surveys or through committee members soliciting feedback throughout the year. It is also important to keep track of employee participation in the various wellness initiatives throughout the year. This is not only helpful for measuring success, but also for budget approval.
- **Strategy:** Discuss plans for current and developing programs. Setting broad goals like healthier eating, exercise etc., paired with activity ideas like monthly luncheons or group fitness opportunities at each

meeting can help the committee narrow down the plan of action. The committee could establish monthly or quarterly themes, and then coordinate challenges and initiatives around those themes.

Keep Track and Reward Committee Member Participation

The typical commitment for wellness committee members is one to two years. Ensure that you touch base with members throughout their commitment to understand whether or not they are enjoying their involvement. Employees want to feel valued and like the work they are doing matters. Wellness committees are uniquely positioned to assist employees with achieving this sense of value. Make sure you are not only soliciting feedback from all employees of the organization, but also from committee members along the way.

Some companies have also found success with rewarding committee members for their ongoing participation. Examples include offering a half day of PTO for attending at least 10 of 12 meetings, providing free lunch to all committee members, spotlighting committee members on the company intranet and so on. Appreciate those that are dedicated to your organization and helping the wellness program succeed.



Conclusion

Wellness committees have the ability to plan, promote and implement wellness initiatives for employees to improve their wellbeing from mental to physical health. They require team effort and collaboration across all levels and departments of an organization. Once a wellness committee is established and created, it can create positive change. Employees are a company's greatest asset, and having a committee dedicated to employee health and wellbeing will help an organization carry out initiatives that promote a supportive environment for employees to thrive.

Creating a wellness committee is not as intimidating as it might sound. Our Lawley Corporate Wellness Consultants are here to help you every step of the way. Our team has experience creating committees for employer groups of all sizes and across all industries. We can support your organization in several ways from recruiting committee members to helping facilitate meetings and dedicating member responsibilities. A solid foundation creates success for any new program launch and we are there to assist you with building this foundation. If this is your organization's first go-around for your wellness committee, expect some bumps along the way, but understand that you are in the process of creating something truly valuable for your entire employee population.

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