

Workplace Wellness



Workplace Wellness: Gain Senior Management Support for Wellness Programs

Developing and executing a successful wellness program at your organization can be extremely difficult, especially without the support of upper-level management. While many companies find that senior management is 100 percent behind their wellness initiatives, other companies' higher-ups may struggle to find the value of such efforts. In fact, some may not be able to make the connection between the company's overall business plan and the wellness of their employees and families.

To get the senior management at your company on board with a new wellness program, you must first determine their level of support and then act accordingly. According to the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA), management's attitude towards wellness falls into one of five categories. Once you determine where your management falls, you can then gear your efforts towards their outlook and avoid potential roadblocks in the process.

Category #1: Active Opposition

Management is opposed to a wellness initiative and does not see the value in its implementation. To work well with this type of management, listen to their opposition and then suggest minor things that you could do to improve workplace wellness. By constantly being open to their concerns, the leaders may be more accepting of your ideas down the road because they see how open you are to them.

Category #2: Quiet Opposition

Management feels that a wellness initiative is a waste of company time, though they do not voice this opinion. Instead, they do not participate in wellness events unless they are required to do so. To work well with this type of management, do some investigating to determine if they find any part of your wellness plan appealing and build on that. Sell those ideas and then petition for more additions to the program as they begin to warm up to the idea of a wellness initiative.

Category #3: Neutral

Management is preoccupied with other priorities and does not feel strongly about your wellness initiatives either way. To work well with this type of management, present statistics and case studies suggesting how wellness programs can benefit your organization. This should persuade them to take a greater interest in the initiatives. One resource, for example, is the Obesity Cost Calculator from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. It estimates how much

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obesity is costing your workplace and the impact that interventions can have. You can access it here: www.cdc.gov/leanworks/costcalculator/index.html.

Category #4: Quiet Supporters

Management does see the value in a wellness program but they are unaware of how to contribute to its growth and success at your organization. These individuals are active participants in wellness events but are unsure how to make the program flourish. To work well with this type of management, show them how they can become more active in the program. It is wise to get wellness gurus involved to show higher-ups how they can make a difference and support other employees in company's wellness efforts.

Category #5: Wellness Champions

Management is in full support of all wellness initiatives implemented by HR. They fully understand the financial and health benefits of a wellness program and want to educate others on the subject. These individuals also typically live a healthy lifestyle and encourage others to do so as well. To work well with this type of management, encourage their existing behavior and let them know how much you appreciate their support. Ask for their assistance in getting the wellness word out and ask what they envision for the future of your wellness initiative.