

Employee Engagement Key to Developing Healthier Employees

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Healthcare expenses continue to rise for employers and employees alike. While healthcare reform attempted to make healthcare more affordable, more than anything it heightened our awareness of just how contentious and important an issue it is to most Americans. As a business or business owner, what tangible opportunities exist to slow or reduce annual healthcare costs?

“Improve your health” is a battle cry heard frequently throughout companies both small and large. Develop healthier employees and by deductive reasoning, related healthcare costs should decline. But how, and more importantly, what, drives successful results? The key is engagement.

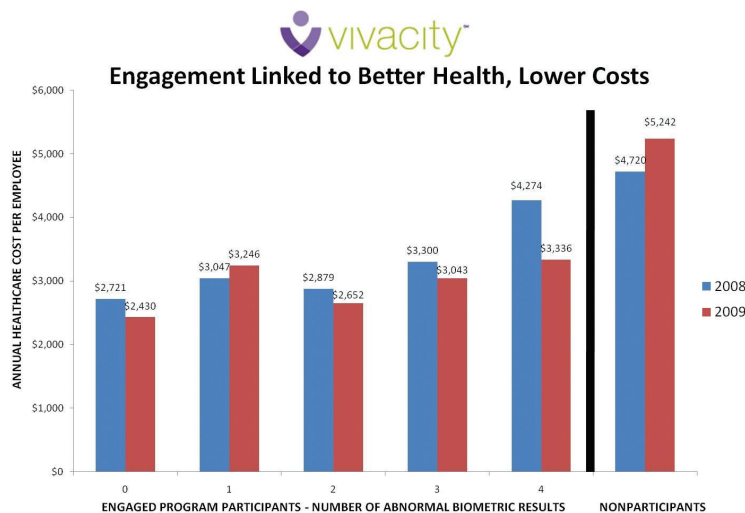
Simply offering opportunities for employees to participate in healthy activities, a discount to the local health club or distributing information on healthy choices may produce satisfactory results. However, as we have learned through our own research, there are no sim-

ple answers. Above all, engagement is the hidden key to success. The challenge becomes: “can the program generate engagement?” Develop and support an engaged participant and results point to significant financial benefits, not to mention a healthier and happier employee.

Even if a participant had all five biometric readings outside the normal range, their average annual healthcare costs were still lower than a non-participant. Subsequent research revealed that average year-over-year medical costs for engaged employees decreased by 9% or about \$300 and participants recorded a significant lowering of their 10 year risk of heart disease.

Comprehensive wellness programs have traditionally been available only to large employers. Generally speaking, small to medium-sized businesses do not have the support mechanism in place to offer and sustain a workforce wellness program nor the employee base to create economies of scale. While Vivacity

can meet the demands of a multi-billion dollar corporation, it recently launched a series of highly innovative products designed exclusively for small to medium-sized businesses. Most importantly, to promote a supportive and ultimately successful program, Workforce Wellness is designed to meet the needs of companies ranging from 25-500 employ-



Vivacity tracked a client’s progress on five key health measurements. Research revealed that healthcare costs for employees engaged in the worksite wellness program averaged more than 30% lower in year one than for those who elected not to participate. The chart measures in real dollars the difference between an engaged participant and non-participant.

ees and can include professional consultation with a Vivacity wellness professional. This professional advice not only helps clients design a workforce wellness program that meets their specific

needs, it also fosters long-term engagement that is critical to success.

Dave Johnson, MD, is President of Vivacity. He has an extensive back-

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