

benefits what's working

MAGAZINE

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employee engagement
in wellness

by | **Kristen Miller, CEBS**

More than half of U.S. employees have an undiagnosed or untreated chronic condition.¹ At Westinghouse Electric Company, we face that issue by working to engage employees in their health to support our long-term growth and industry leadership.

Westinghouse recently experienced several years of dramatic growth. In the United States, we currently serve 17,667 lives—7,930 of them employees—resulting in a 16% increase in our medical plan population. This growth presented an opportunity to expand our focus on improving employee health while trying to manage rising medical costs.

We learned early on an important lesson about the value of employee feedback. At the outset of our population health program, we began providing incentives for workers who were enrolled in disease management. But employees with lower health risks who did not qualify for the program were unhappy that they had no access to this type of support or incentives. So we made lifestyle coaching an option for everyone. That early stumble taught us we needed to listen to our employees. Since then, we have worked with our health and wellness vendor partners to incorporate employee feedback as our programs evolve.

Today we offer a variety of programs and services to employees and, in many cases, their covered dependents—from traditional disease management programs to on-site health coaching, workout facilities and online wellness resources. Following are some of the lessons we've learned, best practices and strategies that have worked in engaging employees.

Refresh and Revitalize Programs

We have found that to keep employees engaged and motivated, we need to continue introducing new wellness programs. We also must understand the needs of our varied culture. A large number of employees travel frequently. This year, we promoted a nutritional scoring program with both on-site and digital components to help users make better, healthier food choices. The program is highly recognized in some parts of the United States and even used by several large grocery chains in their stores. Employees can access the program through our incentive tracking website using a single sign-on. Travelers who want to make better food choices can use their smartphone to scan bar codes on common packaged items to obtain a value between 1 and 100, with 100 being the most nutrient-dense choices.

Westinghouse is a large company with multiple locations, and we believe it is important to provide all employees access to health coaches, even on-site coaches at some locations. Stress management classes are among the programs our employees have requested. These classes are offered as on-site wellness activities at some locations.

Our wellness specialist meets monthly with local wellness champions to talk about Westinghouse's national programs and share information on local initiatives. We've also hosted webinars about stress management, particularly beneficial for employees who travel and aren't able to attend in-person sessions.

Lifestyle coaching, available to all employees, has been incredibly popular—especially when employees are offered incentives to



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meet with the coach. At our headquarters location we recently included an on-site health coach option. All sessions for January, February and half of March were filled by the end of the same day that the e-mail was sent announcing the coaching. An extra day of coaching sessions likely will be added each week.

Reach People According to Their Needs and Preferences

Many large employers make a significant effort to invest in on-site wellness, whether through fitness classes, facilities and/or biometric screenings. But often, some employees do not have access to these programs and services.

The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania headquarters has a full gym, jogging trails, classes and on-site programs. However, it was critical not to overlook employees who travel frequently, work remotely or work in locations nationwide. The company's leadership team bought into the need to broaden the reach of wellness efforts, which was critical to their success.

As a result of feedback from employees and discussion with leadership, we invested in a strong program for off-site engagement, including a robust online portal for health risk assessment, wellness tools such as the NuVal® nutrition scoring system, personal health records for patients to access with up-to-date information, classes and other resources, such as educational information and health tips.

A 56-page, full-color health magazine is sent quarterly to all employees' homes. In the introduction to each issue, an executive writes about the importance of personal health management. The first half of the magazine is specific to Westinghouse, with articles spotlighting employees and their healthy success stories. The remaining articles focus on helping employees and their families maintain a balanced lifestyle.

Use Technology to Optimize Program Impact

Because of how health care technology has evolved, employers now have a variety of tools that were not available when they began offering wellness programs. We've had access to claims data along with health risk assessments (HRAs) and self-reported data from the MyActiveHealth portal, plus biometrics. The use of biometrics has allowed us to explore human nature and tendencies and, when aligned with incentives, has helped us drive behavior change. Using real Westinghouse aggregated data within our data warehouse has benefited the company and improved its population health program in a number of ways:

- Use of advanced analytics helps the company understand what parts of our program are really working and where we have room for improvement.
- Analysis of claims data aids in understanding the impact of a disease management program. We continuously analyze the claims data and are able to track individuals with chronic conditions to see if we are moving them into healthier categories through measurable improvements to their health. Through data analysis, we are able to determine which employees have more immediate health needs.
- Statistics provide insight into how many participants earned an incentive and the level of incentive they've



earned. We can then look at the average cost per year by incentive level earned.

Ensure Vendors Understand Corporate Culture

It is common for large companies to partner with vendors for specific health, education and wellness initiatives. It is essential for health coaches, disease management nurses and others who interact with employees to truly understand the company's culture.

All of Westinghouse's health and wellness vendors that engage with employees undergo training to help them to better understand the company and work with employees who routinely travel and can't benefit from on-site programs. Vendors are viewed as an extension of the benefits department. In many cases, they have more direct contact with our employees than our internal resources do.

We have found it beneficial to visit the customer service centers of our vendors and educate them about the various company roles our employees fill, worker demographics and corporate values.

Consistent Messages Across All Media

Creating a Westinghouse wellness brand has meant a more consistent experience for the employees and has helped to build trust. For example, in 2007, Westinghouse created the NEW Start® wellness brand and logo (NEW stands for nutrition, exercise and wellness). This includes all of our wellness initiatives. Vendors were willing to brand brochures and posters as our own—which was important to us.

Use and Track Incentives

Discussion around using incentives continues in the wellness industry. At Westinghouse, we have tried to stay up to date on the latest strategies to make the best use of incentives.

We started out with piecemeal incentive distribution—handing out gift cards or creating an online raffle for differ-

ent activities. Participation was hard to track, and the effort was not highly effective.

In 2011, we developed an incentive program called Wellness Dollars that integrated a variety of incentives toward reducing health plan premiums and deductibles and earning a higher level of short-term disability. Employees saw the impact of their activities on medical costs—a strong reinforcing message we found much more powerful than just handing employees a gift card. Results have shown this approach works. For example, HRA completions increased by 53% from 2010 to 2012.

We send information about incentive completions to our data warehouse so that we can track the effectiveness of incentives and continue to refine the program.

See Results Firsthand

At Westinghouse, we continue to see employee participation increase in a variety of programs. For example, we reached a 44.6% engagement rate in our disease management program for 2013.

We also have had an incredible 15-fold increase in engagement—both telephonic and online—in lifestyle coaching. Our incentive program has reached a 46% participation level, with 31% of employees completing three or more incentive activities.

Not just one strategy or initiative has led to our success in these areas. We make a concerted effort to integrate new ideas. We work with vendors to stay tuned in to the latest developments. And we listen to employees about what is and isn't working. Based on these experiences, I believe that improving engagement is really a journey and not a destination. ❹

Endnote

1. Charlie Estey. "Find the soul of your wellness program," *Employee Benefit News*, July 16, 2014; available at http://ebn.benefitnews.com/news/ebn_hc_wellness_disease/find-the-soul-of-your-wellness-program-2742793-1.html.

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