

Case study: Activity based wellness solution

AFG finds healthier and happier an award winning combo.

Situation

Rising benefit costs and expanding waistlines - these are why 2008 saw Scott Beeken, Vice President of Benefits Strategy at American Financial Group (AFG), looking for an enhancement to their existing employee wellness program.

Solution

AFG chose a comprehensive wellness solution: annual health screenings combined with an activity-based wellness solution and an obesity management program. The result? The AFGreat Health Challenge implemented in May 2008. It consisted of a six-month Million Step Challenge and a Weight Watchers enrollment program. To entice employees to participate, grand prizes based on a lottery concept were drawn for eligible employees who met individual and company targets.

AFG wanted an activity program that everybody could participate in. As such, selecting WalkingSpree's enhanced pedometer-based walking program was a no-brainer for AFG. Scott Beeken said, "We looked at a lot of options.... We wanted something that you could have confidence in, that could have credibility that it was fair – that people weren't cheating."

Employees had to have 'skin in the game' to participate in a wellness program. Over 2,700 people purchased pedometers in 2008 – about 50% of the eligible employees. After the program finished, most employees decided to continue walking because they enjoyed the WalkingSpree program. Because of the success of the first program, a similar wellness challenge was implemented in April 2009 with an additional 500 employees registering in WalkingSpree. Approximately 300 participated in Weight Watchers in 2008 and 150 in 2009.

Results

Improved cholesterol levels, glucose levels, HDL levels. Improved BMI. Decreased rates of Metabolic Syndrome. Beeken states, "The most impressive results have been in looking at year over year biometric screening results for our employees with potential health risks. On average, about 70% of those with elevated cholesterol, glucose or triglyceride levels have improved their results year over year when retested. We attribute most of these results to our WalkingSpree program."

50%

participation rate

6%

more employees in the
"Healthy Range" of the
Health Index Score

31%

reduction in the number
of employees in the
highest health risk level

17%

reduction in number of
people in "Sedentary
Lifestyles" category
(from 59% to 42%).

"The Challenge also led to key intangible changes," added Spencer Stooksbury, AFG's Director of Corporate Benefits. "I've seen the positive momentum in employee morale. Lines of communication have opened as employees are walking and talking together – something we hadn't anticipated! Many people have shared the stories of how their lives have improved, including spouses reconnecting over evening walks."

Future

As of May 2010, AFG will be implementing a new AFGreat Health Challenge as a year-round self-sustaining program. WalkingSpree once again will be their vendor of choice for delivering the activity-based wellness solution.

Awards

2008 Healthiest Companies in America
2008 Benefits Professional of the Year (Scott Beeken)
2008 and 2009 Apex Award for Innovative Benefit Strategies

