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Case Study: Hancock Regional Rewards Healthy Actions

By Alex Palmer
June 19, 2012

If your business is making people healthier, your staff should probably be healthy themselves. This was the philosophy that led Hancock Regional Hospital to embrace an ambitious, multi-year healthy incentive program that has already had substantial impact at the company.

The Greenfield, IN-based hospital had a wellness program in place for years, but with healthcare costs rising at a faster pace recently, the company's leadership decided to take more significant steps. They researched what other companies in the Indianapolis area were doing to promote wellness and found that walking-focused programs seemed to be the most effective and flexible health-promotion programs.

"It was one of those win/win situations that fit into our model of trying to get our associates healthy," says Jayme Kramer, human resources generalist of Hancock Regional.

While for years they had encouraged employees to get regular biometric data readings, now rewards would be offered to those who kept their Body Mass Index below 30 and maintained a healthy blood pressure and LDL cholesterol level. Taking part in an additional screening, whether it be a mammogram, colonoscopy, or prostate exam, earned employees additional rewards.

Kramer and her team reached out to the corporate wellness company Walkingspree, and together they developed a three-year walking rewards program for Hancock. Each employee who signed up was given a pedometer, and when he hit 500,000 steps within a year, he earned \$35. At 1 million steps, she received \$75, and at 2.5 million steps, the employee earned another \$140, meaning a total of \$250 can be earned in a year.

The pedometer can be hooked up directly to any computer where the information is loaded onto a cloud-based platform that makes it simple to track the employee's progress.

"We're technology based, so someone can't just say, 'sure I did 10,000 steps today,' they have a pedometer and have to show some solid results," says Lisa Rousseau co-founder and vice president of member engagement for Walkingspree.

The program quickly caught on, as 575 of Hancock's 840 associates signed up. Now nearing its first anniversary, in the program's second year, Hancock will extend the same rewards to spouses, and for the third year, employees' children will be eligible.

While Hancock uses cash rewards for its walking program, Rousseau emphasizes that they see impact from clients using a wide range of merchandise and gift card rewards, as long as there are clear goals that allow for those at all fitness levels to participate.

"iPods or iPads are very common milestone incentives," says Rousseau. "Instead of rewarding a top walker, we encourage clients to do a raffle system – it's not about rewarding the person who is already fit, it's about getting the sedentary people moving."

Indeed, in addition to the personal goals Hancock has set for staff, the company also holds a range of other contests. In one recent challenge, the team with the largest average number of steps earned a gift basket. For another contest, employees were challenged to walk 10,000 steps every day for a week to be entered into a drawing to win prizes like a \$75 sporting goods gift card and five free Pilates or personal training sessions.

Hancock has also recently tried out "flashmobs" where the wellness coordinator will drop in on a department and give the person with the greatest number of steps on his or her pedometer a spot reward, whether a branded water bottle or \$25 Visa gift card.

"We really have had some fun with it and there's many things that the wellness team looks at to keep the momentum moving," says Kramer.

So far the efforts have been paying off. Of those participating in the program, 23 percent have been walking 10,000 steps a day or more and 74 percent have been putting in more than 6,000 steps a day on average. Drawing on the numbers coming in to Walkingspree's platform, the company has seen 31 percent of its

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employees lose weight since the program began.

As the program moves into its second year, Rousseau emphasizes that while a healthier workforce can be good for reducing insurance costs, it is valuable in numerous other ways as well.

"One of the things we've discovered is that it impacts the company in multiple ways – because the employees are engaged, there is usually more camaraderie between employees and increased morale toward employer," says Rousseau. "We've had clients in high-stress situations turn to our organization to help, and it's not just about the blood pressure."

For expert advice on running a successful wellness incentive program, check out *Incentive's* recent webinar.

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