



**6 KEY STEPS**  
— TO A —  
**Successful  
Wellness  
Program**

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 **Wellsource**<sup>®</sup>  
THE WIN-WIN WELLNESS SOLUTION

# What Are the Benefits of Wellness?

*You certainly know the consequences of not feeling well, having a headache, or being stressed out. You're not very creative or productive. And life's not much fun.*

*On the other hand, if you're well rested, fit, and energetic, things are different. You do your best work, you feel good, and life is great.*



Companies that have implemented high-performing corporate wellness programs have annual healthcare costs that are \$1,800 less per employee than organizations without such programs.<sup>1</sup>

Now take these same basic concepts and extend them to your whole organization. You can quickly see (and research has shown) that healthy employees:

- Miss less work due to sickness
- Are more productive
- Have lower turnover rates
- Cost their organization less for health care
- Have more positive attitudes about work

A general manager of a large organization recently wrote me a letter giving his evaluation of their newly instituted wellness program. He reported, “My employees look better, feel better, and work better.”

I think he expressed the essence of a good wellness program.

The benefits are even more personal to individuals who participate in a wellness program. As they learn to eat more nutritious foods, become more active, and cope better with stress, their quality of life improves. They feel better about themselves, and they enjoy better physical and mental health. Everyone wins.

As stated in a recent *Harvard Business Review* article,<sup>2</sup> a well-run wellness program doesn't cost an organization money. It *saves* an organization money. The authors showed that for every dollar invested in a well-designed wellness program, the organization saved \$3 to \$6 due to increased productivity and lower healthcare costs. In the past, wellness programs were often considered to be a nice extra – not a strategic imperative. But today, the question is no longer, “Does it make good business sense to have a wellness program?” Rather it's, “What is the best way to design an effective wellness program for my organization?”

## The Cost of Productivity Loss

### Mean annual per person cost because of lost productivity



Lost productivity due to poor health practices can cost a company 2 to 3 times more than even healthcare claims.

In a large study of 28,375 employees, the average estimated cost due to lost productivity from poor health practices was over \$3,000 per employee per year.<sup>3</sup>

*Healthy employees cost less!*

*Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine.*

## The Steps

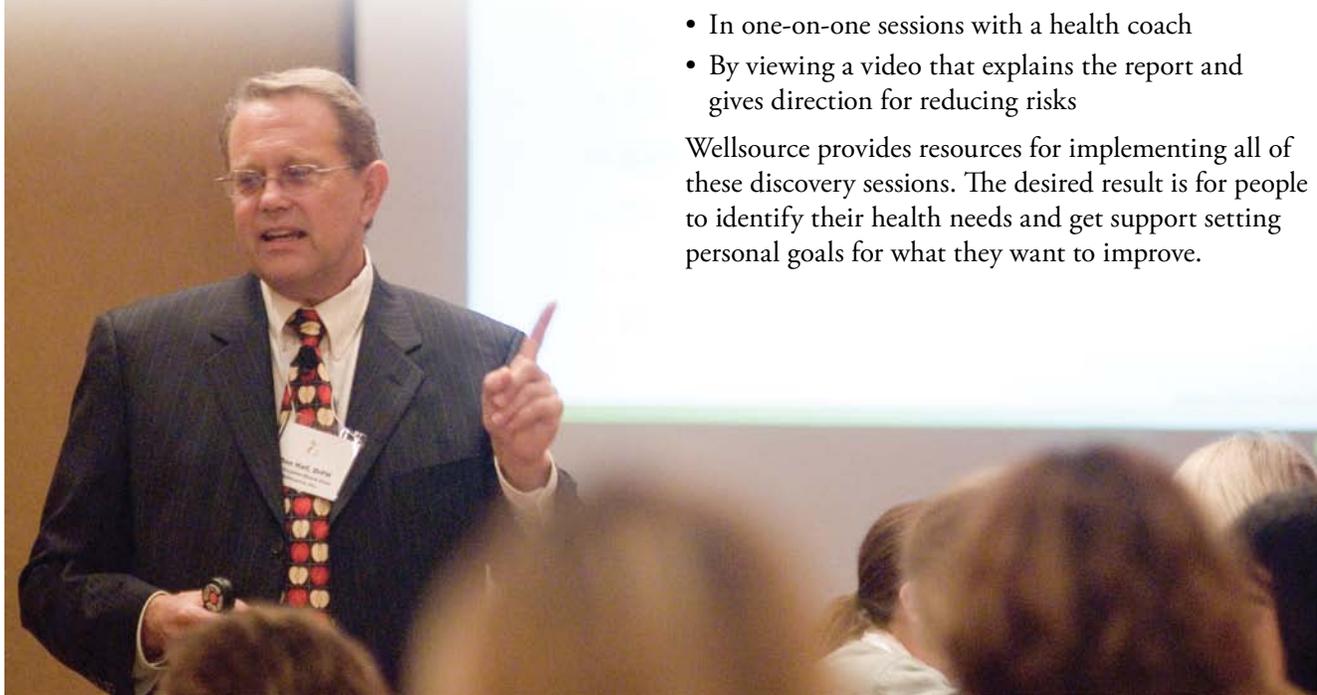
Creating a culture of health can have a profound and positive influence on a company. That's just one of the six key components or "best practices" in a worksite wellness program. Think of the following as your six key steps to wellness success.

### STEP 1.

#### Assess the health of your group.

We recommend that companies start by offering a health and lifestyle assessment along with a health screening. The easy way to do this is to use a comprehensive Health Risk Assessment (HRA). This helps individuals identify their real health needs, and learn how to reduce their risks and get healthier. It also provides motivation to get started.

An assessment also helps an organization identify the most common health needs of its employees, then plan relevant interventions. Finally, an assessment establishes a baseline that documents change. This is crucial. If you can't measure improvement, you won't know if your program is effective.



An example of a comprehensive health and lifestyle assessment is the Wellsource® **Personal Wellness Profile™**. This HRA is easy to administer either online or as a written questionnaire. Contact a local hospital or lab to arrange a simple screening program – one that tests blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and body mass index. You could also include a fitness test like a one-mile walk.

### STEP 2.

#### Discover the results.

The HRA should give each participant a confidential, comprehensive personal report that shows the results of the assessment. The Personal Wellness Profile™, for example, creates individual risk profiles for heart health, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, stress and coping, weight, nutrition, fitness, and safety.

It's important to help participants understand their personal report and show them how to use the information to make needed changes. This can be done in several ways:

- In small group evaluation sessions with a health educator
- In one-on-one sessions with a health coach
- By viewing a video that explains the report and gives direction for reducing risks

Wellsource provides resources for implementing all of these discovery sessions. The desired result is for people to identify their health needs and get support setting personal goals for what they want to improve.

### STEP 3.

## Intervene and educate your participants.

This next step is critical. After individuals set their goals, they'll need resources to help them achieve their goals. For example, offer programs on weight loss, smoking cessation, strength training, learning how to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, improving eating habits, coping better with stress, kicking dependencies, etc. This step may seem daunting. But there are ways to make it manageable and effective:

- **Provide online interventions** and other learning opportunities. Wellsource offers a variety of online interactive learning systems for weight management, stress reduction, better nutrition, getting more sleep, and starting an exercise program. Wellsource also has an extensive **Online Wellness Center™** with more than 2,000 articles and guidelines for lowering cholesterol, eating more healthfully, dealing with depression, stopping smoking, helping with alcohol problems, and more.
- **Present health classes.** Invite proven health organizations – such as Weight Watchers® – to come on site to offer health classes. If they can't come to

your workplace, make a list every month of local health classes, and encourage your employees to attend. Check with hospitals, the local American Heart Association, and other health agencies. If classes have an attendance fee, split the fee with your employees. Do the same for employees who join a local fitness center.

- **Provide health coaches** who can call participants and give professional support and advice. This is very helpful for people who are dealing with complicated problems such as diabetes, and for those who can't readily attend local classes. When needed, health coaches can be arranged through Wellsource.
- **Offer self-study wellness guides.** This approach appeals to busy people. Examples include the many **WellAssured® Guides to Better Health** available from Wellsource. Topics include *A Healthy Heart*, *Living with Diabetes*, *Stress Management and Emotional Wellbeing*, *Quit Smoking*, and nine other titles. Make a library of health videos available for people to download or borrow. Keep a variety of self-education materials on hand to distribute at employee meetings.
- **Encourage medical follow-up.** Encourage anyone with high risks (e.g., high cholesterol, high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, depression) to see a doctor for evaluation and personal guidance.

Helping your co-workers improve their productivity and quality of life offers one of the most rewarding experiences of your career.<sup>1</sup>

**STEP 4.****Motivate and track participation.**

Keeping people motivated and engaged throughout the year is vital for a successful wellness program. Offering incentives can do this. Choose incentives that are particularly meaningful to your employees. Companies usually give prizes, awards, or cash to participants who achieve their goals.

One of the best and most effective incentives is a discount on the portion of health insurance premium that employees pay. Those who participate in wellness activities and/or reach specific health goals (e.g., complete a certain number of aerobic miles per month or attend a class) would pay up to 20 percent less than those who don't. One large company reached over 80 percent participation by offering a \$500 reduction in health insurance contributions per year to employees who actively participated in the wellness program.<sup>2</sup>

A monthly health communication acts as another reminder and motivator. For example, the Wellsource newsletter **WellNotes**<sup>®</sup> helps people stay on top of the latest research and guidelines for healthy living. It also includes a monthly **Health Challenge**<sup>™</sup> that engages participants in healthy lifestyle pursuits 12 times a year.

Having a high participation rate is critical to the success of any wellness program. Aim to have 80 to 90 percent of employees complete the HRA. This will naturally increase participation in your intervention programs. Remove any barrier to participation that you can think of. For example:

- Be sure the company managers support the program.
- Let all employees know in writing that no personal individual health data is shared with management – only anonymous group data.
- Make it easy to participate. Have testing on site, interventions on site and online, and self-study programs available.
- Invite people throughout the year to participate in interventions.
- Provide Lunch & Learn presentations on health topics.
- Keep the program fun.

**STEP 5.****Create a culture of health.**

As you create a social norm in your organization to eat healthfully, be physically active, and not smoke, you also create a powerful environment for change. Your cafeteria can provide healthy meals and table-top tent messages with healthy eating tips. Encourage employees to take the stairs, walk or bike to work, or take activity breaks at noon. Management needs to actively and visibly participate too. Put policies in place that support a healthy environment. For example:

- Provide flex time for exercise.
- Make the work place smoke-free.
- Promote safety.
- Provide healthy snacks at all meetings and in vending machines.
- Provide water coolers and healthy drinks.
- Provide bicycle racks and showers.
- Give rewards and recognition to employees who accomplish health and fitness goals.
- Set a company budget for wellness.
- Subsidize health insurance premiums for those who participate in your wellness program.
- Reimburse employees for half the cost of health classes they complete.
- Arrange a special price for gym memberships.
- Provide an annual Wellness Day to promote good health and feature new wellness activities.

**Make wellness the buzzword  
in your organization.**



**STEP 6.****Measure and evaluate outcomes.**

It's good to evaluate your wellness program once a year. Ask your participants what they liked about it, what was most helpful or least helpful, and what could be done to make the program better next year.

It is also extremely valuable to repeat the HRA and health screening each year. The **Personal Wellness Profile™** includes a Group Progress Report for administrators. It shows the areas where employees improved, and documents the organization's overall success. Management will be very interested in this report.

Participants also receive a personal progress report. Did their overall wellness score improve? Did their *health age* improve – that is, are they “younger” this year than last year? Are their blood tests, BMI, and blood pressure readings better than last year? The report answers these questions. It also gives them the information they need to plan and set goals for the coming year. It helps them see how they've been successful.

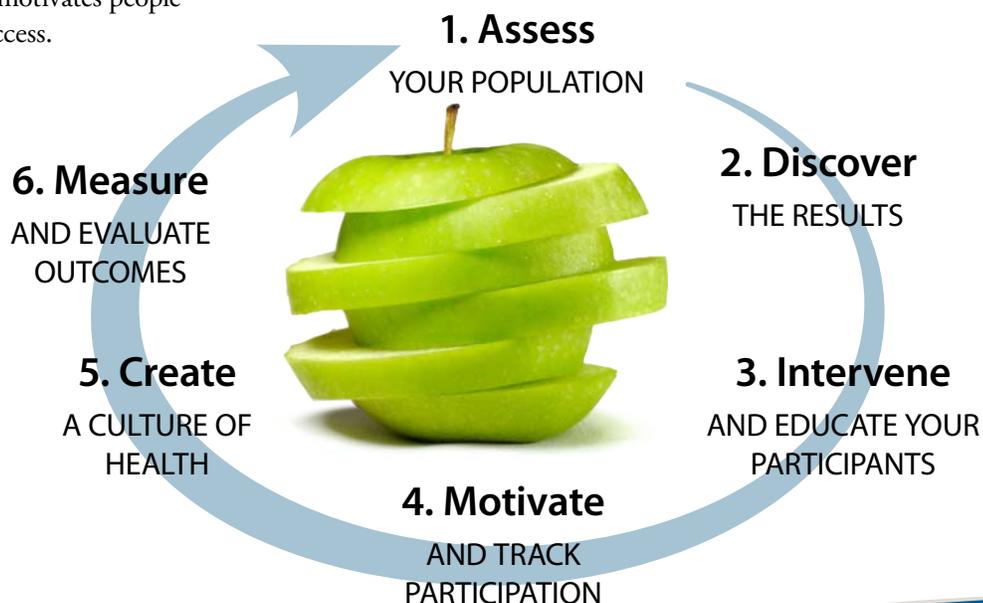
And nothing motivates people more than success.

**SUMMARY**

By actively providing wellness activities and developing a culture of health at your organization, you are investing in the greatest asset in your company – the health and well-being of your staff. It will pay rich dividends in goodwill, increased productivity, and ultimately lower healthcare costs.

By offering worksite wellness, you are turning from a *reactive* approach to healthcare (paying high costs to treat preventable heart attacks, cases of cancer, and diabetes) to a *proactive* approach of prevention and health promotion. Remember: If you do nothing, healthcare costs will continue to skyrocket. Be part of the solution. Be proactive.

For resources to help you initiate an effective wellness program, contact Wellsource at 1-800-533-9355 or visit [www.wellsource.com](http://www.wellsource.com). We'll show you how.



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### About the Author

Dr. Don Hall has made good health his life's work. He began his career as a health educator – teaching community members, nurses, and college students about nutrition and health. In the 1970s, Dr. Hall developed wellness programs for school districts and a worksite wellness program for a health insurance company – one of the first programs in the nation. Seeing a great need for health promotion in the business sector, Dr. Hall founded Wellsource, Inc., a company that would help individuals and groups arrive at their wellness, fitness, and nutrition goals. Wellsource now works with nearly 1,000 corporations and government agencies worldwide.

Dr. Hall serves as an industry expert and continues to lead the company into an era when being healthy is not only a good idea, it's good business. An active fitness and health enthusiast, Dr. Hall has also completed 19 marathons; bicycled across five states, as well as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland; and has climbed to Camp 1 on Mt. Everest.



To start your successful wellness program, call 1-800-533-9355 or visit [wellsource.com](http://wellsource.com)