



Case Study August 2012

Wellness Metrics in Action Lakeside Process Controls: Increasing Employee Engagement

Established in 1952, Lakeside Process Controls provides process automation solutions in Ontario, Manitoba, and other locations around the world.¹ Lakeside's solutions range from devices that measure and relay diverse physical and chemical conditions to process control systems that collect information and trigger necessary actions to ensure continued operations. Lakeside is a business built on customer service and strives to provide the best solutions to its customers' challenges.²

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOCUS

Lakeside has a long-standing strategy to improve employee engagement. In 2009, feedback from surveys revealed that employees were concerned about health issues. Lakeside knew it had to design a program that addressed employees' concerns while also increasing engagement.

By examining employees' benefits use and the most frequently prescribed medications, Lakeside determined the health issues most commonly affecting employees. Using this information, along with employee feedback, Lakeside launched the 2010 Total Health Challenge. During the six-month challenge, a naturopath was on-site for 12 weeks, running sessions to educate employees

1 This case study is based on information from Greg Houston (Chief Executive Officer, Lakeside Process Controls) and Stephanie Enright (Manager, Human Resources, Lakeside Process Controls). Interview by Louise Chénier and Crystal Hoganson, February 16, 2012.

2 Lakeside Process Controls, *About Us*.

About This Series

The Conference Board of Canada recently published a report, *Making the Business Case for Investments in Workplace Health and Wellness*,¹ that provides small, medium-sized, and large organizations with advice on how to measure the impact of their workplace health and wellness programs. The report identifies practical, research-backed approaches to measurement, as well as a variety of tools and metrics, that employers can use to demonstrate the return on investment of their health and wellness initiatives.

Research for the report, which included an in-depth review of the literature, identified several employers that are currently evaluating the impact of wellness programs on their organizations. These leaders have invaluable information and guidance to offer to other employers that are trying to measure the impact of their own health and wellness initiatives. This briefing is the sixth in a series of case studies that profile these organizations, their wellness programs, and the methods they use to evaluate their initiatives.

1 Chénier, Hoganson, and Thorpe, *Making the Business Case for Investments in Workplace Health and Wellness*.

on nutrition and techniques that could help them achieve better health results. This component of the program was added to help employees feel supported in following the program.

In 2011, Lakeside decided to play upon the naturally competitive nature of its employees by including more physical activities and creating the Get Lakeside Moving challenge. This eight-month, points-based challenge motivated employees to improve their overall health and well-being and included measurements of weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and body fat. Employees were rewarded for being involved in various physical activities.

During 2012, Lakeside is aiming to further increase awareness of health and wellness issues among its employees. It is providing more education on these issues and has also introduced monthly challenges that focus on a different topic each month (e.g., weight loss, disease prevention, and physical activity).

MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION, AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Lakeside holds an annual company conference that includes breakout sessions where employees have an opportunity to voice their opinions on the health and wellness program. The company also conducts surveys throughout the year to solicit feedback from employees.

Although it does look at the costs of benefits, Lakeside prefers using “soft” measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its health and wellness initiatives. It has noticed a generally happier workforce and an increase in teamwork, engagement, and friendly competition. When it comes to “hard” measures, the company notes that absenteeism is down while productivity is up—suggesting a more collegial and cohesive work environment.

Lakeside recommends that organizations tailor their programs to address the health issues affecting their employees, and to seek the support of senior leaders.

One of the goals of Lakeside’s overall wellness program is weight management, and this is an area where the company has sought some “hard” numbers. For example, biometric data were documented both before and after the 2010 challenge. By the end of the six-month competition, Lakeside employees had lost a total of 807 pounds and 366 inches. In addition, 63 per cent of participants had lowered their blood pressure, and 48 per cent had decreased their cholesterol levels.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Resources have been the biggest challenge for Lakeside. The health and wellness department is fairly small, and it takes a lot of dedication and time to run the program. This is the main reason why Lakeside has not measured return on investment (ROI) in a more quantitative manner. Lakeside feels that the extra time and effort that would be needed to obtain “hard” ROI metrics would be better spent on the wellness program as a whole.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Lakeside recommends that organizations determine what health issues are affecting employees and then tailor a program to address these issues. For instance, Lakeside was aware that diabetes and high cholesterol levels were common among its workforce. It was also aware that competition is a big part of its organizational culture. Consequently, Lakeside targeted the behavioural changes that could reduce the risk factors for diabetes and high cholesterol (e.g., weight loss) and made sure that competition is an integral part of the health and wellness program.

Lakeside also stresses that health and wellness initiatives must have the support of senior leaders. Senior leaders at Lakeside did not worry about the program delivering a “hard” return on investment. Rather, they encouraged the program and actively participated in the activities and education sessions alongside employees.

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Lakeside Process Controls: Increasing Employee Engagement by Crystal Hoganson

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255 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON K1H 8M7 Canada

Tel. 613-526-3280 • Fax 613-526-4857 • Inquiries 1-866-711-2262

The Conference Board, Inc. 845 Third Avenue, New York NY 10022-6679 USA Tel. 212-759-0900 • Fax 212-980-7014 • www.conference-board.org

The Conference Board Europe Chaussée de La Hulpe 130, Box 11, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel. +32 2 675 54 05 • Fax +32 2 675 03 95

The Conference Board Asia-Pacific 2802 Admiralty Centre, Tower 1, 18 Harcourt Road, Admiralty Hong Kong SAR Tel. +852 2511 1630 • Fax +852 2869 1403

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