

LOSING WEIGHT AND GAINING SAVVY AT WEBCRAFTERS



Webcrafters' Tips for Promoting Employee Wellness

- > **Follow the Healthy Workforce 2010 guide.** Offered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it's offered free online at http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/documents/Healthy_Workforce_2010.pdf
- > **Recruit leaders from throughout the workforce.** Webcrafters is guided by a Wellness Committee of 13 employees who promote wellness to the workforce.
- > **Guide employees to accurate online information.**
- > **Place wellness materials in high traffic areas, wherever they are.** Webcrafters has even put posters above bathroom urinals and on the back of stall doors.
- > **Vary your approach to keep employees motivated.**
- > **Welcome employee contributions.** Along with inviting employees to share opinions and ideas, Webcrafters used employee donations of fitness equipment to create a fitness room used regularly by about 50 employees.

Getting employees to “lighten up” has become an ongoing theme at Webcrafters, Inc., which continues to find new ways to help employees lose weight and gain savvy about managing their health.

Every three to six months, Webcrafters presents employees with a new challenge through its “Lighten Up!” program. Since 2003, employees have lost hundreds of pounds through the program, creating a visible sign that the company is making progress in countering obesity’s threat to employee health.

Challenging Employees

Webcrafters is a Madison-based manufacturer with 650 employees, with most of those workers employed on the manufacturing floor. The company also has up to 160 temporary employees working at its facility. While those employees are not covered by health benefits, they are allowed to participate in weight loss challenges.

The company ran its first weight-loss challenge in 2003, when almost 100 employees participated in a team-based “Lighten Up!” program. In 19 weeks, participating employees lost 641 pounds while gaining a load of information about their health.

Over time, Webcrafters has gradually switched to weight-loss challenges that promote individual weight loss, which allows even out-of-state sales representatives to participate.

In 2007, for example, Webcrafters offered employees a “Poker Challenge.” The 12-week program carried a \$10 fee, which employees could pay in installments if desired.

Every two weeks, participating employees received new nutritional and activity challenges, such as increasing their fiber intake or walking an extra 300 steps every day.

When employees met those challenges they were rewarded with a poker card. Losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight for the two-week period earned another card. At the end of the 12-week period, those cards were combined to create a poker hand, with the employee with the best hand winning the “pot” created by employees’ fees for participation.

Building Participation

Team leaders from throughout the company help track the results of weight-loss challenges. Information about individual progress is passed along to one member of the human resources staff, who uses the records only to determine the “biggest losers” for the purpose of awarding prizes. Most employees keep the weight off long after the challenge ends.

Experimenting with new themes for wellness and weight loss helps keep employees interested, according to Renee Kennedy, benefits coordinator. Judy Peirick, vice president of human resources, and Diane Aaroen, human resources assistant, join Kennedy in coordinating Webcrafters’ wellness efforts. The company gains access to ideas and information through participation in The Alliance. Webcrafters is now exploring the option of offering a weight-loss coach to employees who want to pursue a personal weight-loss goal. The amount of weight loss desired will determine the amount of contact between the participant and the coach, with the most ambitious goals supported by weekly coaching calls.

Webcrafters’ multi-pronged approach to wellness also includes health risk assessments (HRAs), health fairs to distribute information, classes that bring in outside experts, access to a nurse triage line and online health information.

HRA participation is rewarded with lower insurance premiums, with participating employees saving \$20 a month for single coverage or \$40 a month for family coverage. The company hired a new integrated vendor who will analyze HRA data and then contact employees with health problems such as high blood pressure to suggest specific steps for improvement.

Webcrafters combined on-site smoking cessation classes with a change in its prescription drug plan that reduced the cost of generic pills and patches that aid smoking cessation to \$7. Before the switch, those prescriptions were not covered at all. “That’s been huge,” Kennedy says.

Coaching for Wellness

Webcrafters monitors the impact of its wellness initiatives through Bowers, a company that monitors health benefit cost trends.

“Our efforts do not support our wellness (costs) yet, but we are slowly gaining ground,” Kennedy says. She adds that it’s important to use a “coaching” approach that helps the company catch more employees.

“We provide programs early in the Wellness cycle so you can capture the person at the critical thinking stage,” Kennedy says. “Everyone is ready at different stages and times so we keep at them and we are bound to capture some new audience each time we go out.”

Losing Weight the Webcrafters Way

Physical Activity Challenges

- > Wear a pedometer and increase walking by 300 steps a day. Maintain this level after two weeks.
- > Learn and practice core strength exercises for five to 10 minutes every other day.
- > Learn and practice arm exercises for five to 10 minutes every other day and/or get oriented to Webcrafters’ fitness room and work out there two times a week.
- > Join Webcrafters’ team for the American Cancer Society walk and/or learn and practice proper hamstring, hip and calf stretches for five to 10 minutes every other day.
- > Get an extra 30 minutes of activity on each day off.
- > Bike or walk to work at least three times. If that’s not possible, park two to three blocks away from the building and walk the rest of the way every day.

Nutrition Challenges

- > Increase fiber intake, including soluble fiber (helps lower cholesterol) and get three servings of whole grains a day.
- > Drink only water, flavored water, non-fat skim or low-fat 1% milk and 100% juice (juice should be limited to 8 ounces per day). That means no soda or other soft drinks or high-fat milk. (Tea and coffee are unchanged.)
- > Add two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables a day.
- > Eat appropriate portion sizes.
- > Limit alcohol to one or two drinks.
- > Decrease cheese to no more than two ounces a week.
- > Switch from high-fat meats (ground beef, hot dogs, sausage, bacon, bologna) to low-fat meats (chicken breast, turkey, fish).
- > Cut down on high-fat/high-sugar desserts and snacks (decrease portion size, decrease frequency, substitute healthier or lower calorie options).
- > Eat only no-fat condiments and dressings.
- > Eat baked or broiled foods instead of fried or deep-fried foods.
- > Read labels for trans fats and limit trans fats to less than 1% of daily calories.
- > Reduce salt intake.
- > Switch from high-fat to low-fat/high-fiber baked goods.



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Renee Kennedy,
Benefits Coordinator
Webcrafters Inc.
608.245.5584
rkennedy@webcrafters-inc.com



PO Box 44365 | Madison WI 53744-4365 | 800.223.4139 | 608.276.6620 p | 608.276.6626 f | www.the-alliance.org

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