

10 Best Practices Identified by HERO Scorecard Research Study

The following 10 strategies were identified in a study by the Health Enhancement Research Organization (<https://hero-health.org/research/hero-research-studies/>) as most predictive of employee participation in programs, health and medical cost impact, and employee perceptions of organizational support. This handout concisely summarizes a longer article about the research study, which was published in the June 2020 issue of *Benefits Magazine* (<https://www.ifebp.org/Resources/magazines/benefits-magazine>)

**1. Demonstrate organizational commitment to health and well-being.**

Organizations can communicate alignment of the employee wellness program with the broader business goals of the organization in several ways:

- Develop a mission/vision statement that supports a healthy workplace culture
- Include employee health and well-being in organizational goals and value statements
- Ensure senior leaders correlate the value and importance of health to broader business objectives

**2. Ensure senior leaders understand the link to business results.**

Senior leaders are more likely to support employee wellness initiatives when they understand how employee wellness is linked to broader business objectives. This can be achieved through leadership training and by tying senior leadership performance to employee health and well-being.

**3. Walk the talk and actively support employee health and well-being.**

When leaders at all levels (e.g., from executive level to direct supervisors) support and participate in workplace well-being initiatives, employees are more likely to follow suit. Some ways leaders can demonstrate their support are:

- Hold walking meetings at work or incorporating standing/movement into virtual meetings
- Share personal well-being stories and letting other employees know they are working on their own well-being goals
- Model work-life balance by not sending non-essential emails while on vacation
- Let employees know it's okay for them to take time for their health during the workday
- Recognize employees for healthy actions they take to improve their well-being

**4. Support midlevel managers and supervisors in promoting employee well-being.**

Most effective initiatives provide managers and supervisors with training, budget, and resources that allow them to support well-being in ways that are most relevant to their team's needs. Some organizations establish grant programs that allow midlevel managers to apply for funding for specific programs or resources at their locations. It is important that managers and supervisors understand how team communications and managerial style can positively and negatively influence worker well-being and to also provide skills training and resources to help them effectively support the well-being of individual contributors and teams.

**5. Implement policies that support employee well-being.**

Multiple health-related policies can promote a workplace culture of health and well-being including:

- Allow employees to take paid work time for physical activity, a rejuvenation break, or participation in well-being programs
- Establish and enforce healthy eating policies that require healthy options at all company-catered events, office cafeterias, and onsite vending machines.
- Offer flex-time policies or mandatory break policies
- Enhance paternity and family medical leave policies beyond legal mandates
- Allow job-share, sabbatical and wellness time off options

**6. Engage employees at all levels of the organization.**

Employers need to proactively engage employees to shape the direction of programming. Employees should have opportunities to provide input on program content, delivery methods, and plans for future needs. This can be done through employee focus groups and surveys or by creating wellness champion networks to provide a feedback loop back to program planners.

**7. Develop a strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives.**

The most effective initiatives are guided by a written strategic plan that includes measurable goals and objectives. This includes specifying what success looks like to the organization and how long it will take to yield expected results. The plan should be evaluated and updated annually, with adjustments made to expectations based on ongoing process and program evaluation.

**8. Regularly share program performance data and information with multiple stakeholder groups.**

Reporting about wellness program performance should be broadened beyond executive leaders to also include managers, supervisors, employees, program vendors/partners, and other beneficiaries of the program such as spouses and dependents of employees.

**9. Target communications to diverse groups.**

A thoughtful, comprehensive communication strategy aims to reach the diversity of workgroups with relevant information about program offerings and resources. Emails work well for some groups, but others may respond better to written or other digital communications. Ideally, key messages are tailored so language and delivery mechanisms are well received by specific audiences. It's also important to develop messages specifically for various levels of leaders, from senior managers to managers/supervisors to wellness champions.

**10. Support employee wellness champions or ambassadors with tools and resources.**

Wellness champion or ambassador networks are most effective when champions or ambassadors are provided with ongoing training, resources, and information. These groups should be convened regularly to celebrate successes, discuss lessons learned, and recognize and reward exemplary efforts.