

Across the board, organizations are realizing the benefits of providing their workforce with tools and incentives to lead healthier and more productive lives. As employers look for new ways to manage rising health care costs, especially in the age of high deductible health plans, they must also seek new creative approaches for keeping employees engaged and motivated about making positive health care and lifestyle choices. Employers are increasingly turning to sophisticated analytic tools that reveal specific services and providers contributing to high costs while closely monitoring the return on investment (ROI) of the groups' wellness and disease management programs.

Challenges in a new era of engagement

Research shows that well-designed and well-executed workplace wellness programs, complemented by care management programs to address immediate and long-term health issues, can have a significant positive impact on employee productivity and costs. These programs can benefit employers in a variety of ways such as reducing absenteeism, improving presenteeism and increasing overall productivity.¹

Today, more than two-thirds of U.S. employers offer wellness programs, and companies of all sizes are increasing their investment in these programs. As a result, employers are spending on average a record \$693 per worker, up from \$594 in 2014 and \$430 in 2010.² But, without a mechanism for measuring the value derived from such programs, they remain a gamble, a "leap of faith" investment.

As new technologies emerge, employers are rethinking traditional approaches to employee engagement and developing new ways to deliver personalized health and wellness information that has a greater impact on employee behavior. The rise of wearable technology and other digital engagement

tools are generating massive volumes of data across thousands of different platforms, resulting in more opportunities to interact with employees and more real-time information on an individual's health and behavioral choices. These data can inform decisions regarding program outcomes, where to invest resources and how to optimize interventions. However, sophisticated analytic solutions are needed to access these data and leverage the insights available from them.

Data analytics: Delivering powerful insights for employee health and well-being

To optimize employee engagement and outcomes, employers should consider unlocking the wealth of employee data housed in various operational systems. The value of integrating disparate data – cost and utilization (claims), health risk assessments (HRAs), biometric screenings, clinical programs and encounters, as well as disability and worker's compensation data – is a holistic view of employee health, including regular and timely insights into existing health issues and medical expense patterns.

With this critical information, not only can employers evaluate how benefits are used by employees and their dependents, but they can also create far-reaching views of individual and population health to inform the design and continuous refinement of outreach and intervention programs. A detailed understanding of employee preferences is essential to produce a more personalized, relevant experience that positively impacts behavior and outcomes.

Realizing a return on investment

As employers continue to invest in innovative wellness programs, reliable analytics and decision support tools can illuminate the primary factors impacting employee health, productivity and costs, as well as opportunities to maximize

Using Information to Create a Personalized Experience

Comprehensive health data drives a personalized, relevant experience to meet consumers and providers where they are and motivate change.



engagement. Access to these key metrics enable employers to make data-driven decisions about health benefit designs that support the company's vision and strategy. Moreover, the ability to organize and present health care information from a variety of sources in a presentation-ready format saves employers valuable time and resources while reducing the need for expensive analytic personnel and tools.

Finally, deeper insights gleaned from analytics allow employers to establish clear goals for their wellness programs and identify opportunities for long-term savings. The following best practices were derived from a variety of our employer partners who use analytics to increase employee engagement, improve lifestyle behaviors, and enhance their financial return and outcomes:

- **Re-energize your approach.** The same clinical program doesn't work for every employer. It's essential for employers to continually monitor and evaluate their programs with data analytics to understand what works best for each population. For example, employers can use biometric results and medical and pharmacy data to fuel predictive modeling and make adjustments throughout the year instead of waiting for year-end results. A data-driven approach enables employers to take their wellness offering a step further by
- leveraging activities that achieve positive results and phasing out those that do not – resulting in greater flexibility and impact.
- **Personalize touch-points.** One-size doesn't fit all. The right information at the right time for the right audience is instrumental in encouraging healthy behaviors and outcomes. Smartphones, apps, wearables and other innovations are rapidly changing the way people communicate and how health information is gathered and tracked. With information at employees' fingertips, employers have additional opportunities to engage employees with personalized and meaningful messages about their health, lifestyle choices and the progress of their health goals. Regular communication and immediate feedback motivates employees to take action. At the same time, data intelligence gives employers insights for designing interventions and incentives that address the needs of employees and increase program participation.
- **Focus on impact.** Analytics need to focus on both short-term and long-term outcomes to provide comprehensive insight into overall population management across the continuum of care. Although more employees may participate in wellness programs offering long-term benefits, a large portion of

savings often derive from clinical intervention programs that address immediate health concerns and avoidable health care costs. For example, one employer expanded its wellness program to address an often overlooked component to overall well-being: sleep. Using HRA data, analytics revealed a large number of employees who struggled with sleep disorders. Because sleep apnea is associated with a number of chronic conditions (e.g.,

such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression) as well as job-impairment and work-related accidents, the employer initiated targeted interventions to encourage treatment, as well as management of associated chronic conditions. The addition of a sleep component to their wellness program was key to improving financial and clinical outcomes over the long term, but also offered immediate value by producing

¹ <http://www.beckershospitalreview.com/workforce-labor-management/workplace-culture-of-wellness-leads-to-increased-employee-engagement-productivity-and-happiness-5-findings.html>

² <https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pressroom/pressRelease.cfm?ID=252>

About HDMS

Health Data & Management Solutions, Inc. (HDMS) sits at the intersection of providers, payers and employers, putting unparalleled analytic power into the hands of its customers and utilizing its extensive industry expertise to help them better manage their business and improve health outcomes.