

Employee Wellness Program Selection Factors

By Lisa Laskey

The rationale for employers to play an increasingly active role in the health of their employees has never been more compelling. The relentless rise in health care costs, and a body of evidence demonstrating strong connections between employee productivity and health status, is leading employers to seek out effective and efficient ways of empowering employees to make the best decisions possible when it comes to health.

The diversity of options available to the employer that is serious about creating a healthier workplace can be daunting, including partial to comprehensive wellness programs to full disease management. These programs improve employee health and productivity and, as a result, help contain health care costs.

Although the aim may seem simple – creating a workplace that supports all employees to realize their best health – actually providing employees with a coherent system of support to help them do that can be complicated. Employers scouting the marketplace for partners to bring these interventions, and this system of support to fruition should keep four basic tenets in mind to guide their decisions: the breadth of experience and services; proven ability to effectively and efficiently execute the programs including timeframes and expectations; the ability to successfully engage the employee population; and proven, reliable and predictable health and financial outcomes.

Breadth

Improving the health and wellness of diverse populations no matter their health status is a complicated endeavor. Effective programs must not only provide help for those with pre-existing conditions but also provide the support that keeps healthy people engaged and enthusiastic. Employers should seek out companies with the requisite depth of experience to deliver outcomes across this broad health spectrum, and that can provide them in the most seamless and integrated way.

Execution

While engaging a single wellness provider is an optimal solution, employers should also be on the lookout for health and care support companies with the flexibility to integrate and align interventions with tools the employer already has in place. They should be able to offer seamless integration with health insurers, pharmacy benefit managers, as well as the employer's own human resource and IT departments. And, their implementation and timeline need to satisfy leadership.

Engagement

Whether it's high-risk care management, weight loss, or stress management, no intervention can consistently deliver positive, verifiable health outcomes, and return-on-investment unless it successfully engages the employee population. Successful interventions provide employees with the right mix of knowledge, motivation, skills, resources, and incentives to improve their health.

Employers should seek out partners that have a deep understanding of what it takes to engage and motivate employees to live their best lives.

Outcomes

Measurable, reliable, and predictable outcomes should be a non-negotiable requirement for any employer considering health and wellness interventions. Companies that provide such services should be able to provide case studies or data, including medical savings, improved clinical indicators, reduced risk factors, as well as employee engagement and satisfaction.

Proven results should also help provide insight to the actual drivers of clinical and financial outcomes as well as lead to the continual development of program improvements and established best practices.

Employers searching for a turn-key solution to engage and support their employees in attaining their best health have more options than ever. By focusing on these critical tenants of what comprises a quality provider of health and care support solutions, employers will be well-positioned to make the best decision for their employees and their bottom line.