The 11 Keys to Creating a Culture of Wellness

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Introduction

Creating a wellness program within a business is easier said than done. The reality most businesses face may include:

- A very busy coordinator (or team) who now needs to add “wellness” on top of their job
- No budget
- Confusion about where to start
- More “wellness” ideas, classes and programs to pick from than is feasible, reasonable or constructive to implement
- Underwhelming participation, the same faces all the time, and/or those who should really be coming aren’t
- Doubt regarding the actual effectiveness of the programs implemented
- Running out of ideas, etc.

Wellness is not created overnight, not for an individual and certainly not for a company. For many, wellness becomes an increasingly tiring task over time, where the team feels like they always need to come up with the next great idea, usually wondering why people are not as engaged as they’d like them to be. This leads to burnout for everyone — the team, the employees (who no longer pay attention) and company leadership (who question whether it even makes sense).

The recipe to avoid burnout is to realize that wellness can only be lasting and effective if it is approached as an overall culture shift for the organization. And culture involves much more than a few haphazard activities, talks and prizes.

In this report we share with you the 11 keys to creating a culture of wellness. We have captured these 11 keys in the graphic you’ll see on the next page. The two concentric circles that contain all 11 keys:

- **Keys 1-6**: The center circle represents individual wellness. The first 6 keys for creating wellness correspond to the main factors that enable each one of your employees to achieve overall health and wellbeing.
- **Keys 7-11**: The outside circle represents the 5 organizational keys to create a culture of wellness that fosters and supports individual wellness.

Before you read any further, we want to let you know that we know this is A LOT of information. Our intention is not to overwhelm you but to give you a comprehensive overview of the most important elements to consider when tackling wellness. We purposefully kept this at a high-level so you can read or glance at this report and use it as a quick reference guide. We are more than happy to offer additional support if you have any questions.

You can reach us any time by emailing info@transformationone.com, or by calling Morella Devost at (802) 735-1348. We look forward to hearing from you!
The 6 Keys for Individual Wellness

1. Fitness

Our modern sedentary lifestyle is one of the primary culprits behind most chronic diseases of the western world. It is proven that increasing physical fitness reduces the prevalence of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, injuries and depression. All of these present major risk factors for serious conditions.

Providing supportive opportunities and encouragement for people to become more active is usually an essential element of all wellness programming.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
Are we implementing fitness activities that create successful, fun-filled behavior change for our group?
2. Nutrition

Arguably, the second worst offender in creating ill health lies in poor food choices. People are seriously confused, misinformed and misguided by diet trends and widespread marketing from “food” manufacturers.

Most wellness programs need to provide sources of reliable information that help re-educate their groups around the notion of real food, and importantly, also lead them away from the dangerous oversimplification of food as calories and dieting. When well understood, food is the ultimate medicine.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:

Do we have programs that help people discover the wonders of eating delicious food that not only help them manage their weight but also heal chronic aches, pains and other health conditions?

3. Emotional health

Stress, anxiety and depression are the next major culprits behind poor health and significant drivers of health care claims. We see this in prescription drugs for anxiety, heartburn and depression — and all of their side effects, migraines, chronic pain, etc. that are often the result of stress and overwhelm. Our society has become chronically stressed.

Most groups offer EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) as their basic mental and emotional support avenues. These are a great foundational program but support for mental health and emotional wellbeing cannot stop there. Groups must assess how their work environment and leadership style helps or hinders people’s ability to cope with stress.

In many cases, wellness teams also offer stress management programs, yoga classes, etc. as a way to further support the wellbeing of their employees.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:

Are we providing tools and techniques for people to actively and constructively observe, experience and channel their emotions?

4. Preventive care

The healthcare system has shown that people who routinely engage in preventive care (annual physicals, age-appropriate screenings, etc.) usually maintain better health and are able to avoid complicated, chronic health conditions. There’s also a great difference between care that helps people create and sustain health vs. getting “sick care.”

Campaigns for age-appropriate health checkups and screenings have proven to be effective in reducing health care claims for many companies over time.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:

Do we have an effective campaign to educate people on the benefits of developing a relationship with their primary doctor? Do our employees look at their health as something that they can cultivate and continuously improve?
5. **Financial health**

It is increasingly evident that financial strain is becoming a shared concern. In many cases, lack of awareness, planning and support lead people to make poor financial choices for themselves that put them and their families at risk. The result is increasing levels of stress and anxiety over which people feel they have no control.

Programs supporting financial literacy and planning greatly contribute to an individual feeling more empowered about their financial future and their ability to create security for themselves and their family.

**Wellness committee self-evaluation question:**

*Are we actively supporting our employees to reach their personal financial goals?*

6. **Mindset!**

This is the most important element. Why? **Because people fall off the wagon. Period.**

We humans are run by our habits and patterns for doing things, most of which we acquired before we were eight years old. The way we eat, exercise, manage our money, what we believe is true about our potential, etc. usually is not very different from what we learned from our families. Therefore, without a conscious choice otherwise, our lives are run by rote, which is why it is easier to stay the same than it is to change.

This is where most wellness programs fail to support their groups. These plans assume that people want to change and that they can in fact change easily. When you take this approach you are expecting people to change on willpower alone and to be solely motivated by their displeasure with their current situation (weight, inactivity, depression, etc.).

There is a common misconception that willpower alone helps people change their bad habits. When was the last time you heard of a New Year’s resolution that stuck? Willpower alone rarely works.

**You need to help people rewire themselves for success.** People need help changing the mental patterns that have been keeping them stuck, and to create a new mindset that will help them succeed. In order to do that you need to provide:

- Tools that help them see their resistance to changing
- Programs that help them identify their limiting beliefs
- A proven template to help them create a clear vision of what they want to achieve for themselves
- Guidance in setting action steps that will lead to enjoyable behavior change

You can have a program without active support for mindset and behavior change, but it will always be less effective.

**Wellness committee self-evaluation question:**

*Do our wellness programs help employees understand how their subconscious thoughts and beliefs keep them stuck? Are we supporting them to change their old ways of being?*
The 5 Keys for Organizational Wellness

7. Leadership

Nothing changes the culture in a group more quickly than good leadership. A charismatic leader who creates an energizing vision for a group will move that group through magical shifts. Any wellness plan that does not have the authentic endorsement, support and role modeling from the CEO will lack oomph. If you don’t have your CEO’s active leadership, you can still be successful but it will be a steeper hill to climb, or will take massive grass roots coordination.

Leadership however is not just about the company president, it is about having several layers of leadership levels who endorse, participate and help to mobilize people towards your wellness programming. Some of the leadership levels you will want to engage include:

- CEO and/or another executive sponsor from the senior management team
- The wellness committee
- Group leaders/managers
- Team captains, peer cheerleaders, etc.

When you have a clear cascade of leadership deploying programs, engaging large groups of people becomes a cinch.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
Do we have several levels of leaders on board with our wellness initiative?

8. Policies

Do you have smoking policies? Food-at-meetings policies? Vending machines? Seat belt policies? Break policies?

If one day you have a workshop on nutrition and the next day you host an ice cream social, your actions are contradictory. Instituting or changing policies (such as vending machines) can be difficult as people will resist them. However, over time you’ll want to tackle these issues if you really want to create a consistent culture of wellness that authentically promotes people’s health, wellbeing and productivity.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
Do we have clear policies that promote health? Are we being inconsistent in any way? Do we fear people revolting if we take their vending machines away?

9. Tools

These are the tools you use to facilitate some of your wellness content. Tools usually refer to physical, tangible elements such as newsletters, bulletin boards, gym equipment, health websites, assessments, recipes, etc. Tools do not constitute programs nor are they particularly effective in generating change if used in a vacuum. You do, however, need effective tools to help people take action.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
Do we utilize a variety of tools and share them through a variety of communication avenues?
10. Programs

This is where the rubber meets the road. Your programming is the most active way in which you will be looking to influence your group’s daily lifestyle choices. Programs can range from super cheap to very expensive without their cost necessarily correlating to effectiveness.

When you choose programs you must constantly refer to your needs, your vision and your goals (see the next section on creating a strategy), because the best program will fall totally flat if it’s not the program your group needs. For example, we once saw a group with a really great walking program but out of the 150+ employees only 18-20 were participating every year. When we helped them do a needs assessment, we discovered that a large proportion of the population was dealing with anxiety and stress. Who cares about walking when you’re stressed? This awareness led them to shift their communication and engage people much more effectively.

There are many different ways to create a program, so you need to create your programs based on your group’s needs, your geographic distribution, the nature of your work, etc.

You also need to ensure that your programs help people with Key #6: mindset change.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
Are our programs engaging the people who need them most? Are the people who do participate getting results?

11. Support

Support is where it all comes together, and this can make or break your wellness initiative. When there is a genuine atmosphere of support, people pull each other in, they feel engaged and want to participate. Some ways to show support may be about:

- Celebrating successes
- Engaging the families
- Offering incentives
- Creating space inside the office that promotes breaks, healthy eating and exercising
- Encouraging team participation in wellness activities
- Creating buddy systems or peer-support opportunities, etc.

Support does not happen alone, you need to create the structure and avenues to make it visible and tangible for people.

Wellness committee self-evaluation question:
If we took a survey today, would people say that the company supports them in becoming healthier and happier?
All of these 11 Keys to creating a wellness culture are underscored by EFFECTIVE communication. Whether your plan is simple or complex, you need to create a solid communication plan that includes:

- Multiple communication vehicles (email, payroll stuffers, postcards, bulletins, word of mouth, etc.)
- Using cascades of communication from the wellness team through your leadership levels — the larger your organization the more you need to create and use these channels.
- Laying out a calendar that spells out each major initiative with all its critical communication events.
- Defining how you will celebrate and communicate individual successes as well as the organization’s overall success with the wellness initiative.

**Bringing it all together...**

You can’t get anywhere if you don’t have a plan; therefore, the ONLY way to create a wellness initiative that consistently delivers results is to approach it as a multi-year, gradual culture shift for the group. Even if you touch on all 11 keys, you still need to develop a wellness strategy to chart your direction every year.

**The process to create a wellness strategy follows proven steps for change:**

1. **Awareness**
   - Choose the path of transformation & set the drivers in place
   - Choose the path of transformation & set the drivers in place
   - Know where you are today

2. **Vision**
   - Define the outcome you want to see
   - Define the outcome you want to see

3. **Plan & Action**
   - Create a strategy and implement the steps that will lead you there
   - Create a strategy and implement the steps that will lead you there

4. **Assessment**
   - Assess and determine your next growth step
   - Assess and determine your next growth step
1. **Awareness**

The first step is to figure out where you are. What are your group’s needs? What is more important, diabetes prevention or depression? Are you a construction company or a bank? What are the most prevalent health issues and claims? Do people smoke? Are they ready to quit? Do they need to lose weight or do they have serious digestive issues?

If you don’t know what your group needs, how will you create a program that works for them? It’s surprising to see how many groups skip this step and simply start rolling out programs with no rhyme or reason.

How do you assess your current state? There are many ways:

- Analyze your claims data to find the greatest sources of claims
- Analyze your group’s prescription drug usage, what are the most prescribed groups of drugs?
- Do a health needs and interest survey
- Conduct biometric screenings and get an aggregate report for your group
- Do focus groups or interviews to get information and ideas about what people need and want

2. **Vision**

Once you know what people need and want, you create both a vision for the *ideal* state of wellness that you want to achieve for your group. Your vision is your ‘true north.’ This vision usually remains consistent year after year and links to your company’s business purpose/mission. In your vision statement you clearly articulate for all employees why wellness is an important business imperative.

The next part of crafting a vision is setting clear, specific, achievable goals for the year. These goals are the intermediate steps that lead to your vision. For example, the percentage of people who will report losing weight; the percentage of people who will get their annual physical; the number of people who quit smoking; the % reduction in sick days, etc.

Set no more than a handful of concrete goals for each year.

3. **Chart your course (create your wellness plan that touches on the 11 keys) and take action**

For each goal area:

- Map out what programs, tools and activities will help you generate the behavior change in people that may lead you to meet your goal.
- Verify that it incorporates at least one of the 6 keys for individual wellness (i.e. a goal about weight loss or diabetes should touch on nutrition, fitness and mindset change keys).

Once you’ve drafted your plans for each goal, make sure to revisit the 11 keys to ensure you’re not ending up with a lopsided plan (i.e. all fitness and prevention).

It’s important to note that no single activity, program or tool, no matter how great, will lead you to achieve your goal. Variety is the key to success. Different activities will engage different people in different ways.

Finally, in order to be effective, any plan must include detailed communication plans, timelines, deliverables, team members responsible for each initiative, measures of success, etc.
4. Assess

If you don’t measure, how will you know if you’re succeeding or failing? If you do measure, you’ll be able to determine which programs deliver the best results and value, and which programs were least effective. You’ll also be able to make a case for increased funding, if needed.

Some good measures:

• Satisfaction with each program
• Self-reported lifestyle changes
• Biometric screening reports year after year
• Self-reported improvements in health
• Reduced sick days
• Improved productivity (however you measure productivity in your business)

There you have it. These are the 11 keys and the four steps to have a wellness strategy to build a culture of wellness within your organization.

Take Action!

Neither this report nor anything else will get you anywhere if you don’t take action. What will you do this week to move your plan forward? Here are a few ideas:

• Share this report with your wellness team.
• Schedule a wellness meeting to talk about the report and starting your plan.
• Call us to come to your wellness meeting and help you think about your plan and your next steps.
• Need support from your CEO/CFO? Ask us to send you our presentation on why wellness makes business sense.

It probably goes without saying that we would be delighted to help you in the process of creating or revising your strategy. If you’re too busy, feel overwhelmed, or simply would just appreciate some guidance and a helping hand, let us treat you to an initial strategy consultation, which can be done with or without your wellness team. To do that, simply visit this page on our website (Contact Us), provide us with your contact information and we’ll get back to you within 24 hours.

We wish much health and success to you and your group!