

Is your wellness program a slave to fads or backed by science?

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It's impossible to watch TV these days without being bombarded by fad diets and products claiming to be the next health miracles -- green coffee bean supplements that allegedly burn fat or red palm oil promising to guard against Alzheimer's disease, to name a few. These questionable health trends are often the result of the " -- the perplexing phenomenon in which consumers trust health advice because a popular figure said it was good.

As a leader, it's in your best interests to keep your employees healthy. Unfortunately, the glut of misinformation circulating on TV and the Internet makes it difficult to separate bunk from best practices.

The best way to combat the Dr. Oz Effect is to incorporate an effective wellness program that gives your employees the tools and information they need to be healthy. You need a plan that helps your employees create lasting positive habits, so you can reap the benefits of lower healthcare costs, reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and higher employee morale.

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A good corporate wellness program should:

1. Emphasize fundamentals backed by science.

The chief problem with the Dr. Oz Effect is that it muddies the question of which health fads and products actually work. In fact, one study published in The BMJ reported that only of Oz's claims were supported by science.

Rather than buy into the latest craze, look for a wellness program that emphasizes timeless health principles supported by science -- a diet rich in <https://assignbuster.com/is-your-wellness-program-a-slave-to-fads-or-backed-by-science/>

fruits and vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats; regular exercise; plenty of rest and stress management. It doesn't really matter whether your employees want to walk 10,000 steps per day, practice yoga or learn Brazilian jiu-jitsu. What matters is that they have accurate information and understand the basic principles of good health.

2. Focus on intrinsic motivation.

Too many corporate wellness programs rely primarily on extrinsic motivators such as monetary rewards, gift cards and competitions to get employees on board. While these programs might create participation spikes early on, engagement quickly dries up, actually to adhere to healthy behaviors in the long run.

An effective program will focus more on cultivating *intrinsic* motivation (motivation that comes from within). As CEO and founder of LifeDojo, an online health platform for employees, I made sure all of our programs focused their first two weeks on motivation and learning. When your employees understand how exercise impacts their body, brain and emotions, they're more motivated to follow through with the program.

3. Give employees options.

A one-size-fits-all approach to health simply doesn't work for everybody. While written information on health is abundant online, programs such as *The Dr. Oz Show* reach such a large audience partially because they're presented in a format people prefer. According to , presenting health messages in multiple media formats can be extremely effective.

You should also look for a program that gives employees several options for becoming more active, improving their diet or managing stress. Keep in mind that not all employees will show up for sunrise yoga, but they might enjoy walking in a charity 5K or taking a high-energy Zumba class.

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4. Offer personalized, on-demand coaching.

Another reason Dr. Oz has experienced such widespread success is that he talks to viewers about things they might not feel comfortable discussing with their doctors. According to the World Health Organization, people's social environment plays a crucial role in their health, and having someone to offer guidance and support is often the missing component in a health plan.

Bolster your employees' support systems by choosing a wellness program that includes one-on-one or group coaching. Health coaches can educate employees on good behaviors, increase engagement, reduce health expenditures and even diminish employees' risk factors for chronic illnesses.

Your employees want to be healthy, but the misinformation available to them can make wellness seem unattainable. Rather than leave employees to fend for themselves in a noisy industry, choose a wellness program that will arm them with accurate information and give them the tools they need to get -- and stay -- healthy.

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