

Engaging Your Employees

Communication

Employee engagement in your wellness activities may be one of the biggest obstacles you will face. A written communication plan can help you achieve many of your goals and objectives. If employees do not know what you are offering or how it can benefit them, they will not participate.

A communication plan can:

- Increase awareness
- Increase knowledge
- Reinforce attitudes
- Maintain interest
- Provide cues and motivation for action
- Demonstrate simple skills
- Build social norms

Communication channels can include:

- Media
- Newsletters
- Direct mailings
- Company website
- Social media
- Emails
- Text messages
- Podcasts
- Meetings

Also consider:

- **Status updates:** Provide regular status updates to employees.
- **Messaging:** Use culturally responsive communication, including messages that address the overall value and purpose of the wellness program to the organization and the employee.
- **Recruitment:** Include staff members with marketing and communication skills to be part of the wellness team.

Employee Readiness

Employees will likely be in varying states of behavior change when you begin to implement your wellness strategies. Some may already be practicing health-promoting behaviors, while others might not be thinking about making changes. Information from employee interest surveys can help determine employees' capacity to make changes, as well as what strategies will be most likely to be accepted.

Below are the five stages of the Stages of Change Model, also known as Transtheoretical Model. People may move from one stage to another in order, or they may move back and forth between stages until they sustainably adopt a behavior. Moving to an earlier stage is not a failure, but an important part of the behavior change process. The stages of change are:

Precontemplation: An individual is not thinking about changing their behavior in the near future.

Contemplation: An individual is beginning to think seriously about changing their behavior in the next six months.

Preparation: An individual tried to change a behavior at least once in the past year and is thinking about trying again within the next month.

Action: An individual is taking real steps to actively change their behavior. This is the stage where an individual is most likely to move back to an earlier stage.

Maintenance: An individual has changed their behavior for more than six months and is now maintaining the change.



Motivation

Some factors to help employees stay motivated include:

- **Time:** Try to integrate worksite wellness activities into employees' existing schedules (e.g., provide time off for accessing preventive care or health screenings).
- **Access:** Make sure activities are accessible (e.g., host them on-site or provide transportation).
- **Knowledge:** Provide information on the benefits of participating in an activity and additional related resources.
- **Cost:** Whenever possible, make sure activities are free.
- **Incentives:** If possible, provide incentives for participation, such as prizes.

State and federal laws may be applicable to the use of financial incentives tied to health status. Make sure to research and comply with any laws. Two specific laws to research before using financial incentives are the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). For more information, review resources provided by the Public Health Law Center (<https://www.PublicHealthLawCenter.org/>).