

8 Steps to ROI in Wellness

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**Healthy employees mean
a healthy business.**



Having trouble proving the value of your wellness program?

Since 2008, Bravo has been leveraging data to design, build, launch and improve employee wellness programs that help organizations reduce risks and costs associated with preventable health issues.



We've seen a lot over ten years. So, we've consolidated our lessons learned into this step-by-step guide to help employers inspire measurable and sustainable change through their wellness program.

A Quick Note on ROI

In its failure to demonstrate ROI (return on investment), the well-being industry has become clouded with vendors focused on VOI (value on investment). Instead of ensuring ROI is a key element of their business case, employers are relying on employee satisfaction and engagement metrics, which have a weaker cause-and-effect relationship with the wellness program.

While those metrics are important to track and strengthen, many employers have more critical and immediate needs surrounding the rising costs of health insurance. When wellness programs fail to help protect employees' access to affordable healthcare, they fail to produce ROI in one of the most meaningful ways.

As you reflect on the structure and success of your existing employee wellness program or start to think about introducing one in your company, don't feel forced to choose between well-being and wellness. Use this guide as a best practice checklist to design and execute a program that will achieve your unique goals.



Set goals for your program.



SET GOALS

ROI in wellness starts with an honest assessment of your goals. Your wellness vendor should help you clearly articulate the results you want from your program, not force you to shift your goals based on their product offering.

Organizations should make sure their goals are communicated clearly in the language of metrics. For example,

- ▶ Improve the number of people with multiple preventable health risks by 10%
- ▶ Operate a breakeven program over the last calendar year
- ▶ Improve participation by 20% over last year
- ▶ Reduce the number of people with high-risk blood pressures by half by the end of the program year

Whether you are looking to improve employee participation or reduce health risks, the overarching goal and the metrics to reach that goal should align. Remember: An engaged employee doesn't always equal a healthy employee. If you need to reduce health risks, but your program is focused on employee engagement, your team will more than likely be disappointed in the ROI.

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We define success in wellness by whether employers can control rising healthcare costs for the company and their employees, drive down health risks by inspiring personal improvement, and attract and retain top talent. Our first step is to **build a clear vision** for how your culture will achieve a balanced measure of these three goals.

Design a program that works for your culture.



ANALYZE

Start by assessing your employees' perceptions and expectations to increase buy-in when it comes time to launch your wellness program. Each program year is an opportunity to increase engagement, but it starts with listening to your people. Through online surveys, focus groups, and an environmental review, your vendor should be able to develop a strategy that is comprehensive and culturally-specific.

Analyses of the best employee wellness programs have concluded that a “therapeutic dose” of the following elements must be included to experience success:¹

MOTIVATE

Personalized extrinsic and intrinsic motivation through a combination of messaging and rewards.

EDUCATE

Individual awareness of current health and potential health risks.

EMPOWER

Tools, resources and coaching to help individuals build skills that lead to long-term health improvement.

SUSTAIN

Create opportunities for employees to practice healthy behaviors within your culture.

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Overlay cultural assessment data with the health trends of your population (broken down by gender, age group, location, job type, etc.) to inform program selections and communication strategies that will help improve the health of your population and make sure the right people are engaging in the right activities.

Gain visibility to health risks driving claims.



PREVENT

A basic part of an effective program is providing awareness to your employees about their health status and potential risks via screenings. If the value you glean from screenings stops there though, you may be overlooking powerful insights. Make sure your team has an aggregated view of the organization's health, risk trends and impact on preventable claims. Without that data, understanding how and why the program is (or isn't) working becomes foggy.

Use this information to influence your program design and support individuals with higher health risks. The more clarity your plan can provide through biometric data analysis, the more visibility your team can have to the risks impacting the sustainability of the health plan.

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High participation rates are critical when it comes to getting an accurate view of health risk trends. In the US, the biggest medical costs are concentrated on a fairly small segment of people—an estimated 5 percent of the population accounts for over half of the country's total medical costs.²

If an employer is experiencing 70 percent participation or less, it's likely their highest risk individuals are part of the 30 percent not participating. With each incremental participation increase above 70 percent, employers can reach a broader population of risks and get a clearer sense of the health risk trends within the population.

Reward the results you want to see.



INSPIRE

In a recent survey of our participants, 68 percent stated that financial incentives and a personal desire to be healthier equally influenced their decision to participate in the program and take the next step in their well-being journey.

How you reward participation and engagement within your program should be meaningful to your population and may change over time. We suggest our clients follow this maturity model when designing their incentive plans:

Year One: Drive Engagement and Health Awareness

Introduce the concept of wellness by creating health awareness and familiarizing employees with the concept of rewards tied to health-focused behaviors and activities.

Year Two: Reward Achievement and Resource Utilization

Rewarding the completion of activities is a great start, but in year two we encourage you to allow participants to earn incentives by demonstrating healthy measures for biometrics like blood pressure, body mass index, glucose cholesterol or tobacco.

Year Three: Encourage Realistic and Personalized Progress

Reward people who meet the biometric goals, but also those who make progress over the previous year's results or meet a goal set by their doctor. Provide clinically proven activities and coaching within the program to help employees work towards their improvement goals.

“After setting and achieving smaller goals, losing a small percentage of my original weight seemed reasonable.”

- **Jeff Hale**, *Graco Inc., Manufacturing*

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The best program designs deploy meaningful incentives to motivate and sustain healthy lifestyles. By offering a reasonable improvement goal, everyone can be empowered to earn the incentive and put affordable health insurance within their reach.

Provide resources to empower behavior change.



BUILD SKILLS

The problem with many wellness programs is they tell people what to do, but not how to do it. And most of us already know what we *should* be doing. If your goal is behavior change, you can't expect that everyone will have the skills to succeed on their own. Explore resources that cover multiple learning styles to empower your entire population to work towards improvement and provide a combination of the following:

- ▶ Health articles, recipes, videos and lunch and learns to teach employees new skills.
- ▶ On-demand online courses to help address the root cause of unhealthy or addictive behaviors.
- ▶ Multi-channel coaching to provide employees with guidance and accountability to create and sustain healthy habits (may include in-person, telephonic, email, or video chat).
- ▶ High-risk or chronic-care coaching to help employees manage their existing conditions and have a better quality of life.

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When selecting activities and coaching solutions for your population, make sure you are partnering with a qualified vendor that can produce measurable results. It's easy to get distracted by the bells and whistles of a wellness app, but if the goal is to improve employee health, always ask for data on outcomes to ensure they are designed to promote health improvement.

Create opportunities for lasting change.



SUSTAIN

Having the opportunity to practice a healthy lifestyle is one of the most critical factors in creating sustainable behavior change. As an employer, there are several things you can do to lower the resistance to change and promote healthy lifestyles.

Make it Family-Friendly

Healthy habits start at home. Excluding spouses from your wellness initiatives may result in short-term savings but will have long-term consequences to your programs' performance. Research suggests that when spouses participate:

- ▶ Employee participation rates are twice as high.³
- ▶ There is increased participation in meaningful interventions like tobacco cessation and lifestyle coaching.³
- ▶ Preventable medical claims costs are reduced.

Build a Wellness Champion Network

Identify leaders within your population who are passionate about wellness and get along with their co-workers. Empower them to create excitement around your wellness initiatives and provide them with the tools necessary to succeed. Wellness champions:

- ▶ Provide boots-on-the-ground support for your wellness program.
- ▶ Promote the program to hard-to-reach demographics in a more personal way.
- ▶ Lead by example, encouraging and counseling co-workers to practice healthy lifestyles.



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Costs often stand in the way of employers who want to include spouses or wellness champions in their programs. What many don't realize is that the wellness program's design can be a funding source for these and other benefits without expanding their budget. Complete our **free financial analysis and plan modeler** and feel confident in your next benefits meeting. You'll receive a five-year savings forecast, a clear summary of your annual wellness investment, and a sustainable method for keeping your benefits competitive.

Measure the effectiveness of your program.



MEASURE

One of the biggest myths in the industry is that wellness doesn't work. If wellness isn't working for you right now, it's time to ask questions. Is your program structured to improve health? What are you measuring, and how do you measure it?

Find a partner who can collect, store and interpret the data for you and provide proactive insights that will help you along the way. Press into the metrics they provide, asking specific questions on how the incentives, tools and resources offered to employees are impacting health improvement.

Don't Just Ask:

- ▶ How many people are using the program?
- ▶ How many people are syncing a device?
- ▶ How many people are participating in a coaching program?

Also Ask Things Like:

- ▶ Are individuals who utilize the app more likely to improve their health?
- ▶ Are the interventions helping those who need it most? Are they helping people reduce risks?
- ▶ What does our year-over-year health improvement data say?

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The keys to maintaining a results-driven wellness program include measuring success and monitoring goals. If your goal is to improve health, track metrics like:

- ▶ The number and type of health risks and health risk reductions.
- ▶ Participation in activities or coaching and the impact they have on health improvement.
- ▶ Medical and workers' compensation claims for participants versus non-participants.
- ▶ Qualitative measures like participants' stories.

Share your results with the leadership team to preserve support, hone in on areas for improvement, and use this information to help inform discussions surrounding budget and resources next year.

Celebrate success.



CELEBRATE

We often we skip the step of celebrating success and move right on to the next goal. But taking time to recognize progress and achievement helps encourage your employees and builds momentum to continue the trajectory of success.

Collect testimonials on how the program has impacted your people in their everyday lives, and with their permission, share these stories to help support your wellness initiatives and strengthen the culture.

Show your employees how much you appreciate their participation by finding ways to celebrate them in a healthy and inspiring way.



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Your wellness program isn't about achieving perfection—it's about seeing improvement. Help employees see how their progress is contributing to the success of the organization by sharing personal stories and aggregated data.

With you every step of the way.

**Contact Bravo today
and let us help you build
a healthier workforce
and culture.**

Toll-Free [877.662.7286](tel:877.662.7286)

Sales Inquiries sales@bravowell.com

Support/Help support@bravowell.com



RESOURCES

¹O'Donnell MP. What is the therapeutic dose for health promotion? American Journal of Health Promotion, 2009.

²Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Household Component. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2015.

³HERO Employee Health Management Best Practice Scorecard In Collaboration with Mercer Annual Report, 2012.

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