

Emerging Need for Dedicated Wellness Managers



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AMERICA'S HEALTHIEST PRIVATE CLUBS SHARE ONE THING IN COMMON - BOARD LEVEL COMMITMENT.

Boards that embrace wellness and set policies designed to support healthy behavior in the workplace and offer programs to improve health outcomes of its members experience a positive return on investment.

Overall health care costs are reduced, productivity increases, member participation increases and the recruitment and retention efforts for both members and staff improves. Numerous studies have proven that employers that invest in workplace wellness programs experience a return of three to six times their investment.

Wellness is a strategy which goes beyond offering a few healthy options on the menu or adding trendy fitness classes to the schedule. Wellness is a cultural shift and requires board approval and support to satisfy the needs of the members and staff. Naturally, having a dedicated wellness manager as a single point of contact to design and execute a wellness program is ideal, but in most cases, clubs are asking department heads to implement components of wellness and having varied success.

Paul Astbury, president of Ocean Reef Club in Florida and the board have supported wellness as a strategy for many years and just recently created the wellness manager position to continue their mission.

"Wellness is constantly evolving as new discoveries are brought forward, modifications are made to existing philosophies and programming advances. For this reason, we felt a single, focused point of contact was necessary in order to continue to increase engagement amongst associates and members, as well as remain at the forefront of wellness integration," says Astbury.

"Wellness is not something you can put aside when other priorities arise," said Angelina Andreoni recently selected by the board to spearhead the new wellness manager's role. Previously Andreoni worked with human resources. "That is why the tremendous support of the board in dedicating resources to the program ensures that our program will have a singular focus."

EVOLUTION OF THE WELLNESS MANAGER

While not all clubs can justify hiring a dedicated wellness management position, many clubs have adapted to the needs

of members and staff by assigning the overall wellness responsibility to an existing department head, most often the fitness director or human resources manager.

Matthew Allnatt, general manager/COO of the Jonathan Club, is launching a new JCW (Jonathan Club Wellness) "Find Your Balance" branch in 2013. The new role of wellness specialist has been assigned to their current fitness specialist and nutritionist Heidi Llovet.

What perhaps sets Jonathan Club apart from the other club's wellness programs is that Ms. Llovet is a board certified holistic coach who has been tasked with finding innovative wellness solutions for 350 employees and 3,500 members.

"After several years of primarily focusing on nutrition and health coaching, we are now transitioning into an overall wellness approach. This approach emphasizes the mind-body connection and provides guidance, education and programs to support a healthy and balanced lifestyle," Heidi commented.

Top five reasons to hire a dedicated wellness manager:

- Member demand for fitness, nutrition and prevention programs
- Lowered costs associated with workers comp, claims and absenteeism
- Incremental revenues justify the investment
- Improved recruitment and retention of staff and members, and
- Wellness integration and overall management for greater synergy.

While corporate wellness managers have been in place for years at health plans, health systems and self-insured employers, they are not commonplace in the club industry.

But times are changing and we are beginning to see the club industry's early adopters incorporate proven corporate wellness best practices with encouraging results. The common thread among all clubs with legitimate wellness strategies is that they all have a board that embraces, encourages and supports wellness as a long-term strategy. **BR**

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