

Bringing wellness back to the workplace



In today's competitive marketplace, employers are not only looking for ways to manage rising health care costs, but they are also recognizing the important connection between employee well-being and job performance. It is because of this realization that over 21 percent of employers increased their investment in health management programs in 2013. Additionally, 87 percent of employers reported that health management solutions were an important component of their benefits mix.*



Clearly, the commitment to employee health is growing. In fact, most employers offer eight health management services on average — health assessments, wellness coaching, fitness challenges and health and wellness websites are each offered by over half of large employers.* So, what's next for worksite wellness? The answer may surprise you. In fact, the next frontier for wellness may be right in front of us.

On-site wellness, the next frontier

Today's savvy employers are looking to bring wellness back into the workplace. They want to complement their highly scalable phone and digital interventions with high-touch, on-site wellness activities, events and promotions.

In the digital age, the tools and resources for wellness programs are increasingly found online and through mobile devices. These 21st century technologies, however, become even more effective when augmented with one of the most old-fashioned practices in the book: face-to-face interaction. Wellness programs need more than gadgets to inform, motivate and engage employees. They also need dedicated people who can listen, inspire and lead events, experiences and environments that support good daily health decisions.

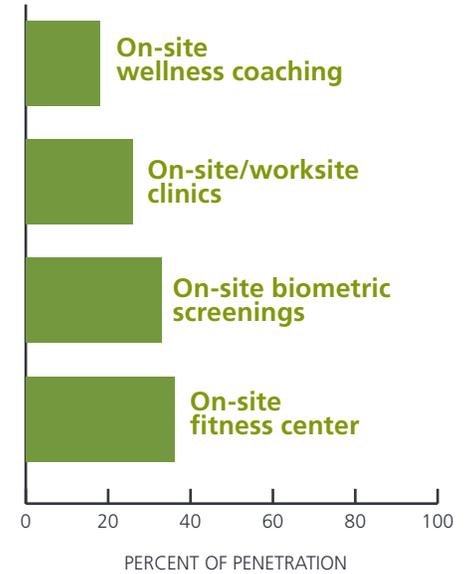
What are on-site wellness services?

Companies approach on-site wellness in a variety of ways, but ultimately, it is a highly customized set of events, experiences and environments that are designed to enable healthy behaviors at work.

Some components include:

- Dedicated on-site personnel (health specialists, registered dieticians, ergonomists, wellness coaches)
- A health-biased focus on the physical environment at work (cafeteria, stairwells, vending areas)
- Healthy policies (such as a smoke-free campus)
- Engagement-building activities and events (team challenges, employee walks, fitness outings, farmers markets)
- Communications that nudge employees to make good health decisions
- Dedicated wellness space (for recreation or consultations)
- On-site fitness centers
- On-site medical clinics
- Biometric screening opportunities

On-site program penetration among large employers*



Annual Workplace Study:

Employers are embracing on-site wellness.

The Optum Wellness in the Workplace Study* surveys 500 human resources professionals from small, medium and large companies each year to better understand how they approach health and well-being at work. Findings related to on-site trends from 2013 included:

79%

of employers administer at least some of their health management programs at an on-site event

36%

of large employers have an on-site fitness center

69%

of large employers have a staff member dedicated to wellness

69%

of employers have made or are considering making changes to their physical work environment to promote wellness



On-site health specialists: listening, inspiring, leading

At the core of an on-site strategy is an embedded health specialist — ingrained in the organization’s culture — who can:

- design and deploy a culture of health
- support communications that activate employees at a grass-roots level
- mobilize resources (internal wellness champions and external vendor partners)
- motivate peers
- deliver health improvement activities at work

Viewed as employee peers, on-site health specialists truly personalize the wellness experience and make it convenient for an individual to engage in a wellness activity or habit during the workday.

There are three main benefits to deploying on-site health specialists and services as part of an overall health management strategy:



Benefit #1:

Help drive engagement of “on” and “off-site” programs like fitness centers, telephonic wellness coaching and digital health solutions.

Employers have made a heavy investment in health management programs. They are offering an average of eight programs across the health care continuum including: smoking cessation, weight loss, disease management, wellness coaching, biometric screenings, health assessments, case management, fitness challenges and more.*

On-site health specialists can optimize that investment — they play a critical role promoting all programs and helping employees get enrolled. As individuals viewed as employee peers, on-site health specialists truly personalize the wellness experience and make it convenient for an individual to engage in a wellness activity or habit during the workday.

Additionally, nutrition programming, fitness centers, ergonomics and healthy environmental “nudges” provide support to employees who have set healthy goals as part of their telephonic and digital programs.



Benefit #2:

Enable HR professionals to take a more strategic approach to their organization’s overall benefits strategy.

The most effective on-site health specialists are embedded in the company’s culture and can account for the organization’s cultural dynamics when partnering with HR professionals on wellness offerings, launching new programs and revitalizing existing initiatives.

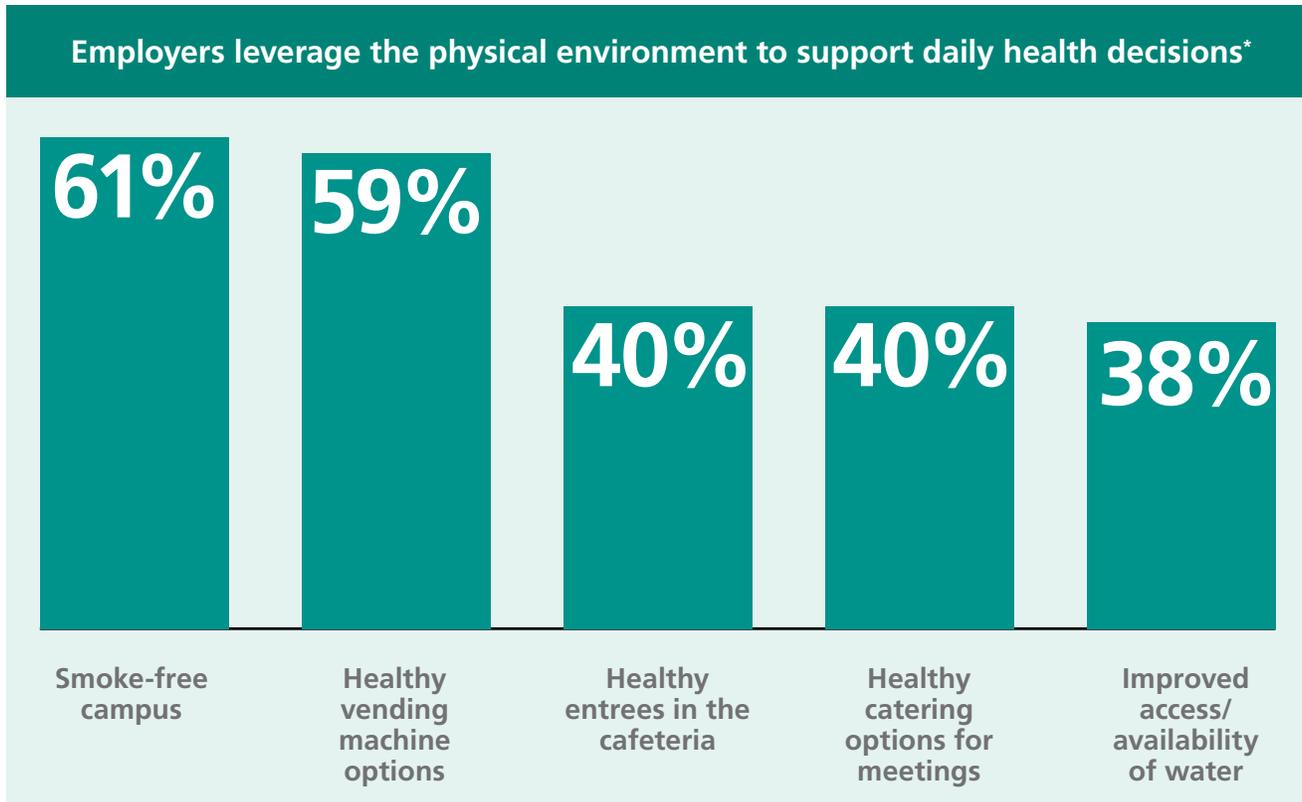
On-site specialists can handle program coordination, promotion and implementation on behalf of the HR team. They are the “feet on the street” who can present upcoming initiatives, attend wellness committee meetings, and deliver health improvement activities such as bike clubs, walking events, and volunteer events. They are often charged with uniting disparate health management offerings — clinical, wellness and behavioral — into one plan (one calendar of events, under one brand).



Benefit #3:

Leverage the physical work environment to support existing health goals and inspire new behaviors.

On-site health specialists know the physical work environment inside and out because they work there, too. As a result, they are able to easily identify locations in the workplace where employees make health decisions (like the cafeteria, vending machines and break rooms) and engineer these locations in a way that make healthy choices easy during the workday. For example, on-site specialists can suggest new food choices and placement strategies in the cafeteria, they can implement stairwell revitalization projects to nudge employees away from the elevators, and create walking meeting campaigns to encourage all-day movement and activity.



On-site wellness services play a critical role in overall program results

At a time when employers are investing in wellness programs and innovative health plan designs, they increasingly expect a return on every dollar spent. Quantifying that value of investment means building a complete value story for the strategy beyond medical cost savings.

Employee engagement:

The benefit of an on-site strategy is that it touches the entire workforce, not just high-risk employees, for example. Additionally, because on-site activities are designed to build engagement in off-site programs, employers should see a bump in existing program participation and enrollment numbers.

Recruitment and retention:

Today, employers are leveraging wellness offerings to attract and retain top talent.

Quality of life:

Our personal health impacts our quality life and many researchers are beginning to study the connection between QoL and wellness programs. QoL metrics can be measured by employee surveys that gauge wellness and other issues such as career satisfaction levels, concern about personal finances, family-related issues and other potential stressors.

Productivity:

Businesses lose millions of dollars each year due to employee absence and presenteeism. An effective wellness program will track employee wellness improvement to rates of absenteeism and other productivity metrics.

Is it time to bring wellness back into your workplace?

Ask yourself these questions to determine if your health management strategy could benefit from on-site services.

Would you like to improve engagement in your existing health and well-being services?

Are human resources professionals expected to administer health management programs as an “add-on” to their existing core benefit-related responsibilities?

Is your office health environment at odds with your employees’ healthy intentions?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, it might be time to consider infusing your existing health management strategy with some on-site activities.

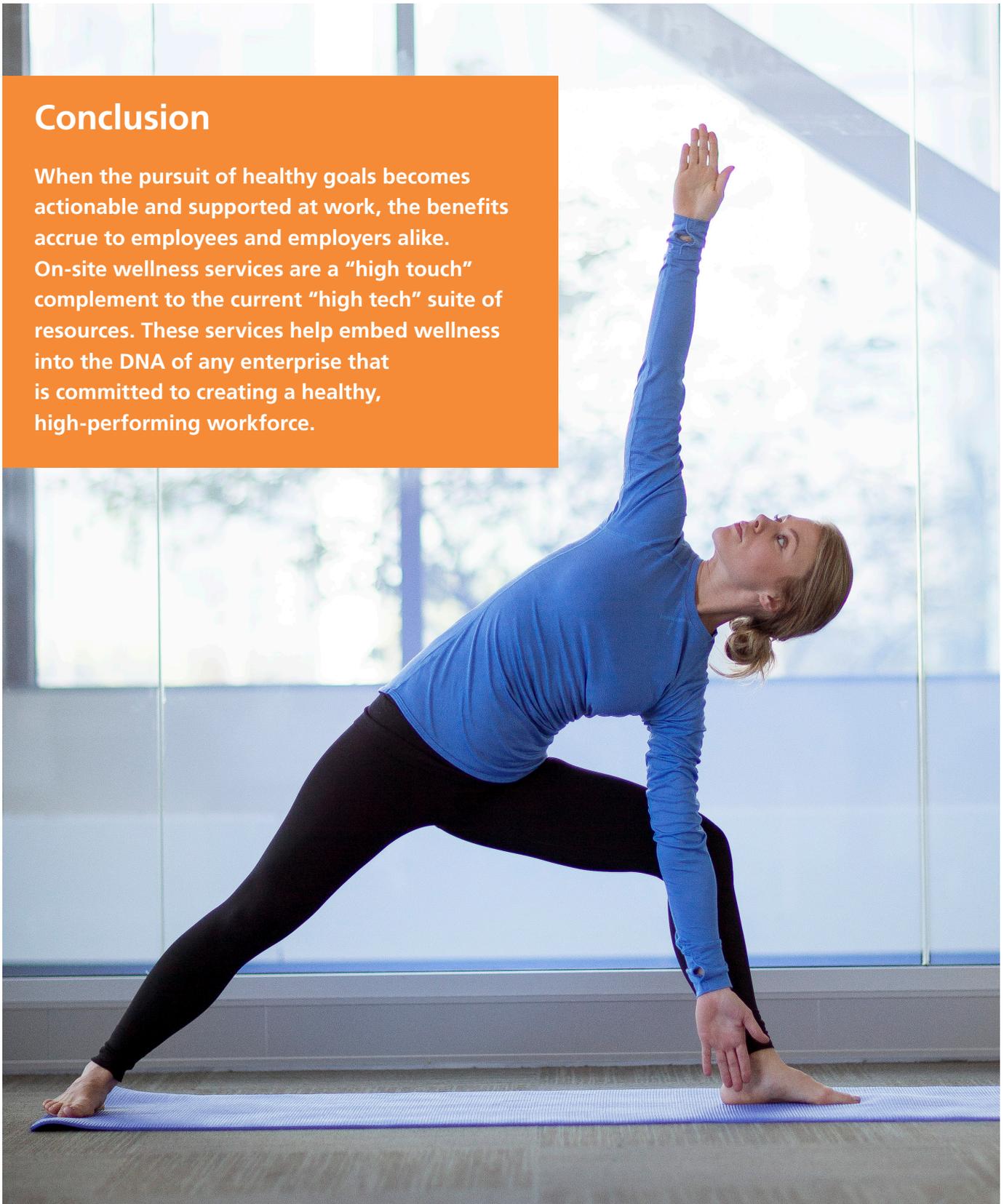
How can employers integrate on-site plans into an existing wellness strategy?

The first steps often include:

- Think about how high-touch activities can complement your high-tech interventions. For example, if your phone and digital coaching programs are helping employees set weight management goals, consider supporting them with accessible healthy food options and group fitness classes.
- Dedicate professional staff to help administer your strategy. Do you have a dedicated health and wellness staff? If not, consider bringing on a part-time or full-time on-site specialist who can champion and expand upon an existing health management strategy.
- Get creative. Before diving into a comprehensive on-site program, some employers will start with simple start-up interventions such as:
 - Walking clubs
 - Six-week employee weight loss programs
 - Group fitness classes in existing conference rooms
 - Recreation programs like ping pong
 - Wellness ‘moments’ during existing meetings, when a facilitator leads teams in stretches and movement exercises

Conclusion

When the pursuit of healthy goals becomes actionable and supported at work, the benefits accrue to employees and employers alike. On-site wellness services are a “high touch” complement to the current “high tech” suite of resources. These services help embed wellness into the DNA of any enterprise that is committed to creating a healthy, high-performing workforce.



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As senior vice president of Prevention Solutions at Optum, Chris Ciatto is responsible for a full complement of health and wellness offerings including leading-edge portal, health challenges, biometric services, health coaching and on-site physical activity and nutrition programs. Prior to this role, Chris was chief executive officer of Plus One Health Management Inc., which Optum acquired in July 2013.

While leading Plus One, Chris implemented a strategy that included the successful execution of three acquisitions and rapid organic growth, which made it one of the fastest-growing private companies in the country. Prior to joining Plus One, Chris created and led ARAMARK's Clinical Technology Services business, a health care marketplace leader representing \$320 million in annual revenues. Previously, Chris was a member of renowned strategy consulting firm McKinsey & Co.

Chris earned a bachelor's degree in political science and economics from Princeton University and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School.

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* Optum Wellness in the Workplace Study 2013



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