

Achieving a culture of health in the workplace




What does it take to achieve a culture of health?

Most employers say that creating a “culture of health” at their workplace is a top priority. Yet fewer than one in five have actually succeeded in achieving this goal, according to a special analysis from the Optum® “6th Annual Wellness in the Workplace” benchmarking survey.

This white paper, which features results from the survey, reveals several key insights that will enable employers to answer this question. Our research also helps shed light on the meaning of the concept itself. There is no one-size-fits-all definition of “culture of health.” Employers tend to view it through the lens of their unique corporate personalities and priorities. While more research still needs to be done to fully understand all the components of a culture of health, our survey attempts to identify some critical aspects.

Key question

The survey respondents were asked:

To what extent do you feel your company has established a culture of health among employees in the workplace 

Culture of health was defined as “a work environment where employees have the resources, tools and a support system that empowers and motivates them to take responsibility for their own health.”

Key findings

According to our survey, employers with a culture of health:

- Offer more wellness programs over a longer period than those without a culture of health
- Invest heavily in incentives to drive engagement
- View health holistically — physical, behavioral, financial and social
- Plan strategically and dedicate staff to wellness programs
- Leverage multiple metrics to demonstrate program success
- Report higher levels of employee satisfaction and well-being



SURVEY BACKGROUND

- Online survey
- 545 respondents
- All surveyed companies offer at least two types of health management programs
- Individuals responding to the survey were involved in benefits decision-making
- A cross-section of industries was represented, including manufacturing, health care, professional services, finance, retail and transportation

COMPARING THE EXTREMES

We analyzed answers from the 19 percent of employers who responded that they had firmly established a **culture of health**. **97 respondents***

We then compared them with the answers from employers at the opposite end of the spectrum — those who felt that they had **no culture of health**. **99 respondents****

This paper highlights what differentiates the two groups.



*6–7 rating on a 7-point scale
 **1–3 rating on a 7-point scale

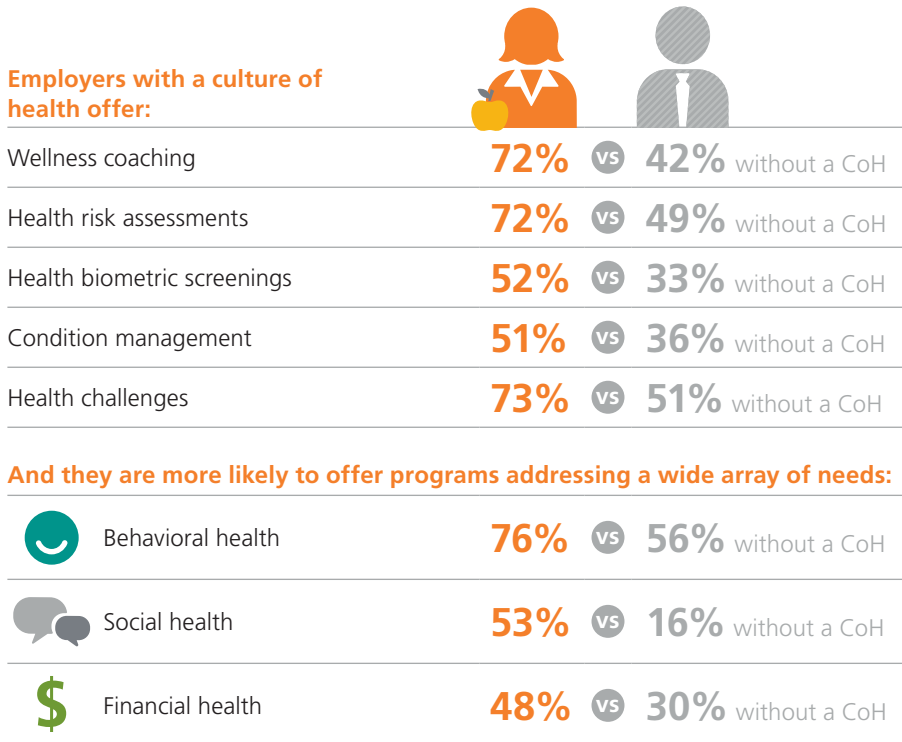
Five characteristics of firms with a culture of health

1. Program diversity



Deep and diverse program penetration is a hallmark of employers with a culture of health. They understand that total well-being involves not only physical health, but also behavioral, financial and even social health.

Employers with a culture of health (“CoH”) offer significantly more wellness and health management programs (10.4 programs on average) than do firms without a culture of health (7.3 programs on average).



THOUGHT STARTERS: 

What gaps do you have in your health and wellness strategy?

How can you help employees address all dimensions of well-being?




2. Incentives



While the use of incentives continues to grow among nearly all employers, those with a culture of health tend to do a better job of aligning their incentive strategy with their health and wellness program goals. Thus, they more frequently reward employees for completing programs and achieving specific results.

Nearly all employers with a culture of health (93 percent) offer their employees health and wellness incentives, compared with 77 percent of firms without a culture of health.

Employers with a culture of health offer:

	Health account contributions	46%	vs	25%	without a CoH
	Gift cards	37%	vs	17%	without a CoH
	Cash	26%	vs	13%	without a CoH

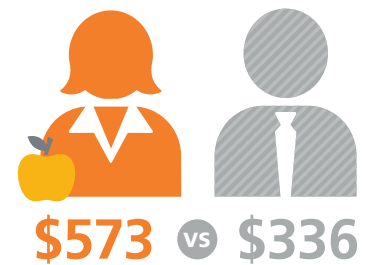
Note: Premium reductions are also leveraged but differences are not significant between groups.

Far more so than employers without a culture of health, firms with a culture of health reward employees for enrolling and completing wellness programs, as well as for achieving a specific health outcome:

Employers with a culture of health offer incentives for:

Program enrollment	63%	vs	36%	without a CoH
Program completion	68%	vs	48%	without a CoH
Achieving specific health outcome	65%	vs	32%	without a CoH

Firms with a culture of health also communicate their incentive strategy to employees more frequently throughout the year. Nearly half (46 percent) do so monthly or more often compared with just 9 percent of employers without a culture of health.



Not surprisingly, there is also a **wide differential in the yearly dollar value of incentives per participant** — \$573 for firms with a culture of health compared with \$336 for firms without a culture of health.

THOUGHT STARTERS: 

Is your incentive strategy driving the right outcomes?

How are incentives changing your participation numbers?

Are you rewarding programs that actually change health behavior?

3. Wellness strategy



Companies with a culture of health take a more strategic approach to health and wellness programs. They have a longer history of offering their programs and commit more staff and budget than do firms without a culture of health.

Employers with a culture of health:



BUDGET

Commit to year-over-year investment in health and wellness:

21% report a budget increase vs. 9% without a CoH



LONGEVITY

Have offered health management programs longer than firms without a CoH:

47% have offered programs for at least five years vs. 26% without a CoH



STRATEGIC PLAN

Are more likely to have a formal wellness plan:

61% have a long-term or annual strategic plan vs. 29% without a CoH



STAFF

Are more likely to have dedicated wellness staff:

79% have at least one person whose sole responsibility is promoting wellness vs. 40% without a CoH



BUSINESS STRATEGY

Believe that wellness solutions are important to the overall business strategy:

59% say it is very important vs. 17% without a CoH

THOUGHT STARTERS:



Is your wellness program budget allocated to have the biggest impact?

Are your business leaders supporting the effort to build a culture of health?

Is the well-being agenda integrated into your company's business strategy?

4. Engagement strategy



Firms with a culture of health used multiple strategies to engage their employees and build a workplace environment that makes good health decisions the path of least resistance.

Employers with a culture of health use:

Online competitions/challenges	50%	vs	25%	without a CoH
Activity-tracking devices/wearables	40%	vs	18%	without a CoH
Social networks	39%	vs	10%	without a CoH

Fifty-eight percent of employers with a culture of health have made physical changes to the work environment to help employees make healthy decisions at work, compared with 28 percent of employers without a culture of health.

THOUGHT STARTERS:



Is your vendor partner integrating new technology with traditional programs?

Does your workplace environment make healthy choices the path of least resistance?



5. Success metrics



Companies with a culture of health are eager to build a more complete business case for health and wellness. They not only measure return on investment (ROI) based on medical cost savings, but also look at how these programs impact employee productivity, satisfaction and retention. This is known as value on investment or VOI.

Employers with a culture of health consider more factors important in determining program success

Increased productivity	95%	vs	79%	without a CoH
ROI	91%	vs	71%	without a CoH
Improved quality of life	94%	vs	83%	without a CoH
Improved employee retention	92%	vs	73%	without a CoH

THOUGHT STARTERS:



Can your vendor partner provide integrated reporting across a wide range of VOI metrics?

How will you shift the focus from ROI to VOI within your organization?

Are you able to track and measure metrics outside of health care cost savings?

Impact of culture of health

The previous sections examined some of the characteristics of employers with a culture of health. This section looks at results. Our findings indicate that employers with a culture of health have better outcomes than firms lacking a healthy culture.

Employers with a culture of health report:



Based on self-reported data

*Top two box

The opportunity ahead — key takeaways

A culture of health is not just about offering wellness programs. It is about transforming the attitudes and beliefs of your entire employee population.

Our research demonstrates what separates those employers who report that they have achieved a culture of health from those who haven't. As an employer, you can work with your vendor partner, to:

- Demonstrate how health and wellness is impacting other important business metrics like productivity, employee quality of life and presenteeism.
- Align your incentive strategy with your health and wellness program objectives.
- Expand your program services to address not only physical health but behavioral, financial and social health as well.
- Consider investing in your workplace environment and on-site health services.
- Garner support from business leaders outside of the HR organization to drive results.
- Leverage emerging technologies to engage employees and enhance program effectiveness.

Contributors

Karen Marlo, MPP

Vice President, Benchmarking and Analysis, NBGH

At NBGH, Marlo is responsible for overseeing the collection of health care data and best practices information as it relates to the health care industry. Specifically, she is responsible for implementation of benchmarking research and data collection surveys, oversight of the Business Group's premier benchmarking products, EMPAQ® and WISCORE™, the Wellness Impact Scorecard, as well as development of new benchmarking products. Marlo holds a BA degree in economics from Georgetown University and a master's of public policy with a focus in health services research from the Georgetown Public Policy Institute.

Seth Serxner, PhD, MPH

*Chief Health Officer and Senior Vice President of Population Health,
Optum Prevention Solutions*

Seth Serxner brings the breadth of his experience in academia, industry and consulting to his role as chief health officer and senior vice president of population health. Seth earned a master's of public health from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a doctorate from the University of California, Irvine, where his research focused on health promotion and disease prevention in social ecology. He is a board member, executive committee member and vice president of the C. Everett Koop Health Project. He also sits on the editorial review board of the *American Journal of Health Promotion* and edits and is a reviewer for peer-reviewed journals such as the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* and *Health Affairs*.

Optum research leads for the Culture of Health Analysis: Rohit Kichlu, MBA, and Erin Ratelis, MBC, CHES

Contact us

1-866-386-3408

resourcecenter@optum.com
optum.com/resourcecenter

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11000 Optum Circle, Eden Prairie, MN 55344

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