
Report on an Employee Wellness Program - Savvy Publishing

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1. Introduction

Savvy Publishing (Savvy) is a national supplier and publisher of online content in Australia with offices in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Perth and Adelaide. Currently employing 60 people, Savvy are rapidly expanding and are considering the effects on the health of their staff who traditionally undertake desk bound work. The purpose of this report is to identify the benefits of introducing a wellness program to Savvy.

2. Key considerations

Each Savvy branch employs 4-6 staff with a variety of roles and EFT, many staff being writers and editors who are, by definition, desk bound in their roles.

Current research indicates there is an increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer among those who sit for extended periods and do low amounts of exercise¹. The research suggested that ‘the impact of movement, even leisurely movement – can be profound.’ Further, those who felt unhappy and unhealthy exhibited higher levels of stress, were lacking in motivation and had lower self-esteem.

To support the findings of this report, data was collected through:

- Current (anonymous) HR records
- Staff surveys
- Individual staff interviews
- Independent research

¹ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005>

3. Key findings

The results from the survey and individual interviews indicated that 92% of respondents did not currently undertake any exercise and felt their diet was inadequate or unhealthy. 98% of respondents would be happy to participate in an exercise program provided it was not too strenuous, did not include special clothing and was conducted during normal business hours. 100% of those 98%, were positive to a wellness program which included a nutrition and diet component.

Core IT have been operating a wellness program for the last 18 months and recently conducted a series of fitness tests and surveys of staff, matching them with pre-program data. The results were conclusive. Staff were healthier, happier, more motivated, sleeping better, eating better and believed the program was now essential to their health and wellbeing. A side benefit was an increase in productivity as reported by management. These results are available for review as requested.

A ²Comcare survey conducted by the Australian Federal Government found that workplace health and wellbeing programs have the potential to significantly improve the health of employees. There was strong evidence that multi-component interventions addressing physical activity and nutrition are effective in increasing physical activity levels, promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity. It also found that interventions which use a comprehensive approach are effective in preventing and controlling job stress. This is because healthy living doesn't just make you look good, but nourishes the way you feel. Healthy living can make you happy.

4. Logistics and options

There are a number of considerations to take into account regarding the set-up, either internally or outsourced, of a workplace health promotion program. It cannot be imposed on workers as yet another management cost-containment initiative. Boosting engagement in wellness can only be achieved when workers own the program, understand how they and the company benefit, and are given a meaningful voice in its ongoing operation.

Option 1: Internal

An internally run program would require leadership, support and strategic planning to ensure its success. Driven as a team project and set up with a ‘Wellness Committee’ it would likely be led by HR and include those interested in promoting a healthy workplace and a healthy company culture. A healthy company culture is built intentionally and is first and foremost about creating a way of life in the workplace that integrates a total health model into every aspect of business practice, from company policies to everyday work activities. For Savvy, this may include setting reasonable health goals, providing social support, enforcing health-promoting policies and establishing a healthy physical environment; healthy food offerings, walking meetings, paid fitness breaks, healthy snacks, or a lunch time walking club.

Some capital investment would need to be made to ensure its success, whether this was to provide staff with a tool such as a Fitbit to promote fitness awareness, install bike racks or to buy purpose built software to measure personalized health data.

Option 2: External

Outsourcing a wellness program means that the program has the skills, energy and support it needs for significant and consistent results. It would allow inbuilt online health checks and data to assist in keeping to a program and it’s success would be measurable by the provider. Any capital outlay would be minimal and may only extend to items such as installing bike racks to support those who wanted to cycle.

There are a number of large organisations within Australian who currently run corporate health and fitness programs such as Fitness First or Fitsense Australia.

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt a wellness program would benefit staff at Savvy Publishing with evidence based research supporting the benefits of such a program. Whilst both options have their merits, a combination of both Option 1 and Option 2 could be the most beneficial scenario. Establishing a wellbeing committee to determine a tailor made program and utilizing the skills of trained service providers would ensure buy in and ownership from staff and appropriate delivery of programs.

It could be suggested that members of the committee attend workshops or a conference such as the annual Think Tank Media, Corporate Health & Wellbeing Summit.

As this report does not review costs, further research is required to establish costs, review projected savings (from absenteeism) and set a company budget.

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