

# Well-Being Strategies for **Employee Engagement and Retention**



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## Hi there!

My name is Andrea Herron, and I'm the Head of People at WebMD Health Services. I've been a part of the HR community for over 16 years, and I've experienced firsthand the many hats that we wear as HR professionals. If you've ever felt like your engagement and retention strategies aren't where they could be, you're not alone. I mean that. Many organizations struggle to find the magic solution to attract, engage and retain their employees—and this has been a pain point long before the pandemic added another layer of complexity to our role in solving these challenges.

I'm hoping this playbook can provide some helpful tips to get employees excited about your well-being program and benefits—an essential element to happy, healthy and engaged employees. Within this book, you'll find some best practices—and real examples—for keeping employees engaged in your well-being program, which can ultimately lead to better performance, productivity and workplace satisfaction. Because at the end of the day, we all need a little bit of inspiration and motivation to keep us moving forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Herron". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Head of People, WebMD Health Services





## Building a Strategic Communications Plan

Communications are a major component of successful well-being programs. After all, people can't participate in a program if they don't know about it! Everything from flyers, posters in the office, home mailers, and emails can help spread the word about your program and get people excited about what's offered. Here are our best practices for communications.

## Communicate early and often.

Bring awareness to your program by kicking off your communications as soon as the program year begins. Let people know what's available to them—including special callouts for new additions—so people know what they can expect throughout the year.

As time goes on, send out strategic communications to keep your well-being program top of mind. Consider mapping out an entire year's worth of communications at the start of every program year to ensure you can speak to every event, wellness challenge and new offering you plan on promoting. That way, nothing gets missed. Also keep in mind any current events that pop up so that you're communicating about those, too—for example, if you are adding additional mental and emotional health services, send out communications that highlight your new solution—it's an important way to engage with those employees that are seeing support.



## Meet your employees where they are.

People may see some types of communication more than others, so it's important to mix things up and send messages through different avenues. For example, remote employees won't see any posters or monitors displayed in an office. And warehouse workers or retail employees may not have access to email communications as easily as office workers. We recommend having a variety of communications to make sure that everyone sees the message, including:

- Emails
- Monitor backgrounds
- Intranet
- Videos
- Social media content
- Company meetings
- Posters
- Flyers
- Newsletters
- Postcards and home mailers



## Create a consistent look and feel.

Well-being program communications work best when they have a consistent design. That way, no matter how an employee views the information, they know right away that it's about the well-being program. Many of our clients have seen success with creating a custom well-being program brand, especially when using our WebMD Communications Services.

In fact, clients who use our custom communications see increased engagement compared to clients who don't.

5x more site visits

54% higher registration rate in the program

52% higher completion rate with Health Assessments<sup>1</sup>



## Check in with your employees.

Communications should be consistent. However, there's a fine line between not sharing enough and over-sharing to the point that people stop reading the information. We recommend sending out surveys to check in with employees and understand how they prefer to receive well-being program information, if they're satisfied with your current cadence, and what they might want moving forward. After receiving feedback, implement changes and communicate any updates you're making based on their responses to ensure that communications are working best for both the business and the employees.

<sup>1</sup> WebMD Health Services. 2020 Employer Data.



## Humanizing Your Well-Being Program

What's the best way to get employees excited about your well-being program? By having people who are huge promoters and cheerleaders for your program. They can help to raise awareness of the program, drive program engagement, and even coordinate events, activities, and wellness challenges.

Overall, their ability to keep people informed about the program and bring excitement and energy around participating can make a big difference in engagement rates. Here are our best practices for building a strong, supportive well-being team.



## Hire employees to support your well-being program.

Having an employee who exclusively manages a well-being program—rather than having the program be another line item on someone’s long to-do list—can do wonders for engagement. That’s because it sends the message that the organization truly cares about and is committed to well-being. It also adds a human element to the program, as someone is available to chat with, answer questions, and recommend specific benefits to employees.

We recommend having at least one position to help plan and manage the program. From there, consider adding other roles—like health coaches, program coordinators and site-specific program managers—to help boost engagement and results across the organization.

At WebMD Health Services, we have a Dedicated Well-Being Services team that can integrate within organizations to act as their local well-being resources. Available in many different roles—and the option of being remote, onsite or a hybrid position—these individuals bring programs to life and make well-being part of the organization’s culture.

95%

report increased awareness of their well-being program

95%

report improvement in their well-being culture

100%

report increased participation<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> WebMD Health Services. Annual Client Survey, March 2021.







Our wellness program wouldn't be as successful without our Dedicated Well-Being Program Manager. She provides support to our Wellness Ambassadors and our participants that we don't have the time for. She also brings creative ideas to increase engagement and make our program fun. We are very lucky to have her!"

**KATE ANDERSON**

Digital Communications Manager  
*Farm Credit Foundations*



## Use different engagement tactics.

In addition to serving as the support experts, dedicated well-being team members can also drive engagement in your well-being program by interacting with employees throughout the year in modalities like:

Promotional events, such as **health fairs, biometric screenings or wellness challenges**

Educational or awareness-building content, such as **Lunch & Learns, well-being newsletters, or virtual webinars**

Communications tied to company culture initiatives, such as **cooking demonstrations, gratitude boards, and location-specific activities like a 5k or charity event**

Open office hours where people can ask questions in a private, 1:1 setting

**Get creative!**

## Build a wellness champion network.

Wellness champion networks are incredible tools for building excitement and awareness about your program. These employees act as onsite cheerleaders that educate, motivate and keep their coworkers excited about the well-being program. They typically partner with the wellness benefits role or the Dedicated Well-Being Services team to:

Promote employee well-being at a local level,

Distribute communications to participants at their specific location,

Participate in onsite events, and

Inspire others to continue engaging in the program.

To start a network, seek out people within your organization who are already well-being advocates.





## Creating a Sense of Community

Community is an essential part of well-being that's often overlooked. In fact, feeling like you belong can lend itself to a better mood, more creativity and collaboration, higher psychological safety, and more. And people who feel like they belong will be empowered to speak up, take risks and be their authentic selves without worrying that they'll be judged. In one study, belonging was linked to a:

56%

increase in job performance

50%

decrease in turnover risk

75%

reduction in sick days<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Business Review. The Value of Belonging at Work. December 16, 2019.



Part of feeling like you belong is having connections with the people you work with. Employees with strong relationships at work benefit from:

- Collaboration between departments
- Stronger peer-to-peer support
- Feeling happier and more fulfilled at work
- Better productivity
- More engagement
- Improved retention<sup>4</sup>

But how can your organization bring people together? Here are some of our best practices for creating impactful relationships between colleagues:



## Identify ways to bring people together.

Dispersed workforces—and even different schedules—can make connecting with coworkers difficult. But social connections can help improve morale, collaboration and productivity—so organizations must design intentional ways to bring people together during the workday.

These could be as simple as creating virtual calendar invites for things like watercooler chats, BINGO or trivia games. You can also plan in-person events for the whole company, single departments, or even local meet-ups for employees from the same region. There are even great plug-ins and platforms that connect colleagues together for serendipitous conversations, enabling people to connect with other employees they may not have otherwise gotten the chance to know.

At WebMD Health Services, our clients and their employees have access to Community, an internal-facing social media experience within their WebMD ONE portal. It helps employees connect with others in their organization who are interested in similar well-being topics. They can join groups, post questions, share their stories, and encourage others to keep working on their well-being.

Data shows that Community works to keep people engaged. In fact, employees who use Community are nearly three times as active as non-community users.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> WebMD Book of Business 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Forbes. 5 Reasons Social Connections Can Enhance Your Employee Wellness Program. January 31, 2018.

## Empower people to create ERGs.

If you don't already have Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), now is a great time to include them as part of your culture. That's because networks like these can help people find others within the organization that have similar interests and backgrounds, allowing them to build relationships with people they may not have otherwise been able to meet or collaborate with.

You can start by suggesting a few groups that you know might be popular, such as Women At Work, a Veterans Group, or a Mental Health Advocacy Group. After a group is established, use it to understand how you can better support them in the workplace. You can do this by listening to their challenges and then work with them to discuss policies or resources you can implement to help.

## Encourage opinions and ideas at every level.

Sometimes, the quietest people in meetings have the best ideas. Unfortunately, they don't always feel comfortable speaking up in group settings. Make sure managers find ways to empower everyone on their team to offer suggestions and provide input in ways that are comfortable for them. For example, after a big group call, send an email to a quiet team member asking if they have any ideas they want to share. This can help people still feel like they're part of a team and encourages them to continue contributing over the long run.



## Offer time off to volunteer.

People appreciate when their workplaces allow them to focus on things they're passionate about. One easy way to help people feel like they belong is to allow extra time off to volunteer for the causes they care about. If the organizations match your company's values and culture, consider getting the whole company involved, and match donations if possible.





## Using Health Coaches for Long-Term Motivation

Overall, health coaching is an incredible engagement tool. Health coaches are tasked with helping employees identify and overcome challenges that impact their well-being—all while providing the motivation and accountability they need to reach their personal health goals.

Here are our best practices for utilizing health coaches:



## Offer a variety of expertise.

Some people may need help with specific chronic conditions, while others may want to speak to someone about increased feeling of stress and anxiety. Having a range of experts can help more employees be engaged in their well-being.

Our WebMD Health Coaches are trained and certified in specific fields to support each individual's needs. We offer a range of health coaching support including lifestyle, condition management, weight management, tobacco cessation and group coaching.

Coaching can be conducted in person, over the phone, through text, via online messaging, and as a group session, allowing participants to interact with health coaches in times and places that are most convenient for them.

2/3 of Lifestyle by WebMD participants migrated to lower risk acuity.

1/2 of Condition Management by WebMD participants migrated to lower risk acuity.

70% of Positively Me® by WebMD participants lost weight.

89% of Condition Management by WebMD participants completed the program.

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## Structure your incentives strategically.

We recommend providing an incentive for health coaching participation. Consider a reward for scheduling the initial session with a health coach at the start of every program year, as well as ongoing incentives for a specific number of interactions with the health coach throughout the year. This strategy has been proven to drive engagement and results.



## The results speak for themselves.

Our WebMD Health Coaching participants have completed:

5.7<sup>M</sup> coaching sessions, resulting in

50,000 fewer cigarettes per day

OVER

85% of our clients improved their population's health in just one year

1.4<sup>M</sup> pounds lost

AND

1.1<sup>M</sup> goals achieved<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> WebMD Book of Business 2022.



Well-being is personal. Your approach to drive engagement can't be a "one-size-fits-all" initiative. Overall, a well-being program should be comprehensive so that it supports each person, no matter where they are on their path to well-being. Keep in mind that employees will engage when they know a solution or service can support their individual needs—whether that be stress and resilience support, connecting with a community, getting fitness and nutrition advice, or even tracking their own personal health information. And if your company culture continues to prioritize well-being, you'll see incredible engagement and retention. Benefitting your employees and your business, that's a win-win.





Empowering Well-Being In Everyone

To make the most of your well-being program, visit [webmdhealthservices.com](http://webmdhealthservices.com).