



## **The Accent is on making the right choice corporate wellness program**

*We all know the benefits of healthy and happy employees, all practicing a work-life balance – lower absenteeism, reduction in injuries, staying at work beyond retirement age, improved morale and for you, becoming an employer of choice. But with a multitude of wellness providers now in the market, one company offers a streamlined, cost effective and progressive program that can help you make the right decision of which provider to use.*

*Accent Health Sciences is company that provides 'ground roots' HR services including workers compensation, OHS, HR consulting and training services. Accent helps business owners identify the day to day HR needs that at times, can be distracting to core business. It is no wonder then that Accent's clients, many of which started with large injury rates, called on Accent to implement effective and workable injury prevention and health and wellness programs. The choice for them was an easy one, but you may be asking....*

### **Where do I start?**

You have made the hard decision... to implement a wellness program. Now you have to choose the right organisation and the right method of delivery. With an ever growing wellness industry, how do you know which is the right wellness organisation to use?

In the last edition of Corporate Wellness, Allan Bolton made the statement that reducing risk factors are not rocket science but common knowledge. "The rocket science is in converting common knowledge to common practice – in and outside the workplace".

On site massage, on site counselling, weight reduction programs, boot camps, health screens, score cards, goal sheets, healthy eating, seminars, quit smoking, fitness days, health expos, gym membership, executive programs, on site, on line, corporate challenges, health retreats... and so on. Where do you start?

The first question you need to be asking the provider is not so much what do you do, but how do you deliver it with minimal time loss and most effective bang for your buck!

Some providers specialise in one or two modalities and some provide a one stop shop. Some programs can be feature packed but require large chunks of stop work. Others can present boring or generic 'off the shelf' programs that just don't hit the right mark. And then you have those that promise the goods but involve more of your or your staff time than anticipated making you wonder if you were better off doing it yourself.

### **A well designed program**

They key is a well designed program – that suits:

1. your workplace,
2. your timeframes and
3. your budget.

If it can't be tailored to meet these needs – look elsewhere, and I suggest, look at Accent work and Health Sciences. Lets look at each need individually.

#### ***Suits your workplace:***

Accent takes the time to meet with you or your HR team to determine a number of key factors. These include your workplace culture, your workplace demographics and most importantly, your employees thoughts, interests and risk factors. Without these, the program cannot be tailored sufficiently to spark the interest in the most important people – those attending. There is no point presenting a drug and alcohol seminar, if no one thinks they need the information. Nor is it effective to prepare an executive program if none of your executives want or have time for it. Your attendance rates will be insignificant.

Accent tailors a wellness program by consulting with your staff, preparing questionnaires and health screens. The end result - a program that people want to attend. Accent's methods are proven...

- In a recent program, drug and alcohol education was omitted. Instead, we concentrated on health risk factors, cancer education and healthy eating. In each of these programs alcohol and drug use were either touched on or discussed. When it came to preparing the next phase of program, the employees asked for drug and alcohol education – and attendance was impressive.
- With another organisation, Accent incorporated a review of their canteen menu as staff did not see the point of discussing healthy eating when the menu consisted predominantly of pies, chips and fried food. In addition, this organisation had a large proportion of night shift workers. These people felt that discussing healthy eating and reviewing the canteen did not benefit them as the canteen was not open on night shift, instead all they had access to was a chip vending machine. Accent, in collaboration with the canteen, was able to organise limited canteen availability and installed a vending machine that provided healthy option frozen meals.
- Executive programs can be a challenging program to implement. One organisation encouraged all executives to attend the mainstream program. This had an extra benefit that 'floor' staff could see that the program was supported from the top down.
- Another organisation wanted a separate executive program so this was delivered before work hours – usually at the executives home or local facility.

What ever the delivery mechanism, you want to be assured that the program fits with your staff, your times and most of all, encourages attendance.

#### ***Suits your timeframes:***

A wellness program needs to be well paced and well presented. There is no benefit in rushing through a list of seminars throughout the year where information will go in one ear and out the other.

Many programs have a one year longevity, once the education components are completed, staff do not want to hear the same information again the following year.

Further, no employer wants their staff to be away from work for any length of time in non-productive activities. Therefore seminars that take over 30 minutes and eat into productive time should be avoided.

Accent provides a choice of one, two or three year programs. The programs can be delivered through progressive topics each year, or repeated topics on a 6 monthly basis but with challenges and progressions the employees must undertake to participate in advanced seminars and workshops.

Another delivery examples include:

- Active walking groups. They can progress on a 6 monthly or yearly basis from small groups to team/corporate events
- Stress management progresses to specific stress management technique workshops as the program developed over the course of 2 or 3 years.

Education components range from handout information in the lunch room, to large group seminars conducted during scheduled work times. All modules are organised with management staff and time loss is minimal. Most of the 'work time' seminars presented by Accent during a 3 year program in one organisation were seminars took no longer than 15 minutes of intense information followed up with lunch time programs, groups and after hours information sessions. The employer appreciated the minimal lost time per month and the employees appreciated the range of options.

Accent also presented seminars or workshops before or after shifts. The group work format for an organisation that had three shifts was to present to night shifters (ending shift) and day shifters (starting shift) at between 6am and 8am, present to remaining day shifters (end shift) and afternoon shifters (start shift) between 2 and 4 pm. In between, administration and executive staff attended.

Whatever the format, your wellness provider should be prepared to work within your timeframes.

***Suits your budget:***

Wellness programs are a significant expense – make sure you get your bang for your buck! As a guide, an organisation with 200 - 300 employees should budget for between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per annum

On top of your financial benefits such as decreased absenteeism, decreased workplace injuries, and increased staff retention, there are a number of other factors you need to be considering.

Does your provider attend site as much as proposed? Does your provider have a visual presence – posters, articles, memos? Are the seminars tailored to your workplace or do they see 'off the shelf'? Are seminars delivered on time? Are seminars going over time? How much time is your liaison person putting into the program?

All these factors cost you money so make you want to make sure you are getting your dollars worth.

Accent proposes all programs on a monthly retainer basis. This retainer is a predetermined fee that includes all time, resources, deliverables, preparation and on site attendance. The only additional cost would be expenses where an organisation wants to change a program significantly or provide equipment to staff. For example,

- One organisation wanted to supply all staff with pedometers to use after the program. Accent purchased the pedometers and expenses were reimbursed.
- Another organisation wanted to supply all staff attending theraband programs to be supplied with their own theraband to use at home. Again Accent purchased the theraband in bulk and expenses were reimbursed.

Where to from here?

Deciding to implement a program and choosing a provider are the hard parts. Once you have chosen your provider, they should do the leg work to design a program and make it work for you and your staff.

Accent Work and Health Sciences as a dedicated team of health and fitness professionals. Our programs are adaptable, economical and effective. We can run simple injury prevention programs, educational programs or progressive interactive health and wellness programs for all level of employees.

Call today and ask for Daniel for a no obligation initial meeting and quote. Mention this article and we will discount the total cost of your program by a further 10%.

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