

At-a-glance: Tips for engaging men in workplace well-being

Even companies with robust and engaging well-being programs may still face one barrier on the path to engagement: getting men to participate. Lack of engagement and investment in their health is a pervasive issue for men. In a survey conducted by Cleveland Clinic, it was found that 44% of men do not get a yearly physical, 44% do not prioritize their mental health, and 49% do not keep a healthy diet.¹ Awareness building and engagement in health programming are vital to shift this trend of disengagement between men and their health. Below are some steps employers may take to engage men in a corporate well-being program.

Ask for input

A good place to start is by collecting feedback on an employee well-being interest survey. Be sure to capture the respondent's gender, which will allow for analysis on the specific preferences of men. Incorporating programs that meet the needs and interests of the men in your workforce may result in better engagement.²

Secure senior leadership support

Ensure that all levels of management, from top executives to middle managers, are promoting and participating in the program. The most important things a leader can do to promote workplace well-being initiatives is to participate and to encourage others to do so.

Build a well-being champion network

Create a network of employees that advocate the program and promote health and well-being to other employees at their worksite location. Members of this network do not need to be "well-being experts." An ideal candidate is someone who has strong social skills, who is influential among their peers, and who has a desire to see the program succeed. Ensure that there is male representation in the well-being champion network.

Align worksite environment and culture

The work environment may impact decisions made throughout the day. Align the worksite to "make the healthier choice the easy choice." Some examples are ensuring healthier food options are available in vending machines, cafeterias and company events, "walk-and-talk" meetings, "recess"/exercise breaks and relaxation rooms, among many others.

Communicate to the home

Reaching men and getting them to engage in a program may require a more robust communications plan. Be sure to cover all forms of communication—e-mails, mailings to the home, and online communications via a company newsletter or Intranet.² Mailings to the home are particularly important for those predominantly male employee populations. This will ensure the message is reaching the female spouses at home who are often the decision makers when it comes to healthcare for the family. In addition, they may also have an impact in motivating the male employee to participate.

Offer paid company time

On average, men spend more time doing paid work than women.³ To address this, employers should consider providing paid company time to all employees to participate in well-being related activities (i.e. receiving preventive care screenings, exercising, completing health surveys, etc.) during work hours and managers should encourage the use of that time by setting the example.

Destigmatize mental healthcare

Research shows that men are less likely than women to seek help for mental health issues. Let employees know that mental health concerns are not a sign of weakness and create opportunities for them to seek help from mental health professionals. Ensure that employees understand the various modalities available to them to seek care (i.e., virtual, onsite, in-person etc.). Offer programs that focus on stress management, anxiety and depression and promote the resources available through your EAP.²

Hold onsite events

Research shows that men are less likely than women to proactively receive routine care and comply with regular screenings. Consider offering onsite well-being events such as biometric screenings, flu shots and health fairs that bring services directly to the workplace. These events may be especially beneficial to populations that are predominantly male, given the tendency for men to be less compliant with getting regular screenings on their own.²

Ensure males are represented in marketing materials

When creating marketing materials to promote your health & well-being programs/initiatives, ensure that you are incorporating images of men, so messages are more relatable.

Understanding the barriers men face when it comes to engagement is critical for the success of a long-term health and well-being strategy. By addressing the above barriers, employers may increase male engagement which may have an impact on several areas such as lower health risks, lower absenteeism, increased productivity, increased job satisfaction, and improved overall well-being.

¹ Cleveland Clinic Survey Examines the Current State of Men's Health in America. <https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2023/09/06/cleveland-clinic-survey-examines-the-current-state-of-mens-health-in-america/amp/>. September 2, 2023. Accessed December 2023.

² 5 Ways to Engage Men in Corporate Wellness. [https://www.neebc.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&category=wellness&id=46:5-ways-to-engage-men-in-corporate-wellness#:~:text=Offer%20programs%20that%20focus%20on,so%20many%20employees%20working%20remotely](https://www.neebc.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&category=wellness&id=46:5-ways-to-engage-men-in-corporate-wellness#:~:text=Offer%20programs%20that%20focus%20on,so%20many%20employees%20working%20remotely.). November 11, 2023. Accessed November 2023.

³ The Enduring Grip of the Gender Pay Gap. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/03/01/the-enduring-grip-of-the-gender-pay-gap/>. March 1, 2023. Accessed December 2023.