

# Building a Healthy Wellness Team

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## What is a wellness team?

**The role of the wellness team is to help integrate wellness into the culture of the workplace.**

This is possible when the team has representation from all levels of the corporation: senior management, mid-level management, unions, off-site or out-state and grassroots employees.

Senior management's endorsement of this committee is essential to launching and sustaining an effective wellness benefit. Committee members and employees must understand that management is involved and supportive.

The wellness team members, or "wellness champions," serve as the eyes, ears, arms and legs of the program. The wellness committee is a working committee that builds, promotes and evaluates initiatives. Most programmatic decisions occur within this committee.

As much as possible, representatives from senior and middle management, human resources, facilities and finance will be working members of the wellness team. In some situations, a separate steering committee might be advisable, convened by the wellness coordinator. This committee is responsible for advising, making financial recommendations, ensuring health promotion activities are tied to the agency's mission and approving recommendations made by the wellness team.

## THE WELLNESS TEAM

### What are the responsibilities of each team member?

#### Each member:

- Helps build the specific vision, mission and goals of the wellness program
- Represents the interests and concerns of co-workers
- Has knowledge of existing programs and health benefits
- Helps design, market and evaluate programs, policies and environments
- Is a mentor and role models wellness

## What are necessary qualifications?

While a job description may be in order to formalize responsibilities and assure supervisor approval, the fundamental qualifications of a wellness committee member are:

- An enthusiasm for wellness
- Commitment to preparing for and attending meetings, or assuring alternate will attend
- Ability to dedicate time to fulfill the responsibilities of team membership
- Willingness to dedicate self to fulfill the responsibilities of team membership
- Committee members need to have their immediate supervisor's support for the time and work they dedicate to the wellness committee.
- Desirable: Employee's will revise their annual work plan to reflect the new responsibilities of serving on the wellness committee.

## How do I recruit?

- Use interest level as your main criteria
- Invite volunteers
- Pick people who are respected by their peers
- Have managers appoint candidates
- Seek broad representation. Consider:
  - Each division/unit/floor/office
  - Interest in healthy eating, interest in exercise, interest in stress reduction
  - Representatives from:
    - support staff
    - managers/supervisors
    - human resources
    - finance
    - facilities
    - unions
- Committee size depends on the organization's size. Here is a general guideline:
  - <300 employees: 5 to 8 committee members
  - 300 to 1,000 employees: 8 to 12 committee members
  - 1,000 employees: more than 12 committee members
- Stagger one or two year terms. At least annually, survey members and invite each member to leave or stay.
- Each member has an alternate, so at least one is able to represent their group at meetings

A common mistake is filling the committee with the most health/fitness-conscious people in the company. It may be more important to identify employees who are well respected by their peers – informal leaders. Ideally, executive leaders would personally invite these individuals to the team and ask who else they might suggest would be interested in being on the team.



## How should the team be structured?

Responsibilities of individual committee members may be structured in several ways. Your team must choose the structure that best engages and gives committee participants a sense of accomplishment, and makes it easy to participate.

### By traditional roles

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

### By wellness interests

- Relaxation coordinator
- Fitness coordinator
- Sports teams coordinator
- Healthy eating coordinator

### By volunteer interest

- Communications and marketing
- Facilities
- Event planning
- Evaluation
- Recognition
- Employee benefits specialist
- Liaison to upper management

It may be perfectly adequate to have *one* wellness team. For some workplaces, it may be better to have two or more: a wellness team, a steering committee and perhaps a subset for special groups to work together to share common challenges, such as for out-state worksites. Subcommittees may be added to draw out particular expertise or interests which may not require the input of the full committee in planning. For example, Work Well has successfully employed subcommittees to develop a Website and to develop risk management tools.

## How should we recognize the team?

It is important to recognize the work of the team informally and formally.

Informal recognition is continuous thanks and acknowledgment for team members' contributions.

You can also create a comments Word file and paste all comments that come to the committee into it. Include these anecdotes with other evaluation measures in your annual report to senior leadership. Set up an special e-mail address for your committee for comments, ideas, registration, etc.

Formal recognition should take place at least annually. It should include supervisors and senior leaders and may be as simple as handing out of certificates by supervisors or writing an article about the team in the agency newsletter, or more involved such a special ceremony to which all employees are invited. When involving senior leaders, draft "talking points" to simplify their ability to be involved.

Here is an example:

Members of the Mn/DOT Health and Wellness Committee and Volunteers were recognized by Commissioner Tom Sorel in a special ceremony on December 16, 2010. The committee received an "Above and Beyond" award accommodation for the work they have done to promote health among Mn/DOT and State Capitol employees via their "employee-powered" wellness efforts.

### **How can I recharge the wellness team?**

Your organization has expectations for the team. Team members have expectations of one another. Effective teams talk about these expectations to make sure everyone clearly understands what is expected and agrees to accept responsibility for delivering on those expectations. Infighting may result when one member doesn't meet the expectations of another. The problem is that often the people doing the disappointing have no clue about the expectations in the first place.

Here are ideas for generating participation of team members:

- Understand and convey the role of the committee to members.
- Provide an orientation for new members that describes the team's vision, mission and goals, and members' roles.
- Remember that the organization and its committees deserve strong attendance and participation.
- Have ground rules that support participation and attendance. Revisit the ground rules every other meeting and post them on the bottom of agendas.
- Involve committee members in developing a clear mandate and an annual plan of work.
- Conduct yearly committee evaluations.
- Provide assignments to team members.
- Let go of "dead wood." It often helps to decrease the number of committee members rather than increase them.
- Consider using subcommittees to increase individual responsibilities and focus on goals.

- Have at least one staff member participate in each committee to help with administrative support and providing information.
- Develop a committee attendance policy that specifies the number of times a member can be absent in consecutive meetings and in total meetings per time period.
- Generate minutes for each team meeting to get closure on items and help members comprehend the progress made by the committee.
- Keep team meeting reports. Include noting who is present and who is absent.
- Consider having low-attendance members involved in some other form of service to the organization, e.g., a "friends of the organization," who attend to special events rather than ongoing activities.
- Have a "summit meeting" with team members to discuss the low attendance problem, and use a round-table approach so each person must speak up with their opinions.
- Rotate in new members every year.

Source: Free Management Library Ideas to Generate Participation in Committees

[http://www.managementhelp.org/grp\\_skl/cmmtee/ideas.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skl/cmmtee/ideas.htm)

## TEAM MEETINGS

### How should the meetings be structured?

Tips to effective meetings include:

- Have a regular meeting schedule.
- Make sure meetings have a clear and useful purpose. This should eliminate a good percentage of wasted meeting time.
- Make sure there is an agenda and carefully follow it. This will keep the meeting on track and as short as possible.
- Be careful when creating the meeting invitation list. Only invite those people who absolutely have to be there.

### What makes a healthy meeting?

Just as it is important for your wellness champions to model wellness, it is important that your wellness meetings provide options for healthy choices. Here are some suggestions:

- Include in your invitation directions via bike, walking or public transportation. Once in the building, give directions via the stairs (if there is access) as well as elevators.
- Build a stretch, short walk or energy break into your meeting agenda.
- Make participants feel welcome to participate while standing for some or all of the meeting.
- If snacks must be offered, keep them healthy.
- If meals are served, include healthy options.

## How can I recharge our wellness meetings?

Here are ideas for keeping your meetings vital:

- Set objectives for the meeting. Before planning the agenda, determine the objective of the meeting. The more concrete your objectives, the more focused your agenda will be.
- Provide an agenda beforehand. Your agenda needs to include a one-sentence description of the meeting objectives, a list of the topics to be covered and a list stating who will address each topic for how long. Follow the agenda closely during the meeting.
- Assign meeting preparation. Give all participants something to prepare for the meeting, and that meeting will take on a new significance to each group member.
- Assign action items. Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it.
- Examine your meeting process. Don't leave the meeting without assessing what took place and making a plan to improve the next meeting.
- Don't meet. Avoid a meeting if the same information could be covered in a memo, e-mail or brief report.

## EVALUATION

### What do I evaluate?

Here are several tools for evaluating your wellness team, and the effectiveness of your meetings.

#### **Team evaluation**

The secret to improving teams is to occasionally assess where they are and then take action based on what you discover.

You can evaluate your team based on characteristics of effective teams. Look over the list and see how well these statements apply to your team:

- We have a clear sense of purpose.
- We have measurable objectives.
- Our purpose supports the larger organization's purpose.
- We know how the team will be evaluated.
- We understand our employees' expectations.
- Groups and individuals that support us understand our expectations.
- We agree on the process for completing our work.
- We each do our "fair share" of the work.
- We have access to the resources we need.
- We effectively make decisions.
- We communicate openly on the team.

- We communicate openly with interested parties outside of the team.
- We effectively resolve conflicts.
- We quickly address problems that are hurting the team.
- We each understand what is expected of us.
- We support one another.
- We continuously monitor our performance.
- We work at continuously improving our performance.
- Our team achieves (will achieve) its goals and objectives.
- We each feel good about being a part of this team.

Source: Tom LaForce Characteristics of Effective Teams:  
<http://tomlaforce.com/20-characteristics-of-effective-teams/>

You can evaluate your team by comparing annual goals to accomplishments. If the team's goal was to bring six wellness speakers to the worksite in the year, the evaluation should address: did this happen, how many employees attended and where they satisfied? If the teams' goal is to make improvements to the physical environment, where these changes made?

### **Meeting evaluation**

Use the last couple minutes of a meeting to evaluate the group's meeting performance. People will have opinions about whether they thought the meeting was successful or not. Capture these opinions and apply the lessons learned to future meetings.

- Was the meeting well-planned?
- Did we achieve the planned objectives?
- Were the right people involved in the meeting?
- Did people come prepared?
- Did we manage our time wisely?
- How well did we manage the interaction between participants?
- What did we do well that we should keep on doing?
- What did we do that we should avoid doing in future meetings?
- What didn't we do that we should have done?

There are many ways of quickly evaluating the meeting. Here are some simple options.

- 1) Draw a line down the middle of a flip chart or a white board. On one half write the word "Keep" and on the other half the word "Change." Ask people to reflect on the meeting and yell out things they think should be kept or changed for the next meeting. You'll need to encourage them to be candid about the problems they saw.
- 2) Each person gives the meeting a letter grade (A-F). After recording the grades, ask people for one or two reasons they graded the meeting as they did.

- 3) Distribute a short survey card at the end of the meeting that asks people to comment directly on the evaluation questions.
- 4) Use a quick follow-up web-based survey. I'm a big fan of [SurveyMonkey](#). You could set up a standard survey and just repeat it to your group after every meeting. Make it easy and react to the results, and you will help raise your group's willingness to provide feedback.
- 5) Just ask.

Source: Tom LaForce Evaluate your Meetings: <http://tomlaforce.com/evaluate-your-meetings/>

Another way to evaluate your meetings is to assess if they have:

- A regular schedule,
- An agenda
- Meeting minutes
- Attendance and participation that meets your goal
- Agenda is followed

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# SAMPLES

## Sample Invitation

(Date)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You are invited to serve on the worksite wellness team. Our goal is to have a committee that represents our unique worksite and establishes an action plan for how we might make our workplace healthier for all employees. The committee will meet on (insert date, time and location).

Please check with your immediate supervisor to confirm that your participation and responsibility to the worksite wellness team is approved and will be reflected in your annual work plan.

I am available to explain to your supervisor the nature of the team and general time commitments. The major responsibilities of the worksite wellness team include but are not limited to: communicating the wellness program to employees, advocating for policies that support health, promoting participation in wellness activities, managing the activities and evaluating the impact of the wellness program.

If you cannot serve on the team at this time, please notify me as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

## Sample Team Meeting Feedback Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form before leaving today.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Were you able to review the agenda and prepare for this meeting before the meeting began?				
Was the meeting time used well? Did it begin and end on time, give adequate time to the most important topics and stay on the topics in the agenda?				
Were the issues discussed valuable, that is, in line with the mission and responsibilities of the team?				
Did the meeting conclude with next-steps for team members to pursue?				

How can our next meeting be more productive?

Based on today's discussion, what should we discuss in the future?

What was the most valuable contribution the team made TODAY to the wellness of our employees?

Please write additional comments below:

## Sample Wellness Meeting Agendas (and more!)

<http://eatsmartmovemorenc.com/NCHealthSmartTlkt/CommitteeWrkBk.html>

## RESOURCES

Eat Smart, Move More NC

<http://eatsmartmovemorenc.com/CommitteeGuide/Texts/WorksiteComm.pdf>

EffectiveMeetings.com <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/meetingbasics/6tips.asp>

Hope Health <http://blog.hopehealth.com/?p=370>

Meeting Wizard <http://www.meetingwizard.org/meetings/effective-meetings.cfm>

Tom LaForce <http://tomlaforce.com/>

Wellness Council of America (WELCOA)

[http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/10\\_secrets.pdf](http://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/10_secrets.pdf)