

Prevention Means Business



A business's most important asset is its employees. And, increasingly, the health of a business depends on the health of its employees. Our country is grappling with a health crisis of astonishing proportions: Two-thirds of the workforce is either overweight or obese; half is both overweight and has at least one chronic health problem. One in four Americans has heart disease; one in three has high blood pressure. Meanwhile, 50 percent of company profits go toward health care costs.ⁱ

Employers have responded with workplace initiatives such as subsidized fitness programs, vending machines stocked with healthy food, individual health assessments and “walk and talk” meetings.

Building health in the workplace in this way is critical, but what happens when employees go home can influence their health even more — and can undermine workplace investments in a healthy workforce. Employers, traditionally generous to their local community's needs, have a stake in the community's overall health. Healthier communities make for healthier, more productive employees and lower health care costs. It's time to recognize the value of building health outside the workplace.

Poor Health Costs Employers

We all pay for poor health, but the bulk of health care costs is borne by businesses. Costs to employers for smokers, people who are obese, and those who have diabetes are \$2,000, \$1,400 and \$6,600 per year higher compared to other employees. The cost to employers of obesity alone among full-time employees is \$73.1 billion a year.ⁱⁱ

Yet 75 percent of our health care costs are from diseases that are preventable.

Boosting employee health translates into a healthier bottom line. In fact, reducing health risk factors including weight, blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol by just 1 percent would save as much as \$103 annually in medical costs per person, much of which would return to employers through reduced premiums.ⁱⁱⁱ



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Businesses with a healthier workforce see cost savings including:

- Reduced costs of employee health care benefits and workers' comp^{iv}
- Increased worker productivity^v
- Decreased absenteeism^{vi}
- Increased retention and employee job satisfaction

Businesses are already investing in workplace health: 77 percent offer at least one workplace wellness program.^{vii} Research has shown that these programs can make an impact, reducing sick leave, medical costs and workers comp by as much as 25 percent each.^{viii} Johnson & Johnson's worksite wellness program has been running strong since 1979 and has shown reductions in obesity, tobacco use, poor nutrition, high blood pressure and more. It has also shown a return on investment of between \$1.88 and \$3.92 for every dollar spent on the program.^{ix} Building health in the workplace is critical. But what happens when employees go home?

Where we live matters to health

The places we live can create barriers to health in the workplace — or they can help support it.

If workers live in safe neighborhoods, with parks and green spaces, they are more likely to be physically active. Farmers markets and grocery stores in proximity make it easier to buy and prepare fresh, affordable and healthy foods. Bike paths, connected transportation, and traffic calming measures make it possible to bike to work and walk to school.

A healthier community makes for healthier employees, and it also makes for healthier family members, which in turn affects absenteeism at work and the cost of health care benefits. School-age sick children can cost employees four days away from work each year, and research shows that parents with a sick child perform more poorly at work.^{x,xi} And of course, a business's future workforce is drawn from the community where it is located. A healthier community means healthier employees down the road, too.

Opciones saludables,
en el trabajo y en el hogar.

Estilo de vida y alimentación saludables
Haga que la mitad de su plato contenga frutas y verduras. Sirva porciones más pequeñas de granos integrales, frijoles y carne baja en grasa. Incluya lácteos sin grasa o bajos en grasa como leche, queso y yogur con sus comidas. Sea activo por lo menos 30 minutos cada día. Para más consejos, visite www.CampeonesDelCambio.net.

Una manera de participar con el HHS para una California Saludable es el Programa de Salud Seguro de California del Estado de CALIFORNIA del USDA, conocido en California como CalFresh. Estas actividades son promovidas y financiadas por el Centro de Recursos para el Cliente, California.gov. Información y ayuda en español y puede ayudar a mejorar su salud para una mejor vida. Para información sobre CalFresh, llame al 1-800-431-2273. Para información adicional, visite www.CampeonesDelCambio.net.

In Orange County, California, the manufacturing company International Seal, Inc., teamed up with the Network for a Healthy California Worksite Program to help improve employee health and keep health care costs down for the company and their workers.

Simple changes, such as adequate refrigeration, tables and microwaves, allow workers to bring healthy meals from home. At work, they now have healthier options in the vending machine and access to fresh, free drinking water.

The changes make for healthier, happier employees, encourage healthier habits at home, and show the company is invested in their employees, says human resources manager Linette Buna. "We are known as an employer that really does care about our employees and about their futures. We tell them, you have to be the role model for your family. We educate you so you can educate them."

In July 2013, International Seal was awarded the American Heart Association Fit Friendly Award for its efforts to provide a healthy workplace. They report improved health overall of their nearly 200-person workforce and lowered absenteeism.

Public/Private Partnerships Pay Off

Memphis, Tennessee, was once named the unhealthiest city in the nation. But remarkable public/private partnerships between the local government, businesses and community organizations have made Memphis a healthier city and boosted economic development.

Livable Memphis, a project of the non-profit Community Development Council of Greater Memphis, worked with foundations and the private sector to build bike lanes to revitalize businesses in a flagging downtown district.

"We moved our business to Broad Avenue, my partner and I, because we were looking for cheap rent," said local art gallery owner Pat Brown. "That was our strategy – just find ways to hang on."

Over time, she discovered that investing in her community was a smart business move: "The best way we can grow our business," Brown said, "is to grow this street."

The local investments paid off, resulting in 37 new businesses opening in the area, 30 significant property renovations, falling vacancy rates, rising property values and a steady flow of foot traffic to retail shops.

From peopleforbikes.org.



Building health outside the workplace saves employers money through:

- Decreased absenteeism due to sick family members
- Reduction in costs of family health care benefits
- Reduction in subsidies for Medicare and Medicaid
- Reduction in subsidies for uninsured
- Healthier pool of potential employees
- Increased buying power and consumption, from improved community health and wealth^{xii}
- Improved community relations and goodwill

Healthier communities become stronger and more economically vital communities, which benefit everyone. Dubuque, Iowa, named Best Small City to Raise a Family by Forbes magazine, also received the Healthy Iowa Community Award for its wellness efforts. These recognitions were part of the reason that IBM opened a new service delivery center in Dubuque — creating 1,300 new jobs for the community, and expanding the consumer base for existing businesses.^{xiii}

"Business leaders must come to understand that they can do everything right to influence the health and productivity of their captured workforce at the worksite, but if that same workforce lives in unhealthy communities, employer investments can be lost or certainly weakened."

—Andrew Webber, former CEO, National Business Coalition on Health

PREVENTION means business

A healthy, thriving workforce makes for a healthier business. Investing in health—in the workplace and in the community—reduces health care costs, improves productivity and makes businesses stronger.

Poor Health is Bad for Business

Chronic disease drives health care expenditures, which cuts into company profits and productivity.



67%
of our workforce is overweight or obese



1 in 4
Americans has heart disease



1 in 3
Americans has high blood pressure



\$73 B
annual cost of obesity among full-time employees



50%
of company profits go towards health care costs



\$153 b
loss to employers annually due to absenteeism from workers who are overweight or obese and have other chronic health conditions



450 m
additional work days missed every year by full-time workers who are overweight or obese and have chronic health conditions

Prevention Pays at Work

Even small investments in health within the workplace can create big returns:



Workplace Wellness

For every **\$1** spent on workplace wellness programs, employers can save up to **\$6**

address health risks

1% reduction in health risks would save as much as **\$83-103** annually in medical costs, per person.

save money

Workplace wellness programs can reduce sick leave, medical costs and worker's comp claims by as much as:

25%

healthy communities = Healthy businesses

Building a healthier community saves lives and money.



biking saves millions

Do you have bike racks? Are there bike lanes on your streets? Bicycle commuters saved Iowa \$13.2 million a year in health care costs and \$73.9 million for those who cycle recreationally.



smoke-free spaces save lives

Are your shared community spaces and workplace smoke-free? Smoke-free strategies and education prevented 800 thousand deaths related to lung cancer between 1975-2000.



healthy options. healthy choices.

Are healthy foods affordable and accessible at work meetings, in vending machines and in your community? Research shows that making the healthier option the default can lead to healthier choices.



walkable spaces + economic growth

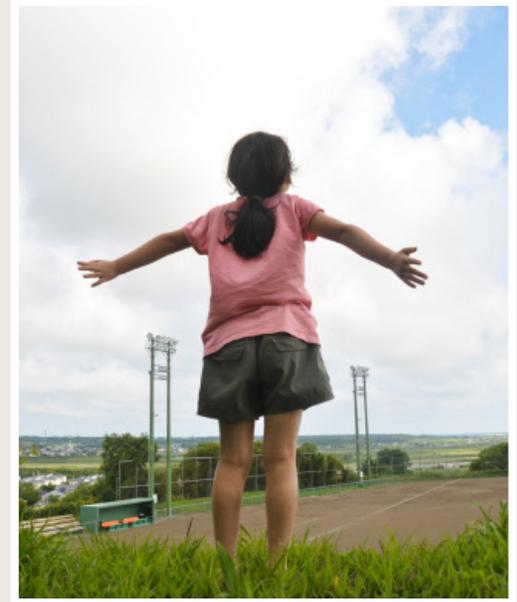
Do your workplace and community make physical activity easier? In one California city, \$10 million spent on more walkable public outdoor spaces spurred a \$125 million economic investment in the local downtown area, which led to the creation of 40 new businesses and 800 new jobs.



Breathing Easier in Georgia

Asthma is the leading cause of childhood absenteeism, accounting for more than 10 million missed school days every year — and caregivers miss work to care for their children, at an estimated cost of \$227 million a year.¹ One third of adults who have an asthma attack will also miss work.²

In Fulton County, Georgia, 25,000 children and 55,000 adults have asthma. As part of the Public Health Institute's National Leadership Academy for the Public's Health, the Fulton Asthma Improvement & Reduction coalition, also known as FAIR, brought together businesses, health care and community members to reduce asthma episodes by addressing environmental triggers, including mold and indoor air quality. Their goal is to reduce missed school days, ER, hospital and urgent care visits, and asthma-associated community costs by as much as 60 percent in targeted neighborhoods.³ Four months after the project began, emergency room visits dropped by 89 percent among survey respondents, and sick days were cut in half.⁴



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3. http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs080/1107495579103_archive/1110375776052.html
4. Fulton County Health and Wellness 4 Month Call-Back Survey Results

Getting Started

Small- and medium-sized businesses may find it hard to engage and invest in community health; finding enough resources to make a meaningful contribution outside of the workplace can be challenging.

Businesses can:

Join a coalition

Coalitions and public/private partnerships can be one way to create sustainable changes that make a difference. Consider joining a local business and health care coalition. Working as part of a local business health care coalition can amplify power and impact, increase employer purchase power, build public-private partnerships, and position businesses as change-leaders in their communities.^{xiv} Leadership teams that include multiple stakeholders from the community, including elected officials, health care providers, businesses, schools and community members, can collaborate on building healthier local communities

and address other issues that affect businesses, including economic development and education.^{xv}

Partner with public health

Local public health organizations are well-versed in how to protect population health; they have subject-matter expertise, health care providers and community connections, along with the resources and tools to implement community health strategies. By partnering with public health organizations and health departments, businesses can add a new perspective on co-benefits including health and safety, worksite wellness and economic development. Together, public health departments can build a stronger evidence base for best practices within and outside the workplace. They can also develop metrics that reflect factors, such as absenteeism and productivity, that can help employers identify where they can get the strongest return on investment.^{xvi}

Support strategies that improve health

Systems, policy and environmental changes are sustainable, efficient and cost-effective strategies for supporting health at a community level and in the workplace. For example, over a five-year period, the increase in use of seat belts was associated with a 50 percent decrease in lost work days after car crashes.^{xvii} Smoke-free policies, including local non-smoking ordinances, taxes on tobacco products and policies that decrease availability, have saved our country, and businesses, billions of dollars in associated health care costs.^{xviii} There are many opportunities for businesses to support health in the community, including active transportation policies that create bike paths, pedestrian paths and safe routes to school, the creation of parks and open green spaces, smoke-free spaces, farmers markets and healthy school lunch programs. Employers can also implement organizational strategies in the workplace that improve health, such as healthy foods for meetings and in vending machines, open stairwells and support for active transportation.

Support public health infrastructure

Public health represents the front line of local, state and national efforts to prevent injuries and chronic disease and to promote health and well-being. Yet, at the same time that our rates of ill health are ballooning, our federal, state and local funding for public health is being cut. Supporting public health and prevention is a long-term investment in the health of your community and your business — prevention efforts can show as much as a 5-to-1 return on investment. Funding for public health programs and national food and nutrition programs provide the infrastructure for programs building healthier communities across the country.

Engaging with Public Health

The National Business Coalition on Health coalitions that have engaged and worked successfully with their public health counterparts offered the following advice for other coalitions and the business community as a whole:

1. **Initiate outreach and formalize a relationship with local public health leadership.**
2. **Ask public health for information about the health status of the community and about their major goals and objectives.**
3. **Exchange information about your coalition's activities and goals with your local public health officials for the purpose of identifying areas of common interest. Do not ask for funding initially.**
4. **Invite public health to join your current activities and initiate new collaborative activities.**
5. **Invite public health leadership to present at employer and coalition forums.**
6. **Invite public health to join your coalition in some capacity. Possibilities include Board participation, joining as a coalition member or participating in an Advisory council/committee.**

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“Although public health and the business sector each bear a responsibility to assure the health of our nation, only by exercising those responsibilities together will we be able to contribute fully to that goal. ”

—Elizabeth Majestic, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Endnotes

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Resources

- The Guide to Community Preventive Services
<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>
- A Compendium of Proven Community-Based Prevention Programs
http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/Compendium_Report_1016_1131.pdf
- What Works for Health: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/policies>
- National Prevention Strategy Fact Sheet for Businesses:
http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/resources/npc_factsheet_busemployers.pdf
- National Business Coalition on Health: www.nbch.org
- CDC Healthy Communities Program: Tools for community action:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/index.htm>



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