

The Definitive Guide to Buying a Corporate Wellness Program

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Introduction

The value of a corporate wellness program is hard to overstate. An effective one can improve employee engagement and retention while simultaneously lowering healthcare costs — and that's just the beginning.

With the right approach, a wellness program can also boost employee loyalty and happiness, and transform a company's overall work environment.

And now that [62% of U.S. employers offer some form of wellness program](#), there's also an increasing number of programs to choose from. This means that there's likely something out there that's right for every company.

On the flip side, it also means that it can be challenging to sort through all of the options and choose the one that's best for your company and employees.

That's why in this guide, we'll go over what to look for (and what to avoid) in a corporate wellness program, followed by a five-step process for choosing the one that's right for your needs.

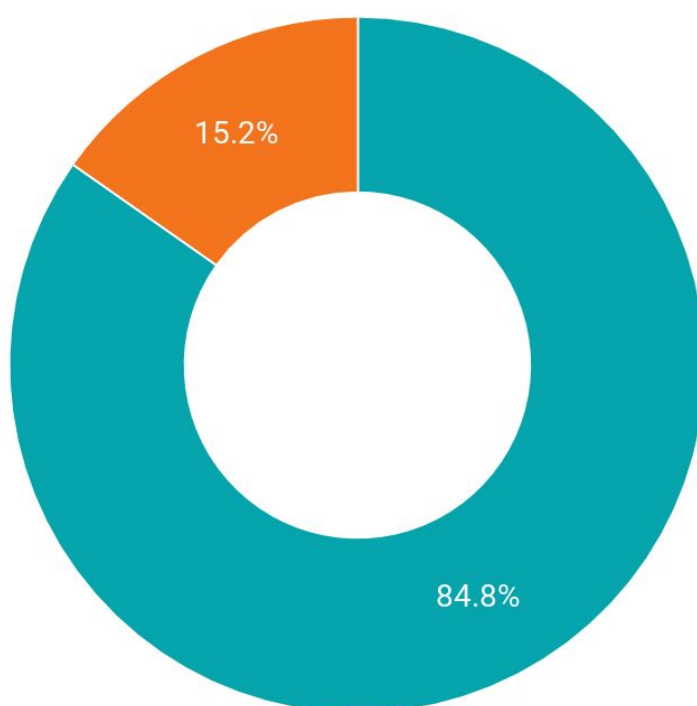
What Should You Look For in a Wellness Program?

The biggest benefits of a wellness program are increases in employee happiness and loyalty. And when done correctly, they can be very effective in reaching these goals.

One Virgin Pulse study, for example, found that [85% of HR professionals](#) said their companies' wellness programs had a positive influence on company culture.

Beyond that, a study from the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans found that of companies that instituted wellness programs, [67% saw an increase in productivity](#) and 67% reported that their employees were more satisfied.

And considering that unhealthy lifestyle behaviors contribute to the chronic diseases that cause [75% of healthcare costs](#), wellness programs can also lower healthcare expenses for employers.



It's clear, then that a wellness program can have a significant and positive impact on any company. But in order to see the results you want, you need to choose a program your employees will actually use — and that's often easier said than done.

In fact, only [24% of employees](#) with access to a corporate wellness program participate. So as you research your options, it's essential to focus on programs that can offer something for everyone.

This means addressing not only physical health, but also mental — including the challenges that come along with stress, sleep, and even parenting.

Mental health issues affect employee happiness and productivity just as much as physical ailments, so it's essential to factor these into your plan.

Your solution should also be easily accessible for employees who work different shifts, travel often, have families, or may not be comfortable exercising in groups with their coworkers.

Finally, it's important to aim for a sustainable, long-term solution. The best way to do this is to add a social component to your program.

One study found [the two most effective means for sustaining behavior change](#) are in-person support and virtual support — both of which ranked higher than motivators like improved access to preventative care and even financial rewards.

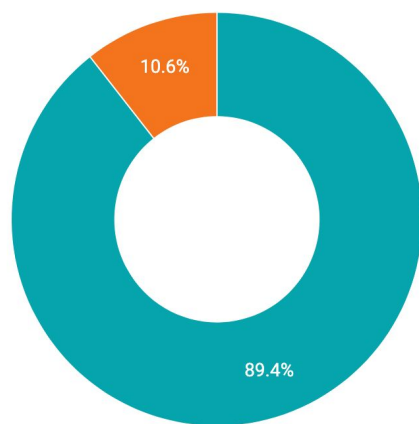
So if you're serious about implementing a wellness program that works, aim for one that's comprehensive, accessible, and empowers your employees to support one another along the way.

Five Steps to Choosing the Right Corporate Wellness Program

Choosing a wellness program isn't a decision to take lightly.

That's why we've put together a five-step process you can use to set priorities, determine your needs, and choose a long-term solution for your employees and their health.

#1: Assess Your Needs



A recent study found that [89.4% of employees](#) think employers should attempt to improve the health of their workers.

It's safe to assume, then, that your employees want a wellness plan — and they expect that plan to meet their specific needs and goals.

That's why the first step in choosing a wellness program is determining what, exactly, you should be looking for. After all, the ultimate goal is to have a positive impact on your employees' health and well-being — but there are several ways to work towards this goal.

In general, most wellness programs are structured around one or more of the following elements:

1. **Education and Demonstration.** Educational programs are designed to give employees information on how to improve their health. This information can take the form of online classes, programs, and resources, in-person classes, or even a series of in-office seminars.
2. **Community-building.** Community-building programs aim to build social connections between employees and generate support for health-related goals and initiatives. This can be done with group fitness classes (in-person or online with tools like BurnAlong), employee sports leagues, and friendly goals and challenges.
3. **Habit-building.** Habit-building programs encourage employees to develop and maintain healthy habits including regular exercise, improved nutrition, and stress management. These types of programs are designed to change employee behavior both during and outside of work.

TIP: Try setting group goals v. challenges, to involve the less competitive or employees — at BurnAlong we see this being very popular with clients).

Before you evaluate your options, take the time to determine which of these types of programs is most in line with your goals.

Do you want to empower your employees so they can learn and take classes whenever they want on their own time? Foster connections to improve support for health-related initiatives? Help your employees develop healthier lifestyle behaviors?

The answers to these questions should inform your decisions as you research your options. It's important to note, though, you don't need to limit yourself to one type of program.

If education, community, and habit building are all important goals for your company, it's entirely possible to achieve them all — you'll just need to keep each factor in mind as you evaluate different programs.

During this stage, it's also a good idea to identify any potential obstacles or challenges that might stand in the way of your program. For example, lack of budget or leadership support can all impede a wellness plan's success.

It's also important to consider how your workforce is situated. If employees are often on the road, located in multiple cities or offices, or work different shifts, for example, in-person classes and events might not be the best idea. If some employees can't participate, they'll ultimately be left out of the program — making online programs a much better option.

But above all of those, the biggest factor in your program's success is to make sure your employees are excited. In order for your program to work, they need to be inspired and willing to participate — and getting employees on board isn't always easy.

This means that you need to anticipate their concerns and make sure your program accommodates them.

For example, [one study](#) found that the main factors associated with low participation rates in wellness programs are lack of time, concerns about confidentiality, perceptions that the program is not useful, and a lack of accountability.

But ultimately, all employees are different. They have different ages, different fitness levels, different interests, and different comfort zones — so a one-size-fits-all approach to classes and programming is setting yourself up for failure.

Keep these factors in mind as you design your wellness program. The better you're equipped to meet the challenges they present, the more successful you'll be.

TIP: At BurnAlong, we see the more choice offered to employees, the more likely they'll find that specific instructor and instruction that works for them.

#2: Set Clear Goals

Before selecting a program, it's important to know what you're trying to accomplish. And the best way to do this is to spend some time setting clear, specific goals.

These goals can be both short-term and long-term. For example, let's say you decide to launch your program with a one-month fitness challenge. In this case, your goal might be to have 70% of your employees participate in the challenge.

That's a great start! But considering that maintaining and improving health require ongoing commitment, you'll want to set clear long-term goals for your program as well.

If your program is designed to improve employee satisfaction, you might measure your success by monitoring employee retention rates and absenteeism over time.

If you opt for a fitness-related plan, on the other hand, you might choose to measure your success by how many employees take part in the activities you offer each month or quarter.

Regardless of the approach you take, your goals should be specific and measurable. So, for example, let's say part of your wellness program includes in-office fitness classes and wellness seminars once per week.

In this case, you could aim to have 60% of your employees attend a health-related event at least once per quarter.

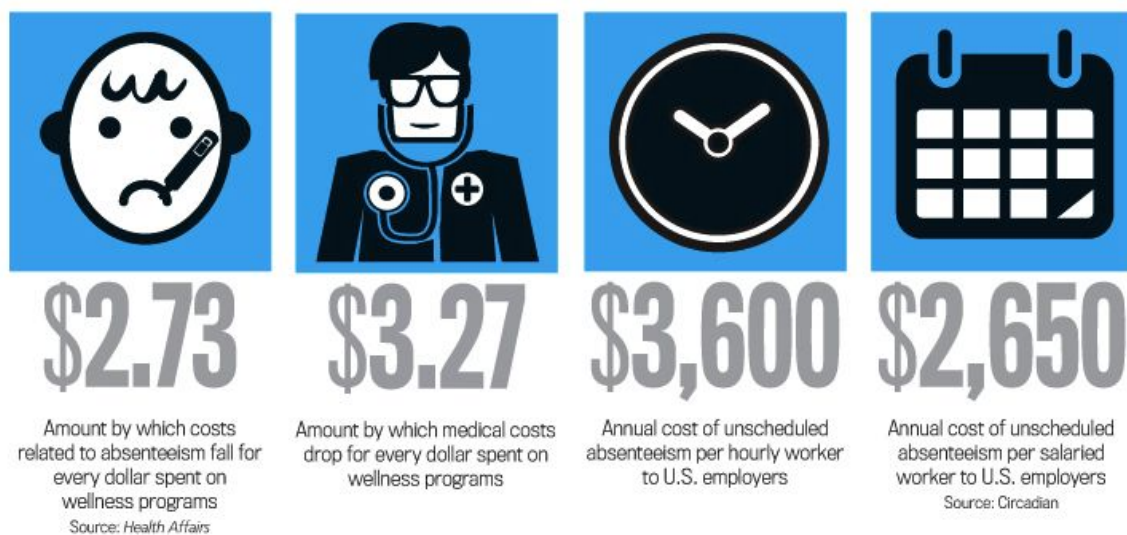
TIP: BurnAlong clients who previously experienced 4% average engagement, now experienced 20% engagement year-over-year.
[Learn more.](#)

The clearer your goals, the easier it will be to determine what kind of program will help you reach them — and the more confident you can be in measuring your success over time.

#3: Establish a Budget

Your employees' health is worth investing in. In fact, one study found that when employees use wellness programs to make lifestyle changes, they can save their companies about [\\$353 each in recouped productivity](#).

Plus, for every dollar spent on wellness programs, average medical costs drop \$3.27.



So even from a financial standpoint, wellness programs are well worth it. Still, there are likely limitations on just how much you can spend on a wellness program.

After all, depending on the approach you take, wellness programs can be expensive. Potential costs include educational resources, hiring speakers for educational seminars, off-site space for company-sponsored events and activities, and event and fitness instructors.

Of course, not all of these costs are essential, and your investment ultimately depends on the type of program you choose. This means it's important to know what your budget is early in the process, so that you can make decisions that are financially reasonable for your company.

As you determine your budget, you'll also want to see whether your company is [eligible for wellness dollars](#). Many insurance companies offer funds specifically for health-related initiatives — and that extra funding can make all the difference in the quality of your program.

Make sure to ask your insurer or broker if they have, or will negotiate for you, a cost reduction if your employees reach certain participation number. At BurnAlong we see that when clients ask their insurers or brokers for reductions, they often get it.

Plus, good brokers can often negotiate extra discounts for you. We've even seen brokers get the entire cost of BurnAlong covered by insurance, as it's in their best interest to find a solution that works for your company.

#4: Gauge Employee Interest

Employee interest is essential to a program's success.

Unfortunately, participation isn't always a given. In fact, **only 24% of employees participate in their company's wellness program.**

So if you want your plan to succeed, you have to be prepared to inspire your employees.

And it works in your favor that most people want to be healthier. In fact, health-related goals top the list of New Year's Resolutions every year, with [37% of](#)



THE BOTTOM LINE: **ONLY 24% OF EMPLOYEES AT COMPANIES THAT OFFER A WELLNESS PROGRAM PARTICIPATE IN IT.**

[people focusing on "staying fit and healthy"](#) and another 32% looking to "lose weight."

This means your employees do care about health and wellness. They just might need a little inspiration to get moving — and you might need to put in the work it takes to find a solution that will accomplish that.

And the answer might not be a traditional wellness program.

As [Henry Ford once said](#): "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

Within this context, the approaches that some employers take to developing wellness programs are essentially “faster horses” — and the less traditional, outside-of-the-box options are the equivalent to the advent of the automobile.

And that might be what it takes to get your employees excited about improving their health.

So to figure out what this program looks like for your company, you need to take your team’s interests into account. Gauge their interest in any of the initiatives you’re considering, whether that’s fitness classes, health screenings, educational seminars, or something else entirely.

Collecting feedback before you launch will not only ensure that you’re not wasting money on programs your employees don’t want, but can also help you achieve high participation rates right from the start.

And this process doesn’t need to be difficult. A company-wide survey is all it takes to get a high-level overview of what your team wants, and can make all the difference in your success.

#5: Select and Prioritize Components

By this point in the process, you should have a clear idea of what you're hoping to accomplish with your program.

This means you'll be able to narrow your list of potential programs down significantly. Then, you can evaluate the remaining options based on a few key factors:

1. **Accessibility.** If your program centers on encouraging healthy behavior outside of the office, you'll need to make sure that any resources or materials your employees need are easily accessible and convenient to use whenever employees want, wherever they are.
2. **Sustainability.** Your wellness program shouldn't be a one-off challenge or initiative. So as you evaluate your options, make sure the one you choose has the potential to be a long-term solution.
3. **Community.** Many factors play a role in developing new habits, but best motivators are in-person and virtual support — meaning that the ideal plan should include steps for establishing strong connections between employees.

TIP: Include their family members, too. [Social sweating has more benefits](#) and sustainability than going it alone.

Spend some time familiarizing yourself with each of the programs on your list and how they compare in terms of these three factors.

While there may be a few different options that meet your basic needs, this is the point at which you'll likely find a standout — and when the right choice for your company will become clear.

Conclusion

Today's employers have more options than ever when it comes to corporate wellness programs. And while this means there's no shortage of choice, it can also make it difficult to sort through the noise. You want programs that actually work for your culture and workforce.

But after reading through this guide, our goal is that you now have a clearer idea of what to look for when evaluating your options, and how to find a program that's right for your employees' needs and interests. We also invite you to take a free complimentary consultation with one of our experts to help guide you, your broker, and your partners to the best program.

About BurnAlong

We offer members a way to achieve their health and wealthness goals regardless of where they are in life or where they are on the globe.

Our growing network of wellness professionals, gyms, and studios provides members with fresh online video classes each week. And our social experience allows users to join a class with a coworker, friend, or family, or to take classes on their own.

We work with companies, hospitals, insurers, and brokers, and partner with on-site and local gyms, studios, instructors, and wellness professionals, to bring the best classes, programs, and social experience to help people achieve their health and wellness goals. Our members can choose from 1,000+ classes across more than 30 categories taught by hundreds of instructors. People can take classes on their own on demand or invite friends to join them live online.