



Realogy Leverages a Comprehensive Wellness Strategy to Drive Higher Engagement and Measurable Results



“We have always believed that delivering benefits is an opportunity to create a unique work experience for our employees, and offering a wide range of wellness programs is a natural extension of that philosophy.”

MAUREEN ROBBINS
VP OF BENEFITS
REALOLOGY

A real estate leader’s HR team develops and delivers a broad range of wellness programs to create a differentiated employer experience and increase employee engagement.

As healthcare costs continue to rise well above the rate of inflation, organizations of all sizes are taking a closer look at their wellness programs to understand if they could be doing more to encourage healthy lifestyles and slow the pace of premium hikes. However, as companies strive to develop a set of compelling wellness offerings, they need to make sure those offerings can be sustained with existing resources.

The development of wellness programs is inherently a mixture of art and science. Effective programs take into account myriad factors — employee demographics, company culture, work-life balance, and more — and getting the mix right usually takes some experimentation. Realogy, a global provider of real estate and relocation services, is one of the few companies on the path to figuring out the right formula for effective wellness programs. The company’s results demonstrate the vital role wellness plays in reducing healthcare costs, reinforcing company culture and values, and increasing employee engagement.

Motivation to Change

Continuing its tradition of leadership in employee benefits, Realogy partnered with Workscope to provide employees with a Web-based self-service enrollment tool that has improved the enrollment experience and reduced the costs of benefits administration. Adoption of the online, self-service enrollment process has generated higher levels of healthcare consumerism, whereby employees are empowered to make more informed and cost-effective benefits elections. The HR team then set out to implement an ambitious wellness

program strategy with a similar goal: encouraging employees to take positive actions with regard to their health and wellness, thereby driving favorable outcomes for the individual and the organization alike. Realogy’s comprehensive “iThrive” wellness program encompasses education, activities, and rewards. The company’s HR team has carefully balanced corporate programming with opportunities for employees to provide direction and ownership — an approach that has led to widespread participation and measurable results.

Creating Health Awareness

Wellness Ambassadors – Realogy’s HR team members realized that the program needed local champions in order for it to take root and thrive, so they created a “Wellness Ambassadors” program to provide that leadership opportunity. Ambassadors are volunteers that help drive corporate programs at the local level, spreading wellness education and encouraging event participation at their site. Employees have elected to become Ambassadors at each Realogy location across the country, and this local leadership ensures that employees stay informed about ongoing and upcoming wellness opportunities that may appeal to them.

Wellness Newsletter – On a monthly basis, Realogy’s HR team distributes a wellness newsletter that provides articles and multimedia content that tie into seasonal or topical wellness issues. The HR team has found that multimedia content, such as video interviews of their employees, and practical resources are very appealing. For example, during “Heart Month” (February), the newsletter contained a video of the corporate chef preparing a heart-healthy Valentine’s Day meal along with the recipe. More than 1,300 employees downloaded the recipe.

Intranet Videos – Positive employee response prompted Realogy’s HR team to extend its use of video to the corporate intranet. When employees log in to their intranet each Monday morning, they are greeted by a message highlighting one aspect of Realogy’s benefits program. For the first few weeks these video messages were delivered by the company’s vice president of benefits. After that the benefits team began alternating the presentation role.

Nutritional Information – In keeping with the approach of encouraging healthy choices, Realogy now ensures that all of the items in each office’s cafeteria, including the daily specials, are accompanied by detailed nutritional information.

Encouraging Active Lifestyles

“Walk with the President” – A new program allows Realogy employees to sign up for a brisk lunchtime walk with the company president (weather permitting) that is scheduled to take place on a monthly basis. The program, although available only seasonally in the company’s New Jersey headquarters, has been well received for a number of reasons. Most notably, it implicitly supports healthy behaviors in the workplace by showcasing the company president taking steps to stay active on a regular basis. “Walk with the President” also has the potential to become a great engagement tool because it affords employees from all levels of the company a chance to connect with the president and share feedback in real time. In many ways, this program is emblematic of the new approach to wellness strategies: designing programs that are meaningful for employees; that deliver results for the employer by helping to build a healthier workforce; and that drive increased employee engagement and enhance the overall work experience.

“Biggest Loser” – When Realogy launched a companywide initiative to promote exercise, nutrition, and healthy weight loss that mimicked the fun and friendly competition of the popular “Biggest Loser” television program, 1,400 employees signed up to participate. Realogy added cash and non-cash incentives, awarding the winner with \$2,500 and three “Wellness Days” of vacation. This program has been tremendously successful: nearly 15% of the organization signed up and participants have lost a total of more than 11,000 pounds.

During the contest, participants receive updates of the company’s overall weight loss status, but individual results are not published. Realogy has found that aggregate statistics are motivating while posting individual results can be discouraging — especially because a few employees lose weight at a significantly faster pace than the general population. The feedback from participants and non-participants alike has been overwhelmingly positive. Many employees have cited the group dynamic and positive focus as a means for them to “get the ball rolling” and start actively thinking about wellness.

Rewarding Wellness Participation

“Name The Wellness Program” – Upon announcing plans to launch these new wellness initiatives, the HR team identified an opportunity to receive employee feedback and further reinforce employee engagement. To that end, HR held a contest to name the new wellness program and the award was a 50% reimbursement of medical premiums for the plan year — a nice tie-in and an effective incentive. A total of 600 employees submitted entries.

Non-smoker Discount – Realogy employees who do not smoke are able to obtain better rates for health insurance through the company’s Web-based enrollment system. Employees who do smoke can become eligible to receive these rates, even retroactively, by completing a smoker cessation program.

A Holistic Strategy Drives Results

Realogy’s iThrive offerings meet numerous criteria for successful wellness program design, including:

- Sustainability from year to year
- Enhancement of the employee experience
- Delivery of significant returns in terms of participation levels and health gains

Furthermore, by implementing a broad array of educational, active, and rewards-driven wellness offerings, Realogy’s HR team has directly engaged thousands of employees and further differentiated the company’s corporate culture.

Prescription for Wellness Program Success

- Make it sustainable
- Sponsor from the Executive team but drive locally
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Leverage varied media
- Make it practical, but keep it fun
- Reinforce company values