



## 2010 National Employee Wellness Month Employer Stories:



As one of the world's largest and most prestigious manufacturers of exercise equipment, the very name of Utah-based ICON Health & Fitness alone denotes a workplace culture focused on wellness. In fact, ICON was an early pioneer of and advocate for the value of employee wellness. Since 1994, the company had leveraged biometric data including blood pressure, cholesterol and Body Mass Index measures to incentivize employees with cash and discounted healthcare premiums to encourage more healthful behaviors.

However, the company sought a solution that would take its home-grown employee wellness initiative that relied on self-reported data to the next level. With the Virgin HealthMiles program, ICON saw an opportunity to better automate and more credibly measure and track its employees' levels of physical activity. Participants are further motivated by setting goals and tracking their progress; receiving ongoing feedback, information and motivation; participating in fun challenges and competitions; and, taking advantage of opportunities for social engagement.

"The GoZone® pedometer has been the catalyst that gives people a kick in the pants and gets them walking," reports Doug Younker, human resources director for ICON. "If someone looks at their belt and sees they've only taken 4,000 steps in a day and they know they need to get to 7,000 steps, they'll turn off the TV and walk around the block a few times. People begin to make a habit out of becoming more physically active."

Jason Lott, supervisor in ICON's plastics division, echoes the value of challenges and the ability to track daily activity. "The pedometers really make me aware of how much I move," says Lott. "I make it a point now to always park the car in the parking lot spot that's farthest from the store. I'm much more conscious of how much I move – or don't – during the day. Every time I have an opportunity, I engage in challenges, especially if they're with guys I work with. We drive each other. There will be many days where I'll hit 30,000 steps a day in a challenge. They really push you more than you'd normally be pushed."

More than 40 percent of ICON's eligible employees are actively engaged in its employee health initiative, well above the industry average of single-digit participation in wellness programs. Employees report they find the Virgin HealthMiles program to be fun and, because they can see precisely how they're progressing through the various program levels, employees know how close they are to receiving a particular cash incentive.

Because ICON's employee wellness program is web-based, its employees simply log on and can quickly upload their steps for that period via the pedometer's USB connection. "It literally takes 15 seconds to log a day's worth of physical activity and nutrition," says Younker. "Administration from both the employee and employer perspective is simple. That's important, since you've got to make it easy for people to participate. I also have access to administrative reports that show how many people are participating at any given time, and how many are at different stages in the program. Over time, that will give me the ability to compare those peoples' medical costs with the costs of program non-participants."



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Director, Human Resources  
ICON Health & Fitness



Dan Walker, trucking and shipping manager with ICON, has seen quantifiable health improvements with the company's wellness initiative. "When I began the program in August of 2008, I weighed 234 pounds. Today I'm down to 204 pounds. That weight loss has nothing to do with anything other than getting in more activity during the day. The rewards with the Virgin HealthMiles program are very motivating. There's a group of us down in this department that now take a walk during our 15-minute break versus going to the cafeteria and grabbing a bag of chips. We all try to get at least 12 thousand steps a day. That's the big difference for me – I plan my day around getting in my 12 thousand."

ICON's Younker sums up the benefits of the employee wellness program this way: "People sometimes ask me, can you really prove that promoting wellness through paying people to exercise pays for itself? The analogy I use is this: prove to me that changing the oil in my car saves me money. You might pay a bit more upfront for that service. But if you don't do it, eventually you're going to blow an engine and that's going to cost you a whole lot more."