



2010 National Employee Wellness Month Employer Stories:



In 2008, global consumer packaging giant MeadWestvaco (MWV) faced a dilemma within its workforce that directly impacted its healthcare costs. A company assessment of healthcare claims revealed that 35% of the population had a disease condition that was preventable. These conditions were responsible for at least forty percent of the company's healthcare costs and originated from four health conditions: diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and lower back problems. In addition, 25% of the population is obese which significantly increases the risk of developing these conditions. With such poignant health findings, and with healthcare costs rising each year, it became clear that intervention was required to create a healthier workforce and find a more effective solution to contain costs.

Like many large manufacturing companies, MWV's employee demographics comprised of thousands of employees, with 51 percent of the workforce male, and a median age of 49. The company was also geographically dispersed across the U.S., and not all employees had easy access to technology. MWV fully understood that to make a long-term and sustainable impact on employee wellness and healthcare costs, the company needed to ensure that all outsourced providers were working together toward a common goal, and find a fresh and engaging way to keep employees excited.

MWV decided to tap Virgin HealthMiles to motivate employees to stay healthy. Employees use the program's GoZone pedometers to track their daily activity and have the opportunity to earn up to \$500 per year in cash rewards for meeting certain program milestones. The data captured by the participants' pedometers uploads to their own online program portal, where they can see their results, monitor their progress, receive ongoing motivation and feedback, and more. Soon, a culture of wellness began to emerge at MWV, with walking groups forming during lunch hours, and increasing departmental challenges.

The company also discovered that the program's technology could be leveraged to integrate the company's existing outsourced benefits provider, Hewitt, and disease management provider, SHPS, under one integrated approach. This would enable the company to develop synergies and closely align the three programs for further success.

By using Virgin HealthMiles' centralized yet flexible platform, MWV was able to integrate SHPS', Hewitt's and Virgin HealthMiles' back-end technologies. The three teams began collaborating weekly on additional ways to support MWV's wellness initiative. These efforts have enabled employees to seamlessly "flow" through enrollment in the Virgin HealthMiles program by logging into Hewitt for the wellness benefit, completing the health assessment by SHPS, and tracking daily physical activity and reinforcing healthy behaviors through Virgin HealthMiles. Also gained is a comprehensive view of how the program is progressing and trending. MWV hopes the newly-found visibility achieved through this platform will enable the company to capture important trends that will help lower premiums for union and non-union employees, and save the company additional costs over time.

"I've been in the healthcare business for 25 years and implementing creative wellness programs by using technology as a facilitator really seems to work," said Jodi Fuller, MWV's global benefits director. "It has broad appeal, is a simple to use program and is fun. We anticipate that every dollar invested will save us two dollars in the next five-year period, and our wellness program results will translate to lower health care claims, increased health and productivity among the workforce and lower overall health care costs."

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