



CASE STUDY: MWV

CHALLENGE:

Tackling Chronic Diseases and Rising Health Care Costs

In 2008, global consumer packaging giant MeadWestvaco (MWV) faced a dilemma within its workforce that directly impacted its health care costs. A company assessment of health care 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 health care 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 health care 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.

"For most of our employees, these conditions are preventable and could be addressed by making lifestyle changes," said Jodi Fuller, global benefits director, MWV. "There were many paths we could have taken, but we wanted to stay focused on creating incentives for employees to modify their behavior. If we could do just one thing to manage this, it would be to get people to be more physically active. It is well documented that increasing physical activity can lower an individual's risk for any one of the disease conditions we are trying to manage."

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MWV recognized that the company would face several unique hurdles. 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. Historically, this was a challenging demographic to engage in wellness programs. The company was also geographically dispersed across the U.S., and not all employees had easy access to technology. To further complicate matters, the company employed both union and non-union employees, and already had existing, critical outsourced benefits and disease management providers in place.

MWV fully understood that to make a long-term and sustainable impact on employee wellness and health care 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. Another critical success factor was implementing a way to capture and measure biometric data, such as blood pressure and weight, to provide a baseline and analyze results. With such data in hand, MWV expected to eventually be able to lower year over year increases in premium costs and maintain a healthier workforce.



HEALTHMILES

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SOLUTION:

Create an Engaging, Integrated, and Measurable Wellness Program

In November 2008, MWV initiated a pilot among 28 employees to test the Virgin HealthMiles program.

With Virgin HealthMiles, MWV employees use their GoZone® pedometers to track their daily activity (such as walking, biking, taking dance lessons, playing soccer with the kids, and much more) and have the opportunity to earn up to \$500 per year in cash rewards for meeting certain program milestones. MWV employees effortlessly upload the data captured by their pedometers to their own online program portal, where they can see their results, monitor their progress, receive ongoing motivation and feedback, and more. To encourage employees to stay motivated, the Virgin HealthMiles program provides employees with the opportunity to create personal challenges with their friends and colleagues.

Soon, a culture of wellness began to emerge at MWV, with walking groups forming during lunch hours, and increasing departmental challenges.

“People got excited about the Virgin HealthMiles program; it was so easy to use,” said Fuller. “Everything was online and our employees could proactively track their results. We had full executive support, and even our CEO and a senior vice president participate in the program. We knew this was the right tool to help get our employees more active.”

MWV not only found the feedback from pilot participants to be overwhelmingly positive, the company also discovered that the Virgin HealthMiles 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.

Immediately following a successful pilot program, MWV rolled out the Virgin HealthMiles technology and rewards platform to 3,200 non-union employees company-wide, as well as to their spouses. By timing the program launch with open benefits enrollment, an aggressive email outreach campaign administered by Virgin HealthMiles, and delivering promotional postcards to employees’ homes, MWV was able to quickly get nearly 75% percent of employees activated within just a few months.

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“What we love about this program is that it encourages friendly competition. Spouse participation was a huge ‘win’ since lifestyle choices are usually tied back to the home, and from a cost-savings standpoint, MWV covers the health care costs of both parties,” said Fuller. “These are very effective motivators for our employee demographic.”

To better accommodate employees without access to computers, MWV placed Virgin HealthMiles’ desktop HealthZone® measurement stations across six locations. There, MWV employees could measure their weight, blood pressure, and body fat.

“What I really like about Virgin HealthMiles is that it’s a solution dedicated toward long-term maintenance and lifestyle changes,” said Greg Williams, safety and health director, MWV, who now walks an average of 8,500 steps per day, and has lost 40 pounds since joining the Virgin HealthMiles program. “I had never paid attention to my BMI before, but now I can take better care of my health. The Virgin HealthMiles program isn’t a crash diet. The graphical interface makes it fun and you don’t get discouraged by the program. There’s always something to keep you going and you don’t have to worry about turning into a Joe or Jane six pack – it is a very practical approach revolved around the things you already do every day. ”

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RESULTS:

MWV Achieves Comprehensive, Effective, and Integrated Wellness Program

In less than one year, MWV has made significant strides toward addressing lifestyle-related chronic conditions. Additionally, the company has had great success in engaging a large portion of its employee population to participate in its wellness program and to regularly track their daily activity and measure key biometrics. Participants are steadily increasing their average number of steps per day and 46% are averaging between 7,000 -12,000 steps each day.

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.



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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.

Plans for additional integration are also underway. MWV will be piloting a weight loss challenge using the Virgin HealthMiles system and providing more information and enrollment opportunities via the company's toll-free "Nurseline", as well as offering more HealthZones within a new on-site fitness center.

"I've been in the health care business for 25 years and the Virgin HealthMiles program really seems to work," said Fuller. "It has broad appeal, it's a simple to use program and it's fun. We anticipate that every dollar invested will save us two dollars in the next five-year period, and that the Virgin HealthMiles 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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