

Workplace as a setting for chronic disease and obesity prevention: Improving uptake of successful programs - From the Perspective of an Intervention Provider.



Emerging evidence is showing that the workplace could be the most promising setting for chronic disease prevention. In saying this and while we know it is the right place to be doing this we can't deny that there are barriers involved.

As an intervention provider we'll give an insight into the barriers that we've faced in the six years we've been running and highlight what has been done to address these barriers.

There are five main issues to discuss;

- Defining the category
- Communication
- Cost
- Engagement
- Evolution

DEFINING THE CATEGORY

Until 6 years ago we were the only health initiative of our kind. What makes the Global Corporate Challenge so exciting is how innovative the concept is but, with this comes the issue of people trying to define and categorise our program.

To give you an idea we're an annual, team based, online, pedometer program, which runs for four months. We get people in teams of seven wearing a pedometer and recording their steps online which then plots them along a virtual tour of the world.

We're not a BRW Challenge, a Melbourne Marathon or a Corporate Games.

We're not a flu shot, fruit delivery service or yoga class.

People like to be able to define things and because we've never fit into a previously defined category they're all the types of things we've been compared with.

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In order to combat this we've had to educate the world on what we are and help them to see where the benefits lie.

We've helped to show what type of program we are by having a year round website that people can access (www.gettheworldmoving.com), by sending out direct mail pieces and by meeting people as much as possible to explain the program in person.

To prove the efficacy of the program we have conducted multiple studies on the potential return on investment, the health benefits and the positive environmental impact we can have.

People are often afraid of the unknown and so having these proven benefits help to reassure organisations who may be unaware of what we are that by putting us in place they are actually doing the right thing - it puts them at ease.

This knowledge of the GCC and the proven benefits also helps people to set us apart from other programs that may seem to fit in to our "category" but that in fact DON'T.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN AN ORGANISATION

We really face communication barriers at three separate levels.

➤ The first we face is **finding that central point of contact at an organisation;** because we are in such a new category and health and well being itself is a new category it's often difficult to pin point one person in an organisation who is going to have a say in whether or not they will implement a health initiative. We get around this by firstly looking for someone in health and wellbeing. If there isn't then we persist until we find someone who is as passionate about health and wellbeing as we are.

- **Effective communication inside the organisation** once they have made the decision to offer GCC is the second communication barrier. This need to communicate effectively is often neglected due to people being time poor and we come in to play by trying to fill that gap and making it as easy as possible. We've overcome this by working more closely with organisations to provide ideas and set time frames. We provide tailored e-flyers and posters. We also provide a tailored online portal whereby staff only need to click on a link and they can read about the program and register from the one place. All aimed at saving time for the organisation whilst maximising the exposure internally.

- **Communicating at an individual level once the program has begun** is the third communication barrier. While we need to remain in contact with the participants and keep them reminded about what it is they're doing we have realised that there is a fine line and people don't want to be bombarded with emails

COST

In the large scheme of things and as a percentage of wage bills, at most organisations \$99.00 per person, which is less than a dollar a day, is barely a blip on the radar. Because, we have previously been such an undefined category it also leads to the fact that people don't have defined budgets to spend on programs such as ours.

We also have realised that because there are such a large scope of options out there it's hard for people to know where their dollar is best spent.

It goes back to educating people; we've spent the past 6 years educating organisations that there is a direct correlation between the money spent and the money that comes back through decreased absenteeism and increased productivity.

As the health and wellbeing arena grows organisations will naturally have to become more aware of these clear returns on investment.

If there are limited budgets then we help companies to see that they do have options. They don't have to pay the full entry fee, they can partially fund or they can ask staff to fund themselves.

EVOLVING

Our program works and we know it does because of the research that has been done and the fact that we've grown in size each year since we began. Because, of this we don't need to change the fundamentals of the program but we understand the hazards that are associated with this and we continuously strive to evolve, stay fresh, and to keep people engaged by offering new things.

We actively encourage feedback from our participants and team managers each year. The footprint is the perfect example of how participant feedback has helped something come to fruition. It's our way of allowing people to give back and donate money to our chosen project and If you want more information on this then please visit www.gettheworldmoving.com.

ENGAGEMENT

This is the second last point and its probably the most crucial key to success – it goes without saying that people have to be engaged if they’re going to be motivated, stay motivated and make lasting lifestyle changes.

We’ve learnt through viewing other similar programs that if they’re not engaging they simply fail.

We’ve studied human behaviour very closely over the past 6 years and have clearly been able to understand that people respond to different things and if you’re to impact and have a positive effect on a large range of people then you need to accommodate all of them.

Once we have them engaged we then have more barriers because, people are naturally resistant to change. We have to eliminate all possible excuses or problems by making the program;

-simple, fun, easy, accessible, measurable, team based, sustainable and effective.

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These are just some of the barriers we're confronted with as an intervention provider.

By no means are we at the end of our journey but we've made some excellent in roads.

We've gone from having 2000 people in 2004 to an estimated 100,000 people in 2010.

We now have offices all around the world making us truly global and helping us in our mission which is to get the world moving.