



Michael Taylor is executive director of Marketing & Communications for UPMC Health Plan. The integrated partner companies of the UPMC Insurance Services Division — which includes UPMC Health Plan, Work Partners, EAP Solutions, UPMC for You (Medical Assistance), and Community Care Behavioral Health — offer a full range of insurance products and programs. This is the third in a series on health promotion in the workplace.

Putting Wellness to Work Outside the Office

Health Promotion Sets Agenda for Community Outreach

Every employer knows what it's like to play a round of golf at a charity fund-raiser, throw the first pitch at a baseball game, or even chair a community gala. After all, good business leaders always attract good causes.

But ask yourself: Do your community relations efforts really match your business priorities? Aligning the two may not be as hard as it sounds. Wellness programs in the workplace will not only help improve the health of your employees, they also may help refocus your company's goodwill efforts in your hometown.

Across the United States, employers are embracing health promotion programs as an innovative way to lower health-care costs, increase productivity, reduce absenteeism, and improve the morale of their workers. Worksite programs are sprouting up in all types of industries to help employees lose weight, quit tobacco, or get more exercise.

So why not take it to the next level? Forming partnerships with parks, zoos, schools, museums, and other nonprofits with a stake in public health can help guide your company's agenda outside the office. It also will send a message to your staff that you really are committed to keeping them healthy — on the clock and off.

Making Community Relationships Work for You

Think creatively about your wellness agenda and you'll be surprised by your employees' enthusiasm. You may even generate some unexpected PR from the local media. Here are some examples to help you get started:

- Hold a health screening event at your workplace and invite elected local officials to speak on behalf of their health agenda in the community.
- Set up a company-wide weight race and encourage employees to form teams to lose weight. Partner with a local television station to track the progress of a few key participants. You'll secure free media exposure and your

employees will love watching their colleagues on camera every week.

- In addition to hanging a banner at the finish line for a local run/walk event, go the extra mile by creating incentives for your employees to participate or volunteer.
- Sponsor a health-related event for kids at your local children's museum, or host a walking event at the zoo. Distribute walking maps with your company information for added exposure.
- If you have a cafeteria in your workplace, consider a healthy menu. Work with local chefs to provide cooking demonstrations and distribute healthy recipes to your employees.
- Commit to a smoke-free workplace initiative with other local companies. Promote it through advertising, public relations, and internal publications.
- Partner with your health insurance company to distribute print or electronic health newsletters that support your programming.
- Join with other organizations or a visitors' bureau to launch a lecture series on health-related topics. Invite community health experts to speak and reward employees who attend.
- Form a partnership with a local cancer institute or university conducting a health research study and recruit participants from your staff.

Everyone loves a good cause. So next time you're asked to play the role of benevolent business leader, consider how supporting your community can also benefit the health of those who work for you every day. ★

For more information about how to establish a health promotion program in your company, contact Michael Taylor at 412/454-7534 or visit www.upmchealthplan.com.