



Stand Strong After COVID-19 Disruption: Steps to take now

COVID 19 is an unprecedented world-wide disruption in this era of globalization, impacting the bulk of small businesses everywhere. As a small business owner or entrepreneur what can you do now? From Step 1 through Step 4, the focal point has been to run an efficient and effective small business. In Step 5, the goal is to build a culture, from ownership to management to employees, of wellbeing and growth to include safety, security, and health. Per BusinessDictionary.com, “implementing a wellness plan in your small business could be one of the wisest decisions you ever make. Your employees will be healthier, more productive and take fewer sick days. You will see a direct positive impact on your business in a relatively short period of time. The costs of implementing a wellness plan in your organization are minimal. According to research conducted by the American Heart Association, for every \$1 spent on worksite wellness, companies can receive up to \$3 in return.”

“This pandemic has shown how critical it is to embrace our humanity, be understanding and caring — and that holds true for companies, too. Make sure ‘human’ is prioritized in Human Resources.” By Kathie Patterson, Chief Human Resources Officer at Ally Financial

Step 5. Wellness Program

Why a Wellness Plan? It has been determined that Wellness Plans have several positive effects within small businesses, among them are the following:

1. Enhances workforce health behaviors (including nutritional, physical, emotional, and mental)
2. Lower health risks after implementing the wellness plan and employees change health behaviors
3. Reduction in healthcare costs in the mid-term and long-term, studies confirm that for every \$1 invested in wellness, \$3.30 is saved.
4. Improves small business production and/or customer service by promoting and improving workforce health behaviors
5. Better health behaviors and lower health risks leads to higher self-esteem and consequently to lower absenteeism
6. An existent Wellness Plan leads to improved employee recruitment and retention
7. A strong wellbeing culture builds and strengthens employee morale

Reference: <https://www.wellsteps.com/blog/2020/01/02/reasons-to-have-a-wellness-program-benefits-of-wellness/>

What are the costs of a Wellness Program? The actual cost varies according to benefits offered through a specific wellness program, nevertheless study after study disclose that it can range from \$150 to \$1,200 per employee per year.

What are some ideas for low cost Wellness Programs?

- Onsite work location wellness benefits can include physical activities such as yoga, tai chi, aerobics, walking, gardening, and the option of setting up an onsite fitness center

- Healthy lunch and snacks
- De-stress zone which should be a “safe” place (private) to relieve and vent off stress
- Employee Assistance Program – EAP: usually third-party service that permits the employees to call a counselor in order to better manage their daily work or personal lives
- Flexible work schedules is a very popular benefit that has been revisited during COVID 19, and in some cases become mandatory. The benefits include changeable to irregular work hours to work-at-home.
- Ergonomic workstations
- Wellness technology and apps
- Wellness workshops and nutritional food demonstrations
- Corporate health membership discounts
- Volunteer days through United Way or other social service organizations

How do I build a Wellness Program? Before choosing and launching a Wellness Plan it is wise to ask yourself a set of key questions. WellSteps clearly expounds on the key factors that will impact the success or failure of the plan in the article “10 Questions to ask before you start a Wellness Program” at this link: <https://www.wellsteps.com/blog/2020/01/01/start-wellness-program/>.

Subsequent to choosing and implementing a Wellness Program, it is essential to evaluate its effectiveness by measuring pre-established metrics and return on investment (ROI). Metrics to consider include employee utilization, employee feedback, reduction in employee absences, reduction in healthcare costs, increase in productivity, and increase in customer satisfaction. Important to consider is that all Wellness Program is a long-term investment which can’t be measured successfully in 2 to 3 months. Continuously engage management and workforce in order to adjust as needed to offer a culture of wellbeing and growth.

The set of “Stand Strong After COVID-19 Disruption: Steps to take now” Series is part of tools and resources that the Iowa Retail Initiative of Community and Economic Development of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. To learn about these resources and the complete Iowa Retail Initiative program visit <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/iowa-retail-initiative> and contact Lisa Bates, Community Development Specialist, at (515) 357-8185 or lbates@iastate.edu.

Resources:

WellSteps - Effective Employee Wellness Solutions - <https://www.wellsteps.com/>

SHRM – Better Workplaces, Better World: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/howtoestablishanddesignawellnessprogram.aspx>

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext