

97% of Health Authority employees improve personal health in a “Race to Panama” challenge

CASE SUBJECT – Fraser Health Authority, British Columbia, Canada

BACKGROUND – Fraser Health Authority employs 30,000 people over a diverse geographical area of British Columbia. The employees serve nearly 1.5 million citizens in rural communities near Vancouver city. Through public education and the promotion of good health practices, they encourage people to take personal responsibility for wellness and to lead a healthy lifestyle.

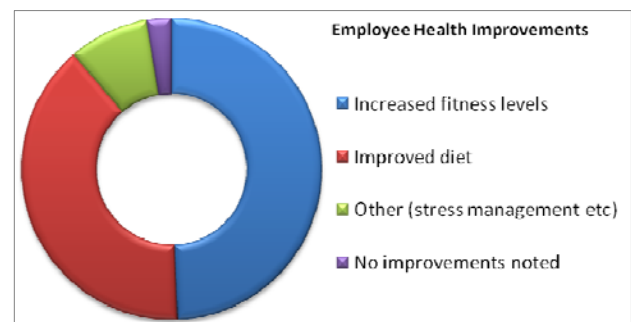
OBJECTIVES – Administrators recognized a need to foster a healthier workplace so that employees would live the values they shared with others. A social, engaging, and positive experience was essential to maintain the morale so vital in organizations where lives are at stake.

Management required evidence of health improvement presented by a researcher, in a report detailing the process and outcomes for all selected interventions. This project would provide the justification for continued health and wellness initiatives.

INTERVENTION – Administrators used the CoreHealth wellness platform to create and deliver ‘The Race to Panama,’ an online fitness competition of their own design. Employees joined in teams of ten to compete, with the exercise logged by each member added to team performance. The challenge was promoted to a select group of employees in team meetings. Employees were encouraged to walk on lunches and during breaks. Promotional events were held during work hours, illustrating the importance of the initiative and buy-in from upper administration. Nutrition and hydration management tools were also provided, but not directly linked to the challenge.

OUTCOME – Fifty teams formed within a two week period, surpassing the participation goal for the project. Throughout the challenge, participation continued to rise and the target was exceeded by 45%.

RESEARCH FINDINGS – In an open ended survey question, respondents overwhelmingly confirmed how the challenge had positively impacted their fitness and nutrition with 49% commenting on increased fitness levels and 40% stating they had improved their diet. Other healthy benefits such as stress reduction were cited by 9% of participants. The number of respondents that reported their behavior as unchanged was 3%.



The greatest change related to physical activity levels. The percentage of respondents who indicated that they engaged in physical activity at least five times in the preceding seven days increased from 19% to 42%. The number of participants that reported being moderately active two times or less in the past seven days decreased from 40% before the challenge to 15%. Activity and dietary improvement are the two most recommended methods for employees to overcome obesity.

The percentage of respondents indicating that they ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day increased from 30% to 47%, while the percentage that reported eating an average of two or less decreased from 24% to 11%. The Challenge resulted in a significant change in intakes of vegetables and fruits, an important means of managing chronic disease and obesity.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS – Researchers measured the challenge’s effect on employee morale and loyalty. The proportions of respondents who thought Fraser Health had an interest in their well-being increased from 67% to 81%, while the proportion of respondents who were unsure decreased from 28% to 16%. The proportion of respondents who would recommend their employer increased from 67% to 77%; those who were unsure decreased from 25% to 18%.