

# Championship Strategies increase wellness in Prominent BC Health Authority

**CASE SUBJECT** – Interior Health Authority, BC, Canada

**BACKGROUND** – Interior Health is one of the largest health authorities in North America, with nearly 18,000 employees dispersed throughout 58 communities and across hundreds of facilities. The logistical challenges of serving a health and wellness program across such a large organization are significant, and employee service mandates require consistency, efficiency, and equal opportunity.

In 2010, Interior Health Authority changed its organizational structure to achieve a vision of “One IH” and there was an opportunity to link this change to a wellness initiative. To raise awareness of this vision, an innovative “One IH” wellness strategy was created.

**OBJECTIVES** – Employees at Health Authorities help patients manage disease and become healthier every day, and yet biometric and health studies consistently demonstrate high health risks among staff. To be a leading organization, Interior Health Authority recognizes the need to link employee health and patient care.

**STRATEGY** – The restructuring provided a sound opportunity to integrate the wellness program with corporate strategy. A tailored fitness adventure challenge was devised where employees logged steps and activity minutes for credit in online competition. A virtual map connected the many regions of the health authority, and employees could see their progress on this map in real time. Integrated messaging helped people understand and more readily embrace the benefits of their organizational change, and a puzzle theme was added to introduce a little extra fun. A combination of inspirational milestone messages, draw prizes, and social engagement tools were used to sustain motivation.

Strong ties between the organization’s mission, vision, and values were integrated into the wellness challenge theme, with senior management helping to shape and

craft this messaging. President and CEO Dr. Robert Halpenny was directly involved.

The difference between senior managers being general supporters and advocates proved very significant. With minimal encouragement, these champions promoted the wellness initiatives in their meetings and in general discussion. Senior leaders are also engaged in recruitment, eliminating perceived barriers to participation, and eager for change. Employees can be comfortable knowing that management genuinely values their health, wellbeing, and involvement.

Following the themed challenge, the program expanded with promotion and facilitation of side challenges. Any participant could become an informal champion, host their own wellness challenge for people at their worksite, and count on support of the organization. A site wellness champion can receive an allotment of about \$100 in prize for the worksite challenge. Where desired, the side-challenge could be facilitated by the online system for fitness, weight loss, nutrition, and creative concepts. The result was regular corporate wellness initiatives all could enjoy, combined with powerful local programs based on the need and interest level at each location.

**OUTCOME** – Wellness engagement increased by 26.5% over the challenge period. 88% of survey respondents were pleased with the effort they put in and 89% said they want to participate in additional challenges. The dominant area of interest was fitness with strong interest also expressed in nutrition and stress management.

