

WEBMD HEALTH SERVICES

How To Plan and Launch **Successful Wellness Challenges** for Your Organization



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Looking for a way to engage employees in a fun, healthy event? **Host a wellness challenge!**

Wellness challenges help people improve their health, increase engagement with your well-being program, and promote a positive and fun culture of well-being at work. This e-book will explain the benefits of hosting a wellness challenge, as well as everything it takes to plan and launch a successful challenge at your organization.

What Is a Wellness Challenge?

Wellness challenges are events that bring employees together to focus on well-being for a set period of time.



Challenges can be done individually, or employees can compete as a team. And while wellness challenges have traditionally focused on physical health, they've vastly expanded to include options related to mental health, social connections, financial wellness, the environment, and more.

No matter the focus, wellness challenges are a great way to unite the organization around a fun, shared goal. And, they give employees the support and motivation to work on their own health goals at the same time.

What's more, a wellness challenge can also:

- help strengthen your culture of well-being,
- increase connections between colleagues, and
- boost morale.

Why Host a Wellness Challenge?

A wellness challenge brings benefits to your employees and the organization.



Wellness challenges help employees in many different ways...

Provides ongoing motivation and accountability.

Joining others in a wellness challenge provides the motivation and accountability we often need to keep up healthy habits. Plus, team-based challenges offer built-in support systems to cheer colleagues toward better health.

Helps kickstart a fitness goal.

Wellness challenges give employees who want to make healthy changes a reason to start working toward their goals. For example, a steps challenge can help new exercisers start a routine in a fun, low-pressure way.

Allows for better relationships with coworkers.

Wellness challenges are great for strengthening bonds with coworkers. Better work relationships reduce stress on the job and help people be more productive, too.

Offers time to focus on health.

With our busy lives, it can be hard to make well-being a priority. A wellness challenge gives employees a reason to focus on their health and intentionally make time for it.

Increases opportunities for social connections.

Social connections are an important dimension of well-being, especially in a world of remote and hybrid work. Wellness challenges can be a great way to stay connected and meet new people—even if the workforce is distributed.

Support from a colleague makes all the difference.



I had one teammate who consistently checked on the entire team every day, asking if we entered our steps, keeping us informed of where we were with our competitors, and just encouraging us every day.”

MARY JO

SummaCare steps challenge participant

...while benefitting organizations, too.

Shows your commitment to a culture of well-being.

People are choosing to work for companies that genuinely care about their health and well-being. Regular wellness challenges show current and future employees that well-being is a business priority.

Allows you to get the most value from your well-being program.

A wellness challenge helps participants learn about the great resources a well-being program offers—like health coaching, help managing chronic conditions, nutrition counseling, and more.

Today's employees want more support for well-being.

62% say employee well-being support and benefits are a top priority when applying for or considering their next job.¹

But many feel employers aren't listening.

LESS THAN 25% of employees feel strongly that their organization cares about its well-being—the lowest percentage in nearly a decade.²

¹ Paychex.com. Report: Over 60 percent of Employees Surveyed Indicate Well-being Support as Top Priority when Seeking Employment. December 15, 2021.

² Gallup.com. Percent Who Feel Employer Cares About Their Wellbeing Plummet. March 18, 2022.

Increases employee engagement and retention.

Wellness challenges are popular morale boosters. They rally employees around a common goal and create a buzz that lasts long after the challenge has ended. And as we know, when employees feel healthy and happy—and know their employer cares about their well-being—they're more likely to stay with the organization.

Teams who say the organization cares about their well-being have:

- higher customer engagement
- higher profitability
- higher productivity
- lower turnover
- fewer safety incidents²

Strengthens corporate culture.

A cross-functional, team-based wellness challenge increases camaraderie and helps people form or revive relationships with coworkers beyond their immediate team. In other words, challenges are a great way for someone to meet colleagues from other departments or time zones, which can lead to better relationships across the organization.

Keeps employees connected to your mission.

Employees want to feel their work is meaningful. A wellness challenge tied to your corporate mission or an important cause reminds employees why they chose to join your company. Think wellness challenges focused on social justice, climate change, and sustainability.

² Gallup.com. Percent Who Feel Employer Cares About Their Wellbeing Plummet. March 18, 2022.

How To Plan Out a Wellness Challenge

Before you host a wellness challenge, there must be a thoughtful planning stage to determine what might work best for your organization's culture and employees. Use these steps to decide on a theme, length, and other essential elements.



1

Choose a wellness challenge topic.

Consider what's important to your organization, its culture and values—as well as what's meaningful to your employees. You might also look to your organization's health risk data to determine which topics would be most beneficial for employees. Then, hold a brainstorming session with your team to develop a list of possible wellness challenge topics.

PRO TIP:

Plan out a year's worth of challenges to focus on different aspects of well-being throughout the year.

2

Pick your challenge format and length.

- Challenges can be individual or team-based.
- For team-based challenges, consider having different locations, departments, or regions compete against each other.
- Decide how long to run the challenge. Two weeks, 30 days, and even six-week challenges are popular, depending on the kind of challenge you hold.

3

Determine which group or groups will participate.

- Will all locations take part, or just one specific location?
- If you have both remote and office-based employees, can everyone complete the challenge?
- Are significant others and families invited to participate?

PRO TIP:

Consider a wellness challenge the whole family can participate in—like walking, nutrition, or drinking more water.

4

Decide how to track activity.

If you're using a wellness challenge platform, it may already have pre-established rules and timelines. These platforms make it easy to track progress, such as how many steps teams take every week and how people report their data.

But, if you're creating a homegrown or smaller challenge, you'll want to establish your own metrics and decide how activities should be tracked. For example:

- How often should employees record their progress?
Daily? Weekly? Every two weeks?
- Will other forms of exercise—like biking—count in a steps challenge? If so, communicate the rules and where people can find tools to convert activities to steps.

5

Choose your rewards and incentives.

Incentives and rewards provide encouragement for people to join and complete the challenge. Remember that the incentives you choose should match your company's values and the expectations your employees have. For example, while branded swag may work for some organizations, it might not work for yours. Some rewards and incentives our clients use include:

- Points earned through the well-being program
- Paid time off
- A small token or gift card
- An end-of-challenge celebration with healthy food
- Donation to a favorite charity

Tips for Launching Your Wellness Challenge

Congrats! You've decided on your challenge and are ready to kick it off. Use these launch tips to make sure it's a success.



1

Identify champions.

Are there people in the organization who are passionate about well-being? Ask them to champion your wellness challenge. Champions can lead teams, encourage colleagues to get involved, and keep everyone motivated—even after the challenge has ended.

2

Create a communication plan.

Good communication is the key to a successful challenge.

- **Before the challenge**, get people excited using various outlets—email, intranet, text, workplace social media, posters, and flyers.
- **During the challenge**, talk it up at town hall meetings, update rankings, and keep the conversation going in chat groups. Your wellness champions can be a big help here.
- **After the challenge**, communicate results and thank everyone for participating.

PRO TIP:

Make sure your challenge-related communications connect people to other elements of your well-being program, like health coaching, health assessments, stress and resiliency resources, and financial wellness programs.

3

Establish metrics.

Popular metrics include challenge registration numbers, completion rates, email open and click-thru rates, and year-over-year comparisons. These metrics can help you determine which challenges to tweak or repeat over time.

PRO TIP:

After the challenge ends, send a quick pulse survey to understand what worked, what didn't, and what employees would like to see in the future.

4

Celebrate!

Formally recognize the end of the challenge with a fun in-person or virtual celebration to announce the results and award prizes.

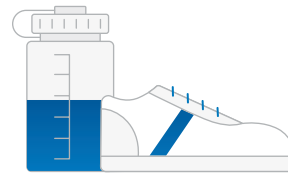
Wellness Challenge Ideas To Consider

What kind of challenge will you host? The sky's the limit when it comes to picking a wellness challenge. Here are some ideas to get you started.



Fitness Challenges

Many employees feel they're not getting enough exercise these days. Help them jumpstart a new routine or rekindle an old one with a wellness challenge. Walking, strength training, squatting/planking, and yoga are all good options. Doing the challenge as part of a team is a great way to give people the encouragement and support to make it a habit.



Fitness Challenges

BEST FOR...

INDIVIDUALS

TEAMS

REMOTE OR
DISPERSED TEAMS

IN THE OFFICE

Steps Challenge

Who can get the most steps or reach a certain steps goal over a specific timeframe? This challenge is consistently one of the most popular challenges our clients use. To make it more inclusive, consider allowing participants to convert other types of exercise into a steps count.



Hiking

This challenge is a great choice for active, outdoorsy-type organizations. Send communications on local trails with varying difficulty levels to get more people involved.



Lunchtime Stroll

Tally the most walking meetings or lunch breaks to encourage employees to step away and come back relaxed and motivated.



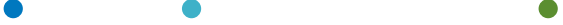
Squat or Plank Challenge

A fun way to increase strength and get some healthy competition going.



Take the Stairs Challenge

Have employees ditch the elevator and get points for taking the stairs.



Fitness Challenges

	BEST FOR...			
	INDIVIDUALS	TEAMS	REMOTE OR DISPERSED TEAMS	IN THE OFFICE
<p>Strength Workouts Encourage employees to add all-important strength training to their workouts. Core workouts count, too!</p>	●	●	●	●
<p>Stretch Break Get everyone stretching at the office or at home for better musculoskeletal health.</p>	●		●	●
<p>Swimming This challenge works well for low-impact summer exercise.</p>	●		●	●
<p>Workout Streak Cardio, yoga, Zumba, surfing, stretching—how many days in a row can people log a workout?</p>	●		●	●

Spotlight:

The Invitational Team Steps Challenge

The Invitational is a favorite with clients and our own teams. Why is it so popular?

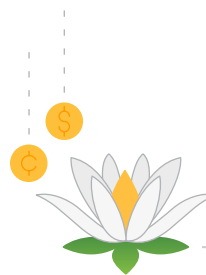


- **People of all fitness levels can participate,** either on their own or as part of a team.
- **It's easy to track.** Employees use their own wearable, steps-tracking app, or exercise converter to record activity.
- **It can be done no matter where your employees are—** in the office, working remotely, or in different geographic locations.
- **You can run it multiple times throughout the year.** We've found that twice a year is our sweet spot at WebMD Health Services!

The best part is our Invitational Steps Challenge comes packaged and ready to go. All you need to do is spread the word!

Personal Health Challenges

Trying to start a new healthy habit on your own can be hard. Team-wide or company-wide wellness challenges can bring the motivation and accountability people need to start the journey they've been waiting for. You'll be surprised to see how many people stick to their new habits long after the personal health challenge has ended!

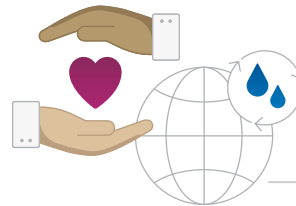


Personal Health Challenges

	BEST FOR...			
	INDIVIDUALS	TEAMS	REMOTE OR DISPERSED TEAMS	IN THE OFFICE
Nutrition Increase plant-based meals, bring a healthy lunch to work, or challenge employees to 30 days of clean eating.	●		●	●
Financial Wellness Reduce financial stress and get employees engaged with your financial wellness program.	●		●	●
Hydration We all need to drink more water, so why not make it fun? Send everyone a water bottle to sweeten the deal.	●		●	●
Meditation/Mindfulness Help employees jumpstart a mindfulness habit.	●		●	●
Gratitude Giving thanks boosts our mental health. Give employees a journal or create a gratitude wall when the challenge is over.	●		●	●
Sleep Log hours to reach a sleep goal and offer education about establishing healthy sleep patterns.	●		●	●

Community-Themed Challenges

Wellness challenges that focus on the community can help bring people together, even if your workforce isn't in just one location. In other words, it can be a great way for colleagues to build relationships with people from other departments, or even from the broader communities they live in. Plus, allowing employees to take time during the workday to help their communities—and backing it up with organizational support—can strengthen your company culture and show your commitment to giving back.



Community-Themed Challenges

	BEST FOR...			
	INDIVIDUALS	TEAMS	REMOTE OR DISPERSED TEAMS	IN THE OFFICE
<p>Social Connections Host activities that increase interactions with colleagues—like virtual water cooler chats, after-work meet-ups, trivia, or bingo and get points for participation.</p>	●		●	●
<p>Volunteerism A great way to bring employees together while giving back.</p>		●	●	●
<p>Acts of Kindness Doing things for others helps reduce stress and boosts our immune system.</p>	●		●	●
<p>Environment/Sustainability Small acts add up. Have employees earn points by logging times they used reusable water bottles, composted, biked or walked to work, and other sustainable habits.</p>	●		●	●
<p>Social Justice Combine increased awareness of social justice issues with a virtual walking challenge.</p>	●	●	●	●



Empowering Well-Being In Everyone

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