Identifying the Triggers and Barriers to Employee Engagement

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Overview:

_Midwest Business Group on Health_

• A Chicago-based, 501c(3) non-profit coalition of employers working together to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care for purchasers and the health status of their constituents.

• MBGH is one of over 60 coalitions, including Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health, in the United States and is a founding member of the National Business Group on Health (NBCH).

• Founded in 1980, membership includes over 100 large, self-funded, private employers such as Abbott Laboratories, Boeing, Kraft Foods, and University of Chicago. Member organizations cover over 3 million lives and spend over $2.5 billion on health care.

• MBGH also serves public employers, including the Chicago Transit Authority, City of Chicago, City of Gary, Metro Chicago Water Reclamation Dist., State of Illinois, and the State of Indiana.
MBGH Activities:

*Education, Networking, Purchasing, Catalyst*

- **Learning Network – Education and Networking**
  - Programs on health benefit management, strategies and trends
  - Networking Roundtables on health benefits
  - Health Benefit Benchmarking Surveys
  - Blues User Group

- **Midwest Health Purchaser Foundation (MBGH partner)**
  - Purchasing groups for Chicago HMOs, pharmacy benefits and health management programs

- **Health Benefit Research & Community Quality Initiatives**
  - “Preventing Unnecessary Early Deliveries”
  - “Engaging Employees in Worksite Wellness Activities”

- **National Association of Worksite Health Centers**
Why are employers still offering health and wellness benefits?

- They need to offer health benefits to recruit and retain talent
- A healthy workforce results in higher productivity
- Their population is not getting healthier and few patients take responsibility for own health
- The marketplace is not meeting their expectations for keeping people health or treating them in quality, safe, cost-effective ways
- Employers have the opportunity to educate and motivate workers and to impact their health, since they see employees over 1000 hours a year, while doctors see patients only 10-12 minutes a year
What is the state of our workforce health and wellness programs?

- People are getting sicker sooner
- Workers have an entitlement mentality, are not motivated to stay healthy, nor do they consider their clinical or cost options
- Compliance with medications and treatment is less than optimal
- Participation and engagement in wellness activities and preventive screenings are low, wasting millions of dollars annually

“Wellness is a chronic, relapseable condition needing constant attention and monitoring”
-Saul Levin, MD
MBGH Surveys of Employers

**Employer views on the value of health**

- 95% of employers agree that there is a link between an employee’s health and their productivity
- 84% of employers believe that health benefits are a necessary cost of doing business
- 85% of employers view health benefits as an investment in human capital with a measurable outcome
- 78% of all employers agree that the new law makes it more important than ever to keep workers healthy to keep costs down

*2008, 2010 MBGH surveys*
Employers need to address chronic disease and quality

*Cost and health implications depend on it*

- Significant and costly problem - 80% of their costs
- Most problems caused by patients allowing conditions to get worse:
  - Not knowing how to reduce risks
  - Not staying on medications
  - Not eating correctly
  - Not being screened regularly by their doctors
- Proper screening, treatment, monitoring, education and motivation of patients could dramatically:
  - Improve health outcomes, as people are able to avoid getting worse
  - Reduce health benefit costs, as patients avoid unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations, as well as don’t waste drugs
  - Improve productivity, as people stay on the job more often by having fewer doctor visits, and feel better at work
Main Strategy Required:  
*Promote “Self Leadership”*

- Help employees not get worse
- Help healthy people stay healthy
- Provide improvement and maintenance strategies

“Create winners, one step at a time and the first step is don’t get worse”
– Dee Eddington, University of Michigan
Costs associated with risks
Medical paid amount x age x risk*

Not all individuals view health the same

*Edelman Health Engagement Barometer*
Engage people at their level of readiness

Messages and communication approaches differ

• Health Actionists:
  – This group is highly engaged and interested in health
  – These people persuade others to take action

• Health Traditionalists:
  – This segment is very interested in health, particularly as it pertains to sustainability and nutrition, but they tend not to persuade others to take action

• Health On-Demanders:
  – Health is something this group thinks about when they need to
  – They are the least likely to care about being healthier, and most likely to only think about health when they or a member of their family becomes sick
  – They usually look to others to form their opinions about health
We need to engage people at their stage of readiness

• Health Disempowerededs:
  – For these individuals, barriers to better health are attributed to confusion and lack of financial resources
  – They are the most likely to find health information confusing and contradictory and say they don’t have enough money to take good care of their family’s health

• Health Neophytes
  – This segment tends to be younger, healthy and carefree

• Health Apathetics
  – This group is less likely to be motivated to take care of their health
  – They are also less likely to share opinions about health with others
Value-Based Benefit Design Research

*Landmark Research Projects – 2006 to 2010*

- 2006/07 - Employer Survey on Readiness to Adopt Value-based Benefit Designs
- 2008 – Employee Focus Groups on participation in VBD programs, incentives and wellness activities
- 2010 – Physician survey on employer–sponsored health benefits and wellness programs
- 2010 – Employee Focus Groups and survey on triggers and barriers to engaging employees in health benefits and wellness programs
  - Included spouses, health coaches and physicians
2010 Employee Focus Group Research

Project Goals

- Understand what prompts (triggers) or prevents (barriers) employees from participating or maintaining involvement in their benefits and wellness programs
- Realize what motivates employees to take responsibility for managing their health
- Determine the influencers of employee decisions and actions by collecting input from audiences beyond the employee
- Gain insight on how to motivate and engage employees through communication, culture, programs and activities
Supporting Employees in Managing Their Health

Employee Focus Groups

- Have an emotional attachment to their health
- Take the role of managing their family’s health very seriously
- Need the confidence to take action and the conviction to keep working at improving their health
- Prefer personal stories about others they can relate – people with the same health condition or life stage
- Want to see the results, feel the results and hear the results, so they can make healthy lifestyle change permanent
- Believe the most credible source for health information is their doctor
Supporting Employees in Managing Their Health

Employee Survey Results

- 88% - Indicate that they themselves are best at managing their own health
- 62% - Are interested in their company offering onsite medical clinics to help them better manage their health
- 56% - Rank their health status as “good”
- 47% - Say their physician is “extremely important” to them
- 41% - Say they use preventive care based on personal motivation
- 39% - Don’t participate in wellness programs because they feel confident they can manage their health on their own
Supporting Employees in Managing Their Health

Recommendations

- Provide employees with best-in-class tools, resources and support and make it convenient for them to have access to information at all times

- Ensure that the organizational culture of health supports not only the work environment, but that senior management is involved in workplace health programs

- Include family members, especially spouses, in benefits and workplace programs

- Share employee testimonials or personal experiences to help employees better relate to specific problems or health conditions
Understanding the Triggers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Employee Focus Group Research

- A bad diagnosis or significant emotional event can serve as a major wake-up call to changing unhealthy behaviors
- Family and loved ones are strong triggers for making healthy changes – especially spouses and physicians
- Co-workers serve as major influencers to getting employees interested and involved in worksite health programs
- Senior management can serve as a strong influencer if company morale is high
Understanding the Triggers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Recommendations

- Encourage employees to share clinical screening results with their physicians so that they can walk through the report together
- Promote team challenges at the workplace or convene a group of co-workers who want to make similar changes
- Show employees the results of their actions so they can make healthy lifestyle changes permanent
- Give employees small, achievable goals to help them stay motivated
- Make sure senior management is visible at workplace programs and that organizational culture is high
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Employee Focus Group Research

- Employee’s top barriers to engaging and participating in employer-sponsored benefits and programs include:
  - Trust
  - Time
  - Money
  - Convenience
  - Stress
- Trust takes the lead as the biggest barrier – 25% say they don’t participate in company-sponsored wellness programs because they aren’t sure what the company is going to do with the information.
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Employee Focus Group Research

- Time is a major barrier because of other commitments
- Money is a major barrier, especially for those who believe they have to choose between basic needs......buying food, paying for a health class
- Convenience is a major factor for those who lead a hectic lifestyle
- Stress is a major barrier for those who have too many commitments or who perceive lifestyle change as a burden
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Employee Focus Group Research

- Family and loved ones can serve as barriers to employees because of the strong influence they have on employee behaviors and choices.

- For women, guilt seems to be a big barrier, especially for moms and health care workers.

- For men, the need to spend more time at their job rather than with their family, is the biggest barrier.

- Men also indicate they don’t like to be “told what to do”.
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Recommendations

- Focus on changing organizational culture and instilling trust:
  - Employers need to understand the effect that culture has on an employee's health and well-being
  - Create an environment of trust to encourage employees to participate in programs
    - Be transparent and honest when communicating to employees – about benefits, how much health care costs.....
- Understand that lack of time is a significant barrier:
  - In addition to a full time job, many are going to school, have another job, have elderly parents or small children
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

Recommendations

- Make participation in workplace wellness events easy by offering activities during work hours and at times that are convenient

- Since money serves as a key barrier:
  - Provide tools and resources to help them determine the actual cost of health care services
  - Help them more effectively navigate their financial health care needs and personal financial needs
Addressing the Barriers to Employee Engagement and Participation

**Recommendations**

- Because many employees indicate they are over-committed and often perceive making lifestyle changes a burden, provide information and resources on:
  - Resiliency/stress management to help prepare them for the extremes of a hectic work and home life
  - Employee Assistant Program (EAP) to help both employees and family members address key barriers
Utilizing Key Influencers and Motivators for Behavior Change

**Employee Focus Group Research**

- Employees’ views of incentives vary but most see the value of using them as a motivator.

- Overall, employees are open to the use of incentives and disincentives but perceive incentives as more powerful in changing behavior.

- Financial incentives and premium reductions are most favored by employees.

- Ultimately, the fear of pain and risk aversion serve as greater motivators to changing behavior than incentives or disincentives.
Utilizing Key Influencers and Motivators for Behavior Change

Recommendations

- Structure incentives as part of the benefit design so that employees value them

- Connect employees with effective resources as soon as they are motivated to change – make sure they know where to go for information when they need it most

- Communicate what’s available to them frequently!

- Offer an incentive tied to obtaining an annual physical – i.e., developing individualized goals based on the results

- Employees will see it as an opportunity to work with the physician and the results can lead to healthy behavior changes
Utilizing Key Influencers and Motivators for Behavior Change

**Recommendations**

- Share information with spouses on workplace programs, incentives and benefit changes
- Include spouses and children over 18 in wellness and chronic disease management activities
- When an employee is found to have a health issue, include the spouse in the recommended solution
- Consider including the spouse and family in work team challenges
Creating Effective Communications

Employee Focus Group Research

- Employees say they want clear and concise communications on benefits and what’s available to them, including cost, coverage, co-pays, benefit changes and who is in their physician network

- Print communications are still important to employees even though they prefer getting email communications

- Almost 50% of employees want more frequent communications and face-to-face meetings to learn what company benefits, wellness and disease management programs are available to them

- Spouses and physicians, both identified as strong influencers, want to receive communication on employer programs
Creating Effective Communications

Recommendations

- Ensure doctors, spouses and managers are equipped with accurate information on what benefits/programs are available.

- Provide information that is easy to understand, concise and consistently reinforced throughout the year:
  - Programs, tools and incentive programs
  - Actual costs of health services and cost comparisons among plans
  - Benefit and coverage changes that could have an impact on out-of-pocket costs
  - Personalized communications focused on health status and readiness to change of the individual

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Creating Effective Communications

**Recommendations**

- Include dependents and other family members in company communication efforts so they can support behavior change efforts for all family members.

- At a minimum, employers should provide a “Benefits-at-a-Glance”.

- Use the results of clinical screening programs and campaigns such as *Know Your Numbers* as the “trigger” to get employees to consider making necessary lifestyle changes.

- Use testimonials and stories employees can relate to - someone with the same health condition, age or gender, similar life issue, personal life-changing stories.
Physician Focus Groups

- Physicians indicate that it takes an entire spectrum of support to help people change their behavior
  - Support should include the employee’s physician, specialists, family members, employer, health plan and health coach
- Overwhelmingly, physicians would like employers to share more with them on what types of information, programs and services are available to their patients to avoid mixed messages
Working More Effectively with Physicians

*Physician Focus Groups*

- Physicians strongly recommend that employers make it easier for patients to visit their doctors.
- Physicians want employers to remind employees to get a yearly physical exam - allowing them to focus on wellness rather than illness.
- Some physicians are willing to work with health coaches, but only if it does not increase their administrative time.
Working More Effectively with Physicians

Recommendations

- Offer employees incentives to get their annual physical
- Provide them with resources and tools on how to partner with their doctors to make sure that each visit is productive and no questions are left unanswered
- Collaborate with health plans, physician networks and health coaching vendors to make sure physicians know what’s available so they can encourage and reinforce patient participation
- Encourage employees and family members to bring copies of their health risk assessment and/or clinical lab results to the physician’s office
Phase 3: **Employer Communications Toolkit on Benefits Literacy and Consumerism**

Toolkit will help employers improve the use and understanding of health care benefits and better engage employees in worksite programs.

- Best practices and employer case studies
- Employer, vendor and health plan communication samples
- Recommendations on effective ways to personalize communications based on culture, size and demographics
- Information on how to effectively communicate:
  - Preventive benefits and medication adherence
  - Health care navigation and consumerism
  - Impacts of health care reform to the consumer

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Phase 4: Physician/Employee/Employer Collaborative

Pilot program designed to improve care coordination with employees/patients through:

- Physicians encouraging patients to participate in worksite clinical screenings and disease management programs
- Physicians reinforcing employer-sponsored health benefits, wellness programs and healthy activities
- Employers encouraging employees to create an effective partnership with their physician
- Employers helping employees better navigate health care services
For more information on the research or on MBGH......

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