



Repositioning health in the workplace as sustainable behavior:

A case study of the Green Health Initiative at the University of Louisville

Lindsay J. Della, Ph.D.

Patricia Benson, M.Ed.

Kristi M. King, Ph.D.

Stephanie A. Tabb



Overview

- What is Green Health?
 - A pilot workplace health promotion program at the University of Louisville (UofL)
 - Developed as a product line extension to UofL's main employee wellness program entitled Get Healthy Now

Situation Analysis

- Green Health was developed out of formative research that showed:
 - 2008 U.S. economic downturn and budget cuts at UofL
 - Increased university focus on operational sustainability, well supported by management
 - Positive employee reaction to sustainability-related changes

Situation Analysis

- Internally, Get Healthy Now program managers had conducted a 3-year retrospective insurance claims analysis and found the primary lifestyle drivers of cost:
 - Obesity
 - Stress
 - Inactivity

Louisville, Kentucky



Yum!



Program Goal & Positioning

- **Program Goal:** From an economic perspective, Green Health was also identified as a way to involve more employees in the UofL workplace health offerings and thereby reduce insurance claims cost
- **Positioning:** Overall, Green Health was designed around the idea that some individuals might be motivated to engage in healthy behavior based on perceived environmental impact rather than personal health benefit
 - Tries to engage employees in sustainability activism and “green” activity to improve personal and community health

Product

- Green Health: The program was designed based on the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984)
 - It was administered on-line through a secure web portal
 - It focused on four lifestyle areas:
 - nutrition
 - stress and worklife balance
 - exercise
 - a rotating monthly focus area
 - Each focus area included various “green” health behavior options (e.g., biking to campus within the exercise area)

Price

- To minimize financial barriers, GHI was offered free to UofL employees
- Enrollment time costs were also minimized
 - Interested individuals simply responded to an invitation email and were sent log-in information for the Green Health Web portal
 - Participation in the program was incentivized with a sweepstakes give away to Portland Oregon – the “greenest” city in the U.S.

Place

- To make participation easier, monthly activities were identified that were already occurring on UofL's campuses or were scheduled to occur nearby in the community
 - Farmer's market at the downtown campus
 - The Mayor's hike in Jefferson Forest (which is 20 minutes from downtown Louisville)

Promotion

- Branded as being environmentally friendly
 - A separate web presence was developed to distinguish main program (pictures on poster)
 - Personality: color green used to visually signify the environmental focus of the program
 - Tone: encouraging yet serious, as global warming and environmental destruction are serious issues in the community
 - Media: messages disseminated via email or the Internet, so as not to waste paper and to act congruently with the goals of the program

Pilot Results

- 243 employees signed up to participate in Green Health out of 582 people invited (42% initiation rate)
- Two initial cross sectional surveys of 243 participating employees:
 - GOAL of 1st survey: to determine if the program was reaching the appropriate target audience
 - N = 96 answered 7 items 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree)
 - Beliefs about health and sustainability connectedness
 - GOAL of 2nd survey: to determine where current participants are according to the stages of change construct from the Transtheoretical Model
 - N = 85 answered stage of change classification items about physical activity, nutrition, and stress management
 - We also measured BMI of respondents by asking height and weight

Pilot Results

- 1st survey found strong agreement with the items
 - e.g., “It makes logical sense to me that health and sustainability are linked” and “Making healthy lifestyle decisions for me can positively impact my community”
 - Means ranged from 3.57 to 4.45, the overall average across the items was 3.95
- 2nd survey found the following distributions
 - Average BMI = 30.26

Physical Activity		Nutrition (Fruit & Veggie)		Stress Management	
Have not acted yet	25%	Have not acted yet	45.9%	Have not acted yet	22.7%
Just started acting	21.4%	Just started acting	8.2%	Just started acting	11.9%
Acting > 6 months	53.6%	Acting > 6 months	45.9%	Acting > 6 months	65.5%

Conclusions

- **Strengths:** The pilot functioned well as a start for the program and as a means for testing our instruments and web portal design
 - Most of the people participating appeared to believe in the link between health and sustainability (1st survey), which suggests that those who signed up and were engaged in the program represented the types of individuals the program was designed to target
 - Stage of change data show room for improvement, especially for nutrition behavior, which suggests a continued need for the program
- **Improvements Needed:** Although 243 people participated in the pilot, the initiation rate was only 42%

Future Ideas & Recommendations

- We need to do a better job of finding and targeting individuals motivated by sustainability
 - Use questions from 1st survey to gauge interest in sustainability across employees and target those with highest interest level
- Ensure that program activities retain their “green” focus so as to continue to attract and engage the target audience
 - Partner with UofL sustainability committee to identify activities that are sustainable in nature and present opportunities for improved physical activity, nutrition, and/or stress management

Questions

- Lindsay Della
- LJDell01@louisville.edu

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