

Program Success Tips

Gearing Up Employees' Readiness To Change

When an employee is ready to change you will often see them attending corporate health initiatives with great interest. But when research tells us that only 20% of a population may be ready to change at any one time, we start to understand why a large proportion of our employees are not actively participating. The key question is 'how do you prepare or encourage employees to become ready to change'?

The answer is to use clever marketing methods that feature proven psychological principles. This way we have a greater chance of not only leading the horse to water, but also making (or assisting) it drink. And it's not as hard as it may sound.



A popular model on behaviour change was developed when 2 researchers were studying how smokers were able to give up their habits or addiction, and is called the Stage Of Change Model (SCM). The idea behind the SCM is that behaviour change does not happen in one step. Rather, people tend to progress through different stages on their way to successful change. Also, each of us progresses through the stages at our own rate.

So expecting behavior change by simply telling someone to attend an activity, or to behave in a certain way is unlikely to achieve a result (and can be counterproductive) because they are not ready to change.

The stages of change and the associated action (likelihood of program attendance) are:

Stage of Change	Action
Pre-contemplation	No action intended within next 6 months
Contemplation	Action intended within next 6 months
Preparation	Action intended 1 month
Action	Change commenced
Maintenance	Change occurred and continuing action

When it comes to promoting corporate health initiatives, if we follow the traditional rule of thumb of simply promoting activities by displaying dates and times then we are unlikely to engage Pre-contemplators or Contemplators. Instead, it is useful to present information that is likely to personally relate to them on a number of levels e.g. physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Let's take a look at an example on the TV. The QUIT line uses a range of hard-hitting images and emotional triggers in its advertising. We have all seen the mouth cancers, gangrenous toes, amputated legs and family relationship messages used to hit home some pretty hard messages. These are not just disturbing images used to scare people into changing their behaviour. Instead they are cleverly developed marketing messages designed to hit a personal 'trigger point' that may assist Pre-contemplators to become motivated for change. Simply telling them to call the QUIT line would be far less successful.

The same principles can be used in the workplace. The use of statistics, benefits and outcomes within promotional messages, rather than just details, offers a far more effective way of engaging staff around their health - as opposed to telling them what to do. This may be just the key to achieving higher participation rates at corporate health activities, especially with those employees that need it most.

What messages are you using to promote corporate health initiatives within your organisation?