

Six Steps to a Healthier Population

An innovative approach to improving population health in any organization.



Culture, Behavior and Health

An organization's culture can influence its members' productivity, their purpose and their collective ability to bring compelling new products to market. But it can also influence a wide range of other attributes and behaviors, including healthy lifestyle habits and choices.

Because the health of your workplace population is critical to your organization's success, you should know that there is an innovative formula for cultural transformation that is delivering quantifiable improvements in employee health, medical expense, productivity, absenteeism and job satisfaction for OptumHealth™ customers worldwide. It's a formula that helps create a sustainable and enduring health community at work by building a culture of health and a wellness brand, connecting consumers to wellness programs and services delivered through a high-touch concierge relationship, and by leveraging incentive-based loyalty programs that engage and reward consumers.



OptumHealth has a long history of successfully helping employers analyze population data while engaging and motivating consumers to change health-limiting behaviors and improve their health.

This paper offers a framework – six essential steps – that ultimately work together to reduce health risk, improve outcomes and save health care dollars for the employer populations we serve.



Figure 2. A six-step process for improving the health of any population.

Step One: Measure and Develop Insights

You can't make a useful plan without knowing precisely where you are and exactly where you wish to be. So your first order of business is to leverage every available data source to understand your population's demographic and health profile, which will then fuel your program strategy. As you can imagine, a program strategy for a predominantly female work force ages 25-35 looks very different than a program strategy for a predominantly male workforce ages 50-60. This powerful combination of demographic information with medical and pharmacy claims, workers' compensation records, absenteeism histories, health assessments, and biometric screenings, provides critical insights on employee health needs and actionable opportunities for beneficial intervention through health and wellness programming. This approach uncovers the real drivers of high health care costs, letting OptumHealth deliver an integrated program based on those findings.

For example, if your aggregate health assessment results show a high percentage of your consumers are struggling with risk factors of physical inactivity and being overweight, then nutrition education, healthy weight coaching and onsite fitness challenges should be a primary focus of your overall program strategy.

Does your data show an expensive spike in musculoskeletal procedures? Then consider onsite ergonomic interventions paired with targeted treatment decision support programs that help employees explore a continuum of medical therapies. One call center recently implemented a mandatory two-minute group stretch during every working hour to combat high carpal tunnel claims.

Are heart-related medical and pharmacy claims a growing expense item? Then be sure your wellness programming includes onsite blood pressure and cholesterol screening, education and activities aimed at lowering blood pressure and total cholesterol. Use all the information at your disposal to understand your population's unique health risks; then design program interventions that reduce those risks by changing the underlying behaviors.

Measure and Develop Insights

Step Two: Build a Wellness Brand and a Culture of Health

Wellness programs work best when there is consistent environmental support and a compelling wellness brand that builds trust and excitement through a year-long communication strategy. One key aspect of that support is an effective branding and communication strategy that clearly identifies employee health as an organizational priority. A successful brand will establish a clear visual identity for the wellness program and use multi-modal communications to continuously build awareness and establish health as a core aspect of the organizational culture. In a world where employees are constantly bombarded with information, your wellness brand needs to be intrusive – a constant reminder of your organization’s dedication to health. Early in the program lifecycle, effective branding and communication are as important as the initial program and service offering. Strong, explicit management support of the strategy is vitally important, too.

Every opportunity should be exploited to reinforce the importance of healthy behavior to the individual and the organization. Food and beverage offerings in the cafeteria and vending machines should promote healthful eating decisions. Employees should be encouraged to walk up and down inviting stairwells instead of riding the elevator. Employees should also be lauded for biking to work or walking during lunch time. One employer even gave employees a new bike for completing a biometric screening at work, and provides seasonal bike tune-ups at work. In order to reinforce leadership support, another employer implemented a dry-erase board at building entrances with a life-size cut-out of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) announcing wellness events.

Wellness communication messaging should appeal comprehensively to consumers’ senses, values and emotions. They should be invasive – surrounding consumers throughout the workday and reaching them afterward, at home. Only when the health and wellness brand is effectively communicated as a critical element of the organization’s mission can employees be engaged to make real, long-term changes.

Step Three: Create a Concierge-Like Relationship

The traditional model of health service delivery is the antithesis of functional navigation, with a different hard-to-locate entry point for each and every service. So the third step in improving population health is to replace the access maze with an always-available concierge service that provides a single point of information, consultation and service access for any health-related need. This go-to resource connects consumers with compelling health programs and resources including wellness programs, high-quality physicians, and symptom-support services and will even schedule physician appointments on behalf of the consumer.

Your goal should be to support a new retail-inspired model of consumerism that puts the consumer at the center of the health care experience, enabling better decision-making through a personalized health advocacy service that builds a trusting relationship with the consumer during every interaction. Consumers’ health advocates help them navigate the oftentimes complex world of health care, helping them uncover health resources they often don’t know about. These resources enable more informed decisions and must be made available easily and ubiquitously, through the consumers’ choice of access channels: letters, online, text messaging, smartphones and onsite clinics.

Build a Wellness Brand and
a Culture of Health

Create a Concierge-Like
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Step Four: Drive Behavior Change

Bending the health care cost trend involves not only reducing health risk over time but also influencing real-time health decisions made each and every day. It's the cumulative effect of long-term and short-term changes that ultimately drive sustainable behavior change.

OptumHealth offers a comprehensive portfolio of resources and services to actively engage employees and permanently change behaviors across the continuum of health needs, including the eSyncSM Health Portal, onsite fitness challenges and one-on-one wellness coaching. These multi-modal programs are delivered over the phone, online, onsite and by mail – enabling us to extend our reach and our impact. These programs empower employees to manage their own health and leverage innovative methods for inspiring change. Our onsite and mobile challenges thrive because we've harnessed the power of competition and gaming to fuel engagement. And since we take integration seriously, we've synchronized all health information, programs and activities into our eSync technology platform, which enables our wellness coaches to drive better health outcomes online, onsite and over the phone.

Drive Behavior Change

Step Five: Reward Health

In the long run, the intrinsic, personal experience of improved health is the only effective motivation for lifelong change. However, incentives play a critical role in attracting and engaging the consumer in a wellness program, and they can also help build loyalty and commitment over time to a healthy lifestyle. That's why this fifth step is so critical. Because a little motivation goes a long way, OptumHealth's innovative incentive loyalty program rewards health actions and outcomes through structured points-based programs and fun-fueling sweepstake-like events. The key is properly aligning your behavior change and engagement goals with appropriate and ongoing incentives in order to be effective.

OptumHealth recommends a tiered approach to incentives. For example, in a six-month tobacco cessation program, you might consider a small incentive to reward initial participation, but reserve a more significant award for completion of the entire call cycle.

OptumHealth's flexible incentive platform focuses on points-based programs and can facilitate gift card redemption and health savings or reimbursement account (HSA/HRA) deposits. Recognizing that rewarding both participation and outcomes is important to employers, OptumHealth can support both models and can even help integrate your outcomes-based strategy with our biometric screening program. Although incentives are most effective when tied to desired outcomes, not to simple participation, an exception might be a drawing, perhaps for a new iPad*, for completion of a one-time event or activity, such as a biometric screening. These "surprise and delight" type of events build excitement and inspire healthy action.

Reward Health

Step Six: Measure Value Creation

No strategic initiative is ever complete until the results have been measured and reported, and that's doubly true for long-term activities that must adapt and change over time. Thus the sixth step in improving the health of your population is to measure value creation, which will enable you to demonstrate changed health behavior, reduced health risk, improved health outcomes and improved engagement. This is, after all, a cycle. OptumHealth focuses on the specific health and financial impacts of individual program elements, providing the necessary metrics for judging the relative merits and return on investment of the many different services and activities in a complex program portfolio. We focus on enrollment, utilization and program completion in addition to the health risk reduction metrics of our programs. In order to complete the reporting cycle, we take the metrics, analyze them and make necessary changes to take advantage of the opportunities uncovered. An investment in OptumHealth's total health management solution will yield improved health outcomes and mitigate disease impact.

Bringing It All Together – I Am, I Do, I Get: The Personal Perspective

Our six-step approach to population health improvement is designed to encourage and enable an incremental process of growth and development, in the organization and all of its participating consumers. The initial steps are devoted to guided self-evaluation, creating a baseline awareness of health and risk states and setting the initial goals for improvement. We consider this the "I Am" phase of the process. The activation phase, which we call "I Do," engages the organization and its consumers to take direct control and responsibility for their health and its costs. Finally, in the rewards phase, "I Get," the organization and all its consumers reap the benefits of fuller life. It's the simplicity and intuitive nature of **I Am, I Do** and **I Get** that helps human resource and wellness professionals evaluate and apply a personal perspective to their culture of health-building strategy.

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As chief operating officer of Wellness, Todd Spaulding is responsible for product leadership of our Staying Healthy solutions. He is a member of the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) and serves on the National Business Group of Health's (NBGH) board for the Institute on the Costs and Health Effects of Obesity. Prior to joining OptumHealth in May 2003, Spaulding held various management positions. Spaulding earned his B.S. in accounting from St. Cloud State University and his M.B.A. from the University of St. Thomas.

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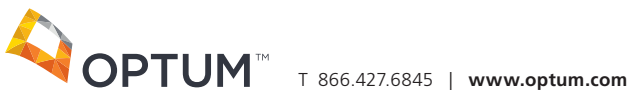
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Prior to joining OptumHealth in April 2011, Thomas held various roles in the health care technology sector and managed care. Thomas spent 10 years at WellPoint/Anthem in sales, human resources and product strategy leadership positions. As WellPoint's first wellness director, Thomas' responsibilities included developing and expanding a national total health management strategy for 42,000 employees across the United States and directing a national women's health strategy. Thomas has assisted national clients in developing strategies and recommending enhancements to their employee health and welfare benefit programs to promote a healthy corporate culture.

Thomas holds a B.S. in Biology from Georgia State University and an M.P.H. from East Tennessee State University. Thomas completed the American Health Insurance Plans' Executive Leadership Program (ELP) and obtained the ELP certificate from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Thomas serves on the National Business Group on Health's (NBGH) board for the Institute on the Costs and Health Effects of Obesity and Corporate Health and Wellness Association. She is also a member of the Health Enhancement Research Organization's (HERO) Think Tank.

To learn more about OptumHealth, contact your OptumHealth sales representative. Call **866.427.6845**, email us at **engage@optumhealth.com** or visit **www.optumhealth.com**.

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