

May 2008

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## **CASE STUDY: INSURER TAKES RISK ON WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAM**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Located in Taunton, MA, Farrell Backlund Insurance Agency LLC. [FB Insure] was established in 1999 by the combination of Farrell Insurance Agency and R.E. Backlund Insurance Agency, businesses started in the 1950's. Aside from combining years of experience and outstanding customer service, as a small business, FB Insure committed to continue the longstanding tradition of taking care of their employees.

### **PROBLEM:**

As an Insurance Agency, FB Insure recognized the cost of risk; they advise clients to minimize it wherever possible. FB Insure knew that there would be a positive return for investing in employees' wellbeing including decreased absenteeism, improved morale, increased productivity, job satisfaction and retention.

In an effort to address the needs of a mature workforce and to "walk the talk", Don Backlund, CEO and Russ Martorana, President of FB Insure began a search for a company that could provide wellness programming to their employees.

FB Insure sought a business that could provide nutrition and wellness counseling to employees on an individual basis, and one who could augment these sessions with group programs related to the material.

### **SOLUTION:**

After examining alternatives and options, FB Insure selected EVOLUTION Bodywork & Nutrition, [EVOLUTION] a comprehensive wellness company headquartered in Bristol, RI.

EVOLUTION's proposed solution was all encompassing: addressing the company's culture and wellness as a whole, yet creating individualized programs to meet each employee's needs and goals.

EVOLUTION's experienced staff would provide support and counseling on both an individual and group basis. In addition, weekly and monthly newsletters would reinforce themes and targeted seminars would address specific topics. Regular assessments and comprehensive aggregate reports would herald successes and highlight areas for senior management and company principals to monitor improvement.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

EVOLUTION's first step was to ask employees to complete a confidential Personal Wellness Assessment. Screenings for Blood Glucose (Non-Fasting), Total Cholesterol, Blood Pressure and Body Composition were collected and analyzed through an independent lab. Each employee/participant was encouraged to bring a family member to the first interview with the Registered Dietitian, particularly if that person was responsible for shopping or cooking.

The aggregate data from this survey shaped the wellness programming and content that EVOLUTION tailored to hit all areas of concern, most importantly, nutrition education.

For the first six months, participants met with a Registered Dietitian twice monthly. This counseling was conducted on an individual basis, during business hours, provided entirely by the employer. Employees were also invited to attend Cooking Demonstrations, Taste Tests, and Grocery Store Tours. In subsequent months a physical fitness component was added which included small group exercise and stress management sessions and joint management of a pedometer program.

IMPLEMENTATION Continued:

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*"We had high expectations for EVOLUTION Bodywork & Nutrition's wellness program and our expectations were met and exceeded from the content, support, reporting and staff – in particular Emily Gedney, Evolution's Nutrition Director/Registered Dietitian" said Greg Arnold, Vice President of Finance and Operations at FB Insure.*

Management at FB Insure participates in the programs right alongside their employees. Whether it's learning new stretches or practicing good decision making at a business lunch, modeling from the company's principals is critical to program success. Don Backlund, President says, *"Jen Morin's style is perfect for our employee population. Like Emily, Jen obviously cares about her clients. Her teaching methods are encouraging and motivating and she addresses our specific questions. It can be intimidating to start a program but neither Jen nor Emily would ever make anyone feel embarrassed or discouraged. They are exactly what we need."*

**RESULTS:**

- The **overwhelmingly positive response from employees** was unprecedented. After three months, participation remained at 100%, despite anticipated attrition.
- **Weight loss and high risk ranges decreased.** At the completion of twelve months of programming, employees had lost nearly 500 pounds and those with total cholesterol results in the borderline and high risk ranges decreased. This amount is remarkable because this was not a weight loss program, but rather a wellness program.
- In less than eighteen months, **significant improvements have been seen across the board** for FB Insure Employees: in body fat; cholesterol; blood pressure; physical activity; smoking prevalence; systolic and diastolic blood pressure; seat belt use; and overall physical health. Employees are more educated and aware of their own health information and taking preventative measures for themselves and their loved ones.
- **Decrease in employee absenteeism.** *"One employee recently experienced a family crisis - her son was diagnosed and hospitalized with diabetes. But because of the education that Emily (EVOLUTION's Registered Dietitian) had provided to us over the course of our program, the mom was light years ahead of where the hospital personnel expected and the child was released several days earlier than anticipated because she was so prepared. The benefit to that employee was peace of mind and confidence."* Said Greg Arnold, V.P. of Finance & Operations, FB Insure.
- **Increased sense of community and peer support.** *"What's remarkable is the shift in our habits" says Josie Lorina-Baker, Marketing Director at FB Insure. "Walk into the kitchen and you will see people sitting around talking about a recipe that they made for dinner last night. Open the fridge and count the containers of hummus – no one knew what hummus was before Evolution got here. My husband inspects the ingredients on a bag of bread because he knows what to avoid. We all have healthy snacks stuffed in our desk drawers."*

*"We've been very happy with the results of EVOLUTION's Employee Wellness Programs," says Russ Martorana, President, FB Insure. Successful results that have lead Farrell Backlund to contract with EVOLUTION for a fourth term of an additional six months.*