

Wellness Incentives

The workplace has a large impact on our health since one in four adults work 50 hours per week or more (Higgs, Duxbury & Lyons, 2008). Workplace Wellness Programs are a positive way to improve the health of working individuals and decrease health costs to the employer. Incentives are an important part of successful Workplace Wellness Programs, so read on to find out why.

What is an incentive?

An incentive is a reward that encourages a specific action or behaviour. A free helmet for participating in a ride to work bicycle program or a day off with pay for taking part in a health screening event are examples of incentives.

Types of incentives (tangible or intangible)

There are two main types of incentives known as tangible and intangible. Tangible incentives are material rewards or prizes that a person receives. In comparison, intangible incentives are moral or personal rewards that an individual receives. Some examples of tangible and intangible incentives are given in the table below.

	Tangible Incentives	Intangible Incentives
Examples	Paid time off	Praise from a manager
	Gift cards	Compliment at a company event
	T-shirts	Recognition from other employees
	Bicycles	Improved health of participant

Benefits of incentives for employers and employees

There are many employer and employee benefits to using incentives in Workplace Wellness Programs. Incentives:

- Are fun and boost morale of the participants and the workplaces.
- Can be free or low cost for employers, therefore lower benefit costs and save the company money.
- Increase participation in wellness programs.
- Engage employees and employers in the healthy behaviour.
- Motivate employees to take action to improve their health.
- Create excitement in wellness programs.

Incentives are a great way to encourage employees to take part in Workplace Wellness Programs. Taking advantage of incentives and using them as part of your Workplace Wellness Programs can help improve employee health and save the company money. No matter how big or small your wellness program is, you can make incentives an important part of it.

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU), Go For Health Windsor-Essex and our community partners are working together with business leaders in the community to help improve the health of everyone around us. Contact WECHU at 519- 258-2146 ext. 3100, or online at www.wechealthunit.org/workplace-health or www.goforhealth.ca for more information on the *Working Toward Wellness* workplace wellness program. With workplace wellness policies we can create a healthier Windsor-Essex County.

Key References

- Cahill, K., & Perera, R. (2009). Competitions and incentives for smoking cessation (review). *The Cochrane Collaboration*, (3), 1-36. Retrieved March 5, 2010 from <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>
- Chapman, L.S., Whitehead, D., & Connors, M.C. (2008). The Changing role of incentives in health promotion and

- wellness. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 23 (1), 1-11. Retrieved March 4, 2010 from <http://www.healthpromotionjournal.com>
- Seaverson, E.L., Grossmeier, J., Miller, T.M., & Anderson, D.R. (2009). The Role of incentive design, incentive value, communications strategy, and worksite culture on health risk assessment participation. *The Science of Health Promotion*, 23(5), 343-352. Retrieved March 4, 2010 from <http://www.healthpromotionjournal.com>
- Kruger, J., Yore, M.M, Bauer, D.R., & Kohl, H.W. (2007). Selected barriers and incentives for worksite health promotion services and policies. *The Science of Health Promotion*, 21(5), 439-447. Retrieved March 4, 2010 from <http://www.healthpromotionjournal.com>