



How To Run A Workplace Wellness Challenge Your Employees Will Love

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How to Run A Workplace Wellness Challenge Your Employees Will Love

As you may have seen in our blog post, [25 Fascinating Statistics About Workplace Wellness](#), 61 percent of employees say that, because of their company's wellness program, they've made healthier lifestyle choices. Isn't that incredible? You have the power to potentially improve your employees' overall health and wellness just by implementing a workplace wellness program—and we all know that improved employee health and wellness has been shown to reduce employee turnover, absenteeism, and even the number of employee healthcare claims.

Without further ado, we've come up with a fun, easy-to-execute way to get your employees engaged in a workplace wellness program! HR managers, meet the internal fitness challenge; the perfect way to get your employees socializing with team members outside of their departments and to encourage your people to become healthier individuals with an improved sense of wellbeing.

Let this be your guide to building a workplace wellness challenge that all of your employees will love (and not feel as though they're being "forced into fun").

A target with several arrows hitting the bullseye, set against a warm orange and yellow background. The target is slightly out of focus, with the arrows in sharper focus.

Step 01

Set Objectives

To ensure that you're actually doing this for a reason and to get buy-in from your executives, it's important to set your objectives. For instance, our objectives for the Rise Wellness Challenge were to:



Get employees to mingle with their colleagues outside of their departments.

As our company has grown rather quickly over the past 12 months, we wanted to ensure that we maintained a culture in which everyone felt comfortable with everyone—we are all family. So, rather than setting up teams by department or allowing people to choose their teammates, we decided to create five teams of 11-12 members and randomly assign each employee to a team (we used [random.org](https://www.random.org) for this).



Get everyone to participate without forcing it.

There was recently a compelling article published in BBC News that was pointedly called, [We Are Not Amused: The Tyranny of Forced Fun at Work](#). As the title implies, forced fun isn't fun at all. In fact, the author explains that "when participating in forced fun becomes a requirement, employees can become resentful of needing to step away from tight deadlines in order to do what feels less important. Others simply don't want to spend what can feel like unnecessary time with work colleagues they already see more than 40 hours a week at the office." We definitely didn't want our employees to feel resentful. After all, the workplace wellness challenge is supposed to be genuinely enjoyed—not dreaded.

We didn't want our team members to feel as though they had to participate, so we made participation optional. However, to encourage maximum employee engagement, we provided a prize that we knew would be appealing to everyone (see Step 3) and made the prize available to the winning group, rather than to individuals. This fostered teamwork and a sense of comradery, which helped to get everyone onboard.



Help our employees get and stay healthy.

As the saying goes, "healthy people are happy people", and we (like you) want to ensure that our employees are both of those things.

While we already [encourage our employees](#) to take care of their wellness by offering everything from gym membership subsidies to a fridge full of nutritious snacks and beverages, we thought we should kick it up a notch with adding more physical activity into the mix. To do this, we wanted to theme our workplace wellness challenge around fitness. See the rules below for how we set it all up.



Step 02

Set Rules For Your Workplace Wellness Challenge

Depending on your wellness challenge goals, you may set different rules, but as an outline, here's a list of the rules we set for our fitness-themed workplace wellness challenge:



Teams will be divided into groups of equal numbers (we have 55 employees, so we created five groups of 10-11). Teams will be selected at random.



For every fitness-related activity that an employee takes part in, his or her team will be awarded one point. Below are some examples of activities:



CYCLING



RUNNING



SWIMMING



**TAKING A FITNESS/
YOGA CLASS**



**PLAYING A
SPORTS GAME**



WALKING*

**To earn one point for walking, and to accommodate those who use and/or don't use a fitness tracker, the employee must either:*

- » walk continuously for 30 minutes
- » walk continuously for 1 km
- » take 10,000 steps in one day (throughout the day)



The challenge will be run for one month straight (we chose the month of October because it's [Canada's Healthy Workplace Month](#), but you can choose any month or week).



A dedicated "Fitness Challenge" [Slack](#) channel will be set up for all things related to the challenge. All employees will be invited to the channel and encouraged to cheer themselves and fellow teammates on.



To earn points for their team, employees must snap and post a photo of their activity in the Slack channel. Examples of photos as proof of activity may include:

- a. running shoes on a treadmill or on the ground
- b. a screenshot of activity logged in a fitness tracking app
- c. tracked steps or distance on a wearable device
- d. the exterior or interior of a gym
- e. a bike
- f. The view from a hike or walk

EXPERT TIP: Notice how we didn't ask for selfies? That was intentional for obvious HR reasons. Don't ask your employees to submit selfies.



Each week, team points will be tallied and shared in a Google Spreadsheet and on Slack for company-wide transparency.



As of 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the wellness challenge, the contest will close and no further photos for points will be accepted. Points will be tallied and a winning team will be announced the following business day.

Step 03

Choose a Motivating Prize

One thing to consider in choosing your prize is that you want to make it appealing to everyone.

If you want optimal participation in your office wellness challenge, your prize should not appeal to just a niche group of people. Examples of niche prizes that you should **avoid** include:



a fitness/gym or public transit pass



a gas gift card (not everyone drives)



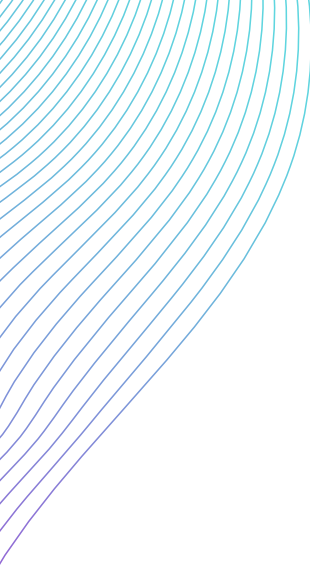
a gift card to the Apple store (some people prefer and use other brands)



a toaster or other kitchen appliance (yes, we've heard some companies actually do this!)

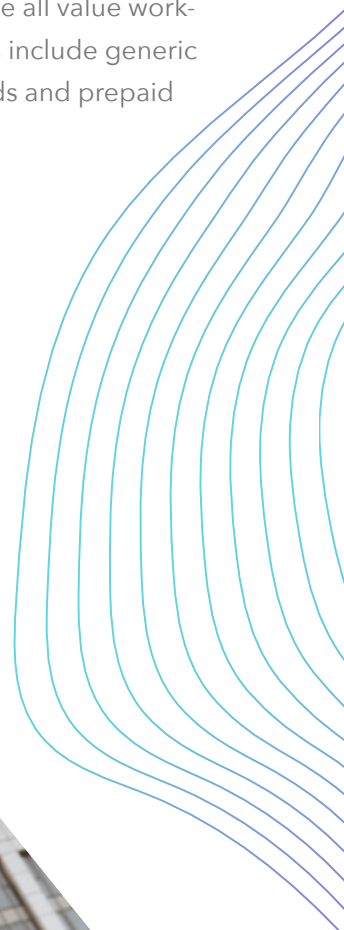


a company branded item (e.g. mugs, pens or shirts)



These are just some of the many examples of prizes that won't win you maximum employee participation.

To appeal to everyone, we ended up offering one extra paid day off that employees on the winning team could take at their leisure. The only stipulations were that employees couldn't be paid out for their extra vacation day if they didn't take it by December 31 of this year, and it wouldn't be carried over into the New Year. This got everyone motivated as we all value work-life balance and can decide what we want to do on our day off. Other options include generic prizes that offer employees more choices (examples include Amazon gift cards and prepaid credit cards).





Step 04

Announce the Challenge to the Team

Now that you have your wellness challenge objectives, rules and prizes in place, it's time to roll it out to the company. To do this, we had someone from our People and Culture Committee make the announcement at our weekly Monday morning staff meeting (we call this meeting the "Rise Up"). Once the challenge was announced, we sent a follow-up email in which we outlined who was on which team along with other contest details. Finally, we invited everyone to the "Fitness Challenge" Slack channel and kicked off the challenge.

TIP: If you don't already use Slack, perhaps you could use Skype or another internal chat tool. If you must, you can use email, but be sure to ask employees to use the word "Challenge:" at the beginning of their subject line so that the organizers can choose not to view them and their inboxes don't get overwhelmed.

Step 05

Have Fun!

After setting the challenge up and launching it to the company, you can now revel in the fact that you are actively making an impact on your team's happiness and health. Like we were, you'll be amazed at how successful this workplace wellness challenge will be. With the right objectives, rules, and prizing in place, your employees are sure to love this challenge just as much as ours did.





Over to You !

Once you've finished running your office wellness challenge, let us know how it went! We'd love to hear your thoughts on social media, so be sure to follow us and send us some messages on:



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