



Client:

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

Challenge:

Company sought to engage its employees by educating them on the importance of health and wellness. They created a longterm strategy called Journey to Health.

Results:

67% of employees participated in the Journey to Health program
The company discovered the top health risks its employees faced:

- > 84% of participants eat unhealthy foods, or foods high in fat
- > 75% of participants do not get enough exercise
- > 70% of participants are defined as overweight
- > 57% of participants have high blood pressure

Large Payer Inspires Employees To Get Healthy

A Case Study

How a leading health plan designed an innovative health management program to help its internal population become active, more health-conscious employees.

More than two decades of occupational health research indicates that healthcare for employees with multiple risk factors tends to cost more than healthcare for other workers. In fact, health risk factors such as obesity add about \$1,500 to the cost of a worker's insurance premium; while smoking adds about \$1,850.¹

Companies like Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (Horizon BCBSNJ) are taking notice, and repositioning their healthcare strategies to keep their employees and plan members healthier and happier.

JOURNEY TO HEALTH™

As the largest health insurer in the state, Horizon BCBSNJ provides a variety of medical and dental insurance products to over 3.5 million New Jersey residents. Part of the company's mission is to help its members become and stay healthy.

Recently, Horizon BCBSNJ sought to engage its own population of employees by educating them on the importance of taking active control over their health. Horizon BCBSNJ understood that providing their employees with the necessary tools and incentives was imperative to this goal.

Assuming the role of "employee health coach," Horizon BCBSNJ created a long-term health and wellness strategy called Journey to Health.

Journey to Health consisted of two main components:

- > Increased internal communications and activities to create a culture of health and wellness among its employees.
- > A company target to engage at least 50% of the employee population to participate in wellness clinics and complete an online health assessment as part of Journey to Health.

To build buzz around Journey to Health, Horizon BCBSNJ launched the program at a live company health fair in June 2007.

Stories of active, more health-conscious employees are emerging from every office location.

POWERFUL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

To maximize the impact of the health fair and the overall Journey to Health program, Horizon BCBSNJ designed a detailed communication plan that leveraged a number of proven promotional strategies:

- > **Compelling art design** that branded Journey to Health and provided the creative platform for posters, flyers, and other print materials.
- > **Targeted e-mail campaign** that regularly and clearly communicated the importance and impact of the program. During the last two weeks that lead up to the health fair, Horizon BCBSNJ sent out an email almost daily promoting Journey to Health.
- > **Intranet site** that housed information about Journey to Health and made it easy for employees to get information.
- > **Team meetings** were utilized as an opportunity for managers to facilitate regular discussions, giving employees a platform to talk about the program with their peers, raise questions, and expand word-of-mouth.
- > **Biweekly voicemails from senior executives** that not only highlighted Journey to Health, but encouraged employees to stay on top of various health conditions like high blood pressure.
- > **Internal TV ads** were created and played constantly on the company's internal television system.
- > **Employee newsletter** articles were distributed to all employees that promoted the entire program.
- > **A Journey to Health Passport** was given to employees, which was stamped when various activities were completed.
- > **Prep sheets and checklists** to ensure the health fair ran smoothly. Prep sheets included important event contact information, along with possible questions from employees.

By using a variety of internal resources – such as the company email and voicemail systems, team managers, and executive staff members – Horizon BCBSNJ was able to implement a coordinated, yet cost-effective communication strategy that delivered a strong and simple message to employees.

EVENT KICK-OFF

The Journey to Health fair took place at four separate Horizon BCBSNJ locations in New Jersey. Horizon BCBSNJ invited local health and wellness vendors, such as massage therapists and gym trainers, and used a large “town-hall” meeting room in each office location to set up small booths and kiosks. Team members presented My Health Manager Flash demos, and organized contests, prizes, and discounts from participating vendors. The president and CEO of the company spoke throughout the day via live satellite feeds to all locations and encouraged employees to take full advantage of the event and the Journey to Health program.

In addition to educating employees about the overall goal of the program, the focus of the event was an on-site wellness clinic where a registered nurse measured blood pressure and conducted biometric testing on blood sugar, cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, and Body Mass Index. Horizon BCBSNJ partnered with IncentOne – a rewards program administrator – to provide a gift card incentive (\$100) for employees who completed three initial tasks:

1. Attended the wellness clinic and underwent brief biometric testing.
2. Logged on to My Health Manager – the company’s online member decision support tool powered by WebMD – via the employee Intranet site, and completed the Health Assessment Tool (the WebMD HealthQuotientSM HRA).
3. Entered their personal biometric data into WebMD’s HealthQuotient. The tool would then give feedback on preventive health measures that the employee could take to lower the risks of developing an illness. If a health issue or risk factor was identified, the employee was given information to share with their personal physician to enable more informed treatment options.

Horizon BCBSNJ stayed well connected with employees throughout the program by tracking response rates to the wellness clinic and emailing employees who had not completed the necessary steps to receive the reward.

THE RESULTS

The Journey to Health Program and Fair proved to be very successful.

Although they had originally set out to achieve a 50% participation rate among employees in year one of Journey to Health, Horizon BCBSNJ ultimately achieved a 67% participation rate. From the aggregated results of employees’ health assessments, Horizon BCBSNJ discovered the top health risks its employees faced:

- > 84% of participants eat unhealthy foods, or foods high in fat
- > 75% of participants do not get enough exercise
- > 70% of participants are defined as overweight
- > 57% of participants have high blood pressure

Achieving culture change is extremely hard, but the Horizon BCBSNJ team has reported many initial success stories from Journey to Health. Some of these anecdotal successes included:

- > Employees finding out they had a condition they didn’t realize they had and taking corrective action with their physician.
- > Employees organizing group walks around the office hallways or in the stairwells.
- > High attendance rates at on-site nutrition and dance classes.

Stories of active, more health-conscious employees are emerging from every office location on a regular basis. When making or encouraging healthy choices, employees are often overheard saying they are acting on their “Journey to Health.”

Horizon BCBSNJ continues to offer employees a wide range of health programs and rewards in the Journey to Health program. The rewards are based on a customized point system that is tightly integrated using the online My Health Manager tool. This provides real-time reporting and management of activities for employees. It also offers personalized communications about the importance of health and wellness initiatives

LESSONS LEARNED

With effective planning and experienced partners, Horizon BCBSNJ launched a successful program and complementary rewards system that has inspired its employees to take action and become better healthcare advocates for themselves and family members.

The Journey to Health experience also gave Horizon BCBSNJ unique insight about the employer market – lessons that Horizon BCBSNJ has already begun to share with its own employer clients.

- > **Lesson #1.** Horizon BCBSNJ employees were concerned about privacy throughout the launch of Journey to Health. Horizon BCBSNJ learned quickly that openly addressing privacy concerns and being completely transparent in communications with your population is essential, and will help diffuse speculation.
- > **Lesson #2.** Aggressive marketing and awareness is critical. Response rates were directly tied to various marketing tactics. Without a strong long-term marketing campaign, Journey to Health would not have been as successful.

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FUTURE DIRECTION

The Horizon BCBSNJ team is currently working on a second phase of its Journey to Health program for its employees. While already having successful tools and resources in place for its members (My Health Manager and an award-winning incentive program, Horizon Health Rewards), Horizon BCBSNJ is also developing a Journey to Health product for its clients. Horizon BCBSNJ realizes that employers want to encourage their workforce to become healthier, and need help developing programs to realize this goal. Through its own experience, Horizon BCBSNJ is working to help its employer clients create effective strategies and programs that will increase the health of employees and reduce future healthcare costs.

It's just another way that Horizon BCBSNJ is making healthcare work for its members.

1. Hudson Institute, © 2007

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