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We welcome the submission of articles by our members on topics of interest to the HR profession. Date for submission of materials and advertisements is the 10th of the month prior to month of publication.



By JOHN KAHLE, Chief Wellness Officer Intercare Insurance Solutions

Is Wellness Really the Answer to Containing Employee Benefit Costs?

provide an incentive for employees with chronic medical conditions to manage their health.

The EAP should be designed and promoted for higher utilization. An EAP can provide the foundation for creating a healthier workforce, assisting with stress management and behavior modification. Additionally, integrating information and resources from workers' compensation with the medical plan and the EAP is more effective than managing each program separately.

The short answer is "no." Wellness alone is not the answer, but it is a key part of the equation that can allow mid-sized companies to contain – or even reduce – their employee benefit costs.

In addition to a company's wellness program, anything that impacts employee health should be evaluated; including plan design, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), workers compensation, and employee communication. Analyzing and integrating the data from all these elements then provides a comprehensive outcome measurement and management strategy for containing benefit costs.

Finally, employees must be engaged in the process. Communications must help educate employees to become better consumers. Tools such as health risk assessments, health screenings and employee surveys will provide the data needed to plan effective strategy.

With information in-hand, companies can then implement a variety of tactics to contain or even reduce benefit costs:

Is wellness the answer? Well, partly.

Medical plans should be designed to remove barriers to accessing health care. They should encourage preventive care and

John Kahle is chief wellness officer of Intercare Insurance Solutions, San Diego's third largest insurance broker. He has over thirty years of experience in the industry and has implemented more than 50 successful corporate wellness programs, saving sponsor companies millions of dollars.

This is a paid advertisement

CELEBRATE THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORKPLACE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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member of the "A-Team." The A-Team is a group of San Diego SHRM volunteers who are committed to helping their assigned companies understand the award program and timely complete an effective – and hopefully award-winning – application.

be encouraged to attend at least one of the Nominee Orientation sessions; tentatively, we have planned for one session per month in April, May and June. At these orientation sessions, you will learn more about the application process, including some insight on what the judges see in award-winning applications. So . . . begin thinking about your HR practices, look for the opening of the nomination period, circle November 11 on your calendar, and join us in helping to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Workplace Excellence Awards!

By April 5, the A-Team will be ready to spring into action, so be ready to nominate your company, or a company that you do business with, if you believe that its HR practices are exemplary and should be recognized for their excellence.

Workplace Excellence Awards – Honoring Exemplary HR Practices!

Once your company's nomination has been processed and you have been assigned to an A-Team member, you will receive the WEA Toolkit. Also, you will

David Monks is a Past President of San Diego SHRM and a member of the 2009 Workplace Excellence Awards Steering Committee.