

CATCH FIRE

Great Ideas For Infusing Energy And Commitment In Your Wellness Team

| By David Hunnicutt, PhD



It comes as no surprise that teams with great energy produce great results. Therefore, it makes a lot of sense to ensure that your wellness team is always pumped up. To do this, it requires some creativity and a little work. However, the payoff will be enormous—both in terms of improved morale for team members and improved health for all employees.

Have Your CEO Reinforce The Importance Of Your Wellness Initiative

If you really want to get things off to a fast start, invite your CEO—or most influential senior executive—to a wellness team meeting. At this meeting, this leader has the opportunity to talk about the impact wellness has on the organization and the essential importance of the success of the wellness team. If done right, this is guaranteed to get the blood flowing within your group.

One CEO who has done an exemplary job in this area is Al Emsch of West Virginia-based law firm, Jackson Kelly. As the key leader and visionary, Mr. Emsch has made it a priority to communicate regularly and publicly with not only the wellness team members, but the company as a whole. Speaking from personal experience, we can tell you that Mr. Emsch is energizing, committed, and passionate about wellness at Jackson Kelly. When you have a leader like this, it's hard not to get excited.

Develop A Team Name

I know that to many, this sounds a little hokey. To the contrary, team names can provide an important sense of identity both for team members and your company's employees. It's important that the team's name is consistent with the overall purpose of the wellness initiative. In addition, it's nice if the team's name is upbeat and energizing.

For example, several years ago we were consulting with an electric cooperative located in the great northwest. For those of you who may not know, rural electric cooperatives are the entities that maintain power in largely isolated areas. Interestingly, this co-op's wellness team was made up of mostly women even though the company was predominantly male. To create a team identity, team members appropriately named themselves the "Electri-Cuties." Enough said.

Invent A Team Vision Statement

As we have mentioned in many other articles, a vision statement is an essential part of the success equation. Indeed, the vision statement cleanly and clearly articulates the ultimate destination at which the team hopes to arrive. Remember, the vision statement is generally not a long document. Rather, it is a couple of sentences or at most a couple of paragraphs. Although vision statements are generally brief, they are powerful reminders and motivators.

A company that's done a great job with inventing a team vision statement is International Truck and Engine Corporation. Interestingly their program is known as Vital Lives and their vision statement is brief yet powerful: "To be smart, to be healthy, to be responsible, and to be safe." Obviously, this Fortune 500 giant gets it. For their efforts, the Vital Lives program has received WELCOA's Platinum Award.

Manufacture A Team Motto

Like the vision statement, the team motto is a simple statement that embodies what the group stands for. Again, in order to build a great team, it's important that you breathe life into the group as a whole. A great way to do this is by manufacturing a team motto. If you don't think that this is important, think about all of the great teams that know and repeatedly recite their team's motto each day—Semper Fi, get it?

One group that has manufactured a great motto is Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. As their team was developing and growing, the motto was simple: "Make the rest of your life, the best of your life."



Recruit New Team Members

There's no question that recruiting new team members can revitalize a stagnant group. If your wellness team is suffering from a sense of lethargy, it's time to recruit some new people. However, be warned that recruiting new individuals can be a two-edged sword. Recruit the right people and the team takes a huge step forward. Recruit the wrong people and pound another nail into the coffin.

One of the best ways to recruit new members is to think about the organization's informal leaders. Here's a way to get a better handle on this concept. Imagine that there were no titles and no hierarchy within your organization. Who would people naturally be drawn to? Who would be the personalities that they would follow? Who would people do their best work for? Once you've answered these questions, you've identified your next team members—close the deal.

Assess Individual Strengths

It's true that the team is a group. But that team is also made up of individuals. And it is these separate personalities that bring richness to the entity. If you really want to get a better handle on how your team can best perform, we suggest assessing individual strengths. In so doing, you will quantify and capture the precise individual and overall strengths that the team embodies.

A great tool to assess individual strengths is Gallup's StrengthsFinder™. The best-selling companion book entitled, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, allows you to log on to a website and take an online questionnaire. This questionnaire is known internationally for its ability to capture an individual's strengths. If you haven't done this exercise before, you'll find it well worth your time, and it will make a world of difference in better understanding the diversity that exists within your wellness team.

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Set Goals

If you really want to energize a team, just set some goals. In essence, goals serve an important function in motivating a team to take action. If set appropriately, goals create a sense of energy that can magically draw team members toward their desired destination.

Many times the overall quality of the team's substance is measured by its BHAGs—Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals. No BHAGs, no movement. The key point here is to remember that goals can substantially improve a team's performance. If your team is struggling, you may want to pay particular attention to this area.

Publish A Team Newsletter

This is an idea that is catching on in many companies. Indeed, a team newsletter can not only help to keep a company informed about the tasks and activities of the wellness initiative, but it can also have a wonderful effect in creating a sense of energy for team members. When the newsletter is published and circulated, team members often feel a great sense of pride and importance. These sentiments are extremely important in keeping team members motivated.

Your team's wellness newsletter can be published in-house and it doesn't have to be done every month. However, it does need to be done routinely and it needs to be done well. We've seen companies create stories about the team's priorities, recent successes and upcoming events. In addition, the newsletter may feature a bio of a wellness team member—this will serve to create a sense of personality behind the publication. Be sure to include your vision statement, team motto, and feedback mechanisms in each addition.

Conduct A Team Retreat

Taking some time to getaway, recharge, and bond is a great way to energize your wellness team. Retreats can take several forms including: day-long getaways, overnight stays, and multiple-day events. Whatever form is right for your company's wellness team, it is important that retreats be done at least annually.

More and more companies are scheduling wellness retreats that coincide with local or national conferences. This just might be the ideal retreat scenario as team members are receiving intellectual stimulation from conference presenters and building bonds by spending important face-to-face time outside of the office setting.

Take A Team Photo

When it comes to photos, the old adage is true, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Team photos are essential in helping to promote the wellness team's brand and identity. Too many times people underestimate the power of photographs. In fact, it's been our experience with wellness programs that very few teams have done this. However, it is important in the overall scheme of things and can breathe life into team members.

Remember, team photos don't have to be boring. In fact, it's better if they're not. By involving all of your team members in the discussion, you can engage everyone and come up with unique and novel ways to showcase the uniqueness of your team.

Conduct A Team In-Service

Continuing education is a great way to reenergize your team—it's amazing to see the impact that skilled presenters can bring to the group setting. By conducting an in-service you are effectively filling the team's consciousness with new ideas. This by itself will stimulate discussion and get people's insides churning.

If there is anything we've learned about wellness teams, it's this: Choose your presenters (and topics) carefully. If the presenter is dynamic, charismatic, and relevant, the effect is profound. On the other hand, if the presenter (or topic) is a dud, your team will pay the price. Make sure that you get plenty of background materials and references before committing to any speaker.

What's perhaps most important about in-services is the "detox" process that follows the session. All too often, teams don't carve out any discussion time after the presenter leaves. As a result, the great ideas that were swimming around during the session are lost due to the simple fact that no time was set aside to bring these ideas to a boil.

Will Your Team Catch Fire?

The above suggestions will ignite sparks that can get your team moving in the right direction. Certainly it will take some doing on your end; however, if you can incorporate these ideas into the fabric of your wellness team, there will be no question that you and your team will be in a better place—and better able to serve the employees within your organization. ★



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