

CURRENT CONCEPTS

Health Services Research

How Health Relationship Management Services (HRMS) Benefits Corporate Wellness

Nik Tehrani, PhD

DynoSense Academy, CA, USA

Abstract

The typical worker spends about 47 hours a week commuting sitting in cars, trains, buses, or sitting at their desks. These statistics show that maintaining a healthy work and life balance has become progressively important. Workplace wellness and health promotion are of central importance for any organization in today's world. People are becoming highly conscious about their health and seek to ensure that they are provided with best medical services and facilities in case of any health issue. Organizations have switched to proactive strategies for the healthcare of their employees. Billions of dollars are spent on the workforce only after illnesses or injuries have occurred. Over the past several decades, healthcare services have drastically changed, altering the manner in which healthcare was previously managed. Technological advancements in medical systems have revolutionized the healthcare industry, and digital health tracking has been quite successful in monitoring patients' health. Since patients are continuously monitored, no matter where they are, these systems can indicate patients' adherence to medical protocols and act as a warning sign for such diseases as heart problems, Alzheimer's disease, and many others. Health Relationship Management Services (HRMS) is a new paradigm which defines comprehensive healthcare for an individual. HRMS is a complete health ecosystem suitable for the workplace, which enables healthcare providers to collect personal health data from various sources, analyze it for positive outcomes, and take action to preserve an employee's good health to reduce absenteeism or turnover. HRMS can act as a preventative sentinel for corporate well-being as well. (*Int J Biomed.* 2016;6(2):143-145.).

Key Words: corporate wellness • health relationship management services • patient health data • lifestyle

Many employees spend more hours at their workplace than anywhere else, not to mention the time spent commuting. The typical worker spends about 47 hours a week in these activities,^[1] many of them sitting in cars, trains, buses, or at their desks. A recent study found that a person who spends long hours sitting down each day, has a higher risk of premature death, even if he or she engages in regular daily exercise.^[2] Urban environments often require behavior that requires sitting down: commuting, in the workplace, or even during time spent at leisure, such as watching television or movies. These statistics show that maintaining a healthy work and life balance has become progressively important.^[2]

Traditional corporate wellness programs encourage employees to stop smoking, lose weight, or get more exercise, with the goal of decreasing the company's overall healthcare costs by having healthier employees. However, such programs have not always met those goals, as research shows that cost increases have either stayed steady or even

increased.^[1] Wellness is not merely the absence of illness, but also includes the concept of total well-being of the individual embodying social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual health, to include physical health. It also encompasses a lifestyle of healthy behavior and healthy environments that are supportive not only at work, but also in the home and community.^[3] Thus, many organizations are turning toward promoting a healthier work environment and health promotion policies for their employees. Corporate wellness programs are effective ways to establish this balance. Programs emphasizing corporate wellness benefits can be instituted in several ways. One new health paradigm that is providing a total health ecosystem is Health Relationship Management Services (HRMS)^[4] that combines remote health monitoring that captures individual health data, sends it to the cloud for restructuring into actionable information that can be used to anticipate changes in health and allow access for caregivers to provide solutions or treatment. HRMS allows individuals to engage in their own healthcare and encourages lifestyle changes for better well-being. The common goal for all corporate wellness programs is to promote employee, employer, and organizational well-being.

Employees who do not have the opportunity to engage in corporate wellness programs may be susceptible to serious illnesses, which may lead to long-term disability or discontinuing their employment. A primary benefit of corporate wellness is reducing rates of injuries and illnesses among workers, since many employees experience work-related injuries as well as development of health complications such as heart disease, diabetes, or stroke.^[2] Prevention of employee illness can also lead to reducing employee absenteeism, since people who are unhealthy, stressed, or overworked have a tendency to experience illness more so than employees who are healthy.^[2] Programs focusing on corporate wellness benefits can drastically reduce these problems. As an example, Coors Brewing Company decreased employee absenteeism 18 percent after introducing a corporate wellness program.^[2] Coca-Cola saved \$500 per employee yearly, even though only 60% of its employees participated in a corporate wellness program.^[2] Also, retention of key employees is enhanced, leading to less turnover.

Corporate wellness is also the process of enabling employees to control and improve their own health. On average, half of an employee's waking hours are spent on the worksite, resulting in stress and lack of physical activity that constitutes health problems. Many organizations have developed strategies to align their goals and objectives to bring about the sustained performance of business by having effective relationships with their employees. One such strategy is the implementation of Health Relationship Management Services (HRMS),^[4] which is a health ecosystem that continuously monitors an employee's health data for prevention and/or treatment.

As an example, Zappos, an online e-business selling shoes, clothing and many other products to its customers, has rapidly expanded its operations over a short period of time because of successful implementation of a similar method as HRMS.^[4] Zappos is admired for its employee wellness programs and healthy environment.^[5] Zappos' workplace is an efficient LEED certified building constructed for the benefit of Zappos employees. This has made the workplace a happier, healthier, and more productive milieu for employees, which translates into happier customer service and customers.^[6]

New healthcare technologies can now monitor an individual's personal health data continuously with services that provide health alerts when the data deviates from a healthy pattern. Such technologies can engage an employee in his/her own health care and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Health Relationship Management Services (HRMS)^[4] is such a system that is ideal for employee wellness as it makes it fun and engaging for individuals. Instead of adhering to traditional approaches and methodologies for employee wellness, Zappos focused on making its employees happy by encouraging them to participate in an environment that encourages healthy activities and programs. Zappos believed that motivation is the key to success and values its employees' feelings and their viewpoints, rather than forcing rigid and overly-planned corporate goals on them.^[9]

Healthcare services have drastically changed over the past few decades, and the technological advancements in

medical systems have revolutionized the healthcare industry. Zappos took the risk of incorporating such new systems of healthcare, which has definitely paid off for the company and employees since most employees now love working there.^[6] One such similar paradigm is HRMS in which individuals can engage in their own healthcare and lifestyle changes. Along the principles of this new paradigm, Zappos promotes fitness by monitoring employee health, providing a health station so employees can check their blood pressure, weigh in, and receive a body fat percentage reading. Employees can also log their fitness activities to earn rewards for their physical activity. Zappos also offers free on-site fitness classes and boot camp-style training.^[9] Employees can participate in endurance events, such as 5Ks and marathons, and if they finish the race, they are rewarded by being reimbursed for their entry fees.^[9] All of these activities are similar to the HRMS paradigm that engages individuals to improve their own healthcare and observe wellness. Employees at another company, VISTA Staffing Solutions, spend on average 10-12 hours a day sitting. The company decided that its previous wellness programs did not work, so they switched to "stand-up desks, wireless head sets and walking treadmills" to create a healthier work environment.^[2] The goal was to promote healthy eating habits and weight loss to boost employee productivity.

Research has shown a link between employee nutrition and exercise and how it affects their overall productivity.^[7] Obesity and related diseases, have led to a significant increase in healthcare costs for many organizations. Zappos was aware that obesity is one of the largest contributors to health problems linked to diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancers. Moreover, these health problems resulted in lower employee productivity, higher absenteeism and an increase in employee turnover. Additional costs aside from medical claims occur when employees are not performing at optimal level. Technological systems can indicate patients' adherence to medical protocols and acts as a warning sign in many cases such as hypertension, cardiac disease, and many other diseases, as patients are continuously monitored no matter where they are.

Giving attention to overall employee wellness, Zappos designed policies to facilitate employee health by offering healthy food options and allowing for exercise time. Zappos focused on employees' happiness by encouraging them to engage in a flexible, fun approach to wellness, such as Wellness Adventures, March Madness, and Recess Tuesdays, that recruits employees from different departments and encourages them to mix and have fun away from work, doing such activities as laser tag, playing basketball or jumping on a trampoline.^[6] To encourage participation, there are incentives to wellness events. By using a similar concept as HRMS, Zappos can monitor the employees' health records through online portals and can determine whether its employees are following healthy lifestyles and are getting proper healthcare. This is why there is an increased need for employee wellness programs, and systems, such as HRMS, are becoming fundamental to many businesses such as Zappos.

Zappos considered how responsibility for action on health determinants and health behaviors was balanced

between employers and employees. The development of systems, such as HRMS, promotes and fosters health and well-being of individuals, corporations, and communities. HRMS helps to develop plans to increase physical activities and increase awareness of health problems and education. Furthermore, applications and services which use the internet as a platform have allowed gathering and sharing of medical, health, clinical records and data that can be analyzed, stored, and made easily available to different participants in the healthcare system.^[10] This will encourage employees to willingly provide personal health data that will result in job satisfaction, as satisfied employees are more likely to contribute as a consequence of increased duty, responsibility and obligation to employers. Zappos has adopted employee wellness strategies and found that its employees performed better than before as they are more confident, fresh and active while performing their jobs.^[6] Zappos wellness coordinator Kelly Maher has remarked that it is all about encouraging people to engage in wellness voluntarily, not by force. Programs that are successful are ones that engage team members to become energized on their own.^[2] HRMS can act as a preventative sentinel for corporate well-being as well.

Conclusion

Zappo's, Coors Brewing Company, Coca-Cola, and VISTA created a unique wellness program to engage employees in unique health-through-fun health activities, as well as healthy workplace environments. Benefits of corporate wellness combined with the benefits of HRMS can lead to happier, healthier employees who like their working environment. Companies should take advantage of corporate wellness and HRMS benefits to avoid stressed, sick, or unhappy employees who experience illness, absenteeism, injuries and increased healthcare costs. Instead, companies can experience an increase in employee productivity and retention. A monitoring system, such as HRMS, can standardize patient health data, and continuously follow-up with relevant feedback to actionable data. Therefore, as companies adopt HRMS, health-related costs may decrease while providing better quality services to employees who can receive health services

as a product.^[11] A harmonious, healthy workplace provides all employees with the benefits of corporate wellness.

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