

# Creating a culture of health at work

## Investigating the keys to a successful health and wellness strategy



### **Optum<sup>®</sup>/National Business Group on Health<sup>®</sup> culture of health analysis**

Thanks to advances in health technology and behavior-change science, the quest to achieve a culture of health at work may seem more possible than ever. Yet many organizations continue to struggle to achieve this much discussed “ideal.” With so many health-enabling strategies and services available, what behaviors and attitudes set apart those employers who feel they’ve established a culture of health among their employees? To find out, Optum partnered with the National Business Group on Health (NBGH) to perform a culture of health analysis gleaned from the Optum annual “Wellness in the Workplace” study.

This white paper highlights the differences between companies that feel they’ve firmly established a culture of health versus those who feel they have not, as well as the key factors that drive these perceptions.

## Purpose

Our analysis first looked at organizations that responded they had a firmly established culture of health (6–7 rating on a 7-point scale). Then, we compared those answers with responses from those organizations at the opposite end of the spectrum — those who felt they had no culture of health (1–3 rating on a 7-point scale).

## For the purposes of our research, “culture of health” was defined as:

A work environment where employees have resources, tools and a support system available that empowers and motivates them to take responsibility for their own health.



**n=137**  
**Firmly established**  
culture of health



**n=44**  
**Not established**  
culture of health



## The results

The study identified the following key areas where companies with an established culture of health and those without differed.



1

**Strategy.** Companies with an established culture of health are more likely to view their health and wellness programs as important to their business strategy and benefits mix.



2

**Program offerings.** Employers with a firmly established culture of health are most inclined to feel that their employees' well-being is being addressed on multiple levels.



3

**Engagement technology.** Established employers are more likely to be leveraging digital technologies to drive engagement in health and wellness programs.



4

**Incentives.** Virtually all established employers offer incentives — and invest more heavily in rewards.



5

**Measures of success.** Companies with an established culture of health are more likely to believe their employees are confident in their health care navigation skills and take control of their overall well-being.

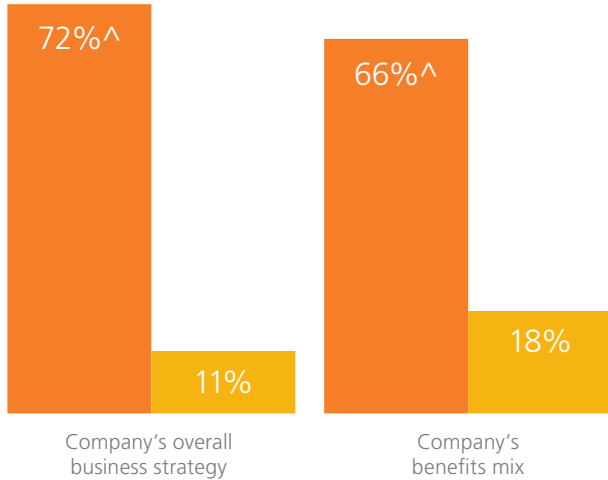
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### Strategy: Perceived program value to the company

When it comes to a company’s overall business strategy and benefits mix, **72 percent** of companies with an established culture of health view their health and wellness programs as important to their overall business strategy, compared to just **11 percent** of unestablished companies. Established companies also perceived their health and wellness programs as important to their benefits mix (**66 percent**), while only **18 percent** of unestablished companies felt the same.

■ Firmly established ■ Not established

^ indicates a **significantly higher value** over counterpart group 



### The motive behind the motivation: Reasons for offering health and wellness programs

While both established and unestablished companies offer health and wellness programs, the reasons for doing so differ significantly.

Established companies look more toward employee-friendly benefits, such as promoting a more productive workplace (**66 percent**), offering a competitive benefits packages (**60 percent**) and improving employee morale (**57 percent**). Conversely, unestablished organizations have goals that focus more on saving money, such as reducing employee health risks (**34 percent**), lowering long-term health care costs (**39 percent**) and reducing absenteeism (**18 percent**).

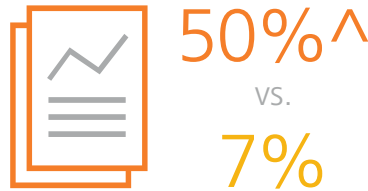


Reasons for offering wellness and health management programs

■ Firmly established ■ Not established

### Better health takes planning

Half of the companies with a firmly established culture of health have a formal wellness plan in place, while only **7 percent** of unestablished companies do. Established companies are also more likely to have dedicated staff responsible for implementing, promoting and overseeing health and wellness programs in the workplace.

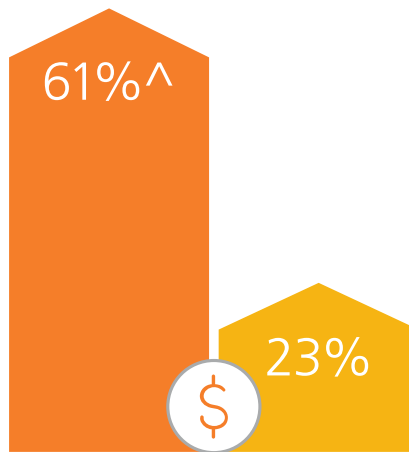


#### Thought starter:

What is the primary objective for your company's health and well-being strategy: building employee loyalty, or saving health care costs? Or both?

### Putting their money where the health is

In sharp contrast, **61 percent** of established companies expect to increase their program budget within the next three years, while only **23 percent** of unestablished companies expect to do the same.



Percentage planning to increase program budget

### Smart strategies for success

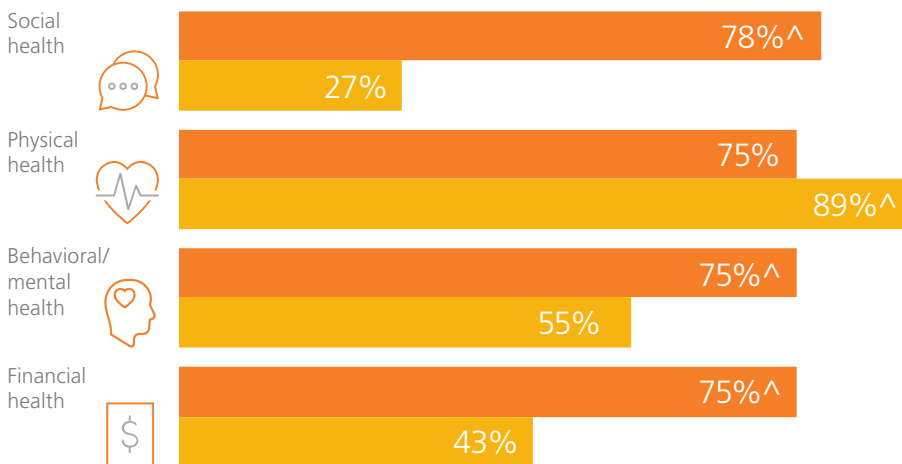
In reference to their health and wellness program strategy, established employers have the following attitudes in common:

- **Seventy-nine percent** say their company communicates their health and wellness offerings effectively to employees (compared to **14 percent** of unestablished companies).
- **Seventy-two percent** feel that senior management values and supports their programs (versus **11 percent**).
- **Fifty-nine percent** report that their company makes healthy choices the path of least resistance at work (versus **9 percent** of unestablished companies).



## 2 Programs: Addressing multiple dimensions of well-being

Employers of established companies feel that employee well-being is addressed to a similar degree among multiple dimensions including social, physical, behavioral/mental and financial health (**78 percent, 75 percent, 75 percent and 75 percent**, respectively). On the opposite side of the spectrum, companies without an established culture of health report that their programs focus mostly on physical health (**89 percent**) — with only **27 percent** offering programs that address social health needs.



■ Firmly established ■ Not established



### Thought starter:

What programs can you offer your employees that encompass a more holistic view of their health?

This holistic approach to well-being also leads established companies to offer more programs to their employees.

### Number of programs offered to employees



### In it for the long haul — for everyone

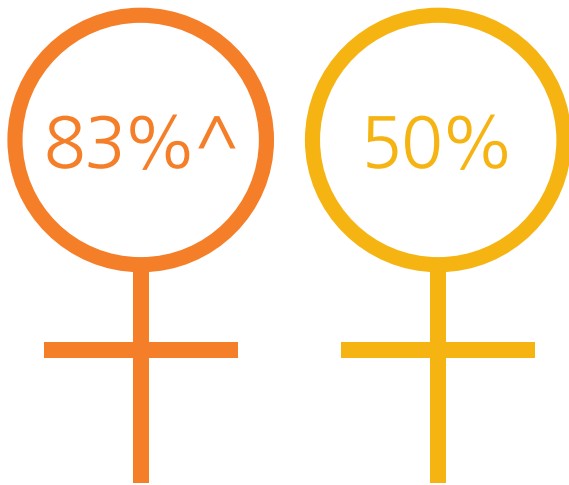
Established companies have been offering health and wellness programs for a longer period of time (**6 years** versus **4.8**), are more likely to encourage family members and retirees to participate in programs, and are more likely to offer women's health programs.

Employers with a culture of health have been offering programs longer



### Employers with a culture of health are also more likely to offer women’s health programs

#### Offer 1+ women’s programs



■ Firmly established ■ Not established

#### Women’s health programs may include:



**Fertility solutions** Manage treatment path to achieve pregnancy sooner with superior results

**Preconception** Help women make positive decisions

**Maternity** Identify and provide care for women with high-risk conditions

**Neonatal** Improve outcomes of infants admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) or other specialty care

**First year of life** Meet the needs of infants through 15 months of age

### Engineering a healthy work environment

And, although they’ve seen success in offering programs that extend beyond physical health, nearly two-thirds of companies with an established culture of health made physical changes to their work environment as well (**61 percent**), compared to only **25 percent** of unestablished companies. Environmental changes like standing desks and healthy food options in the cafeteria support employee health goals and make healthy choices the path of least resistance.

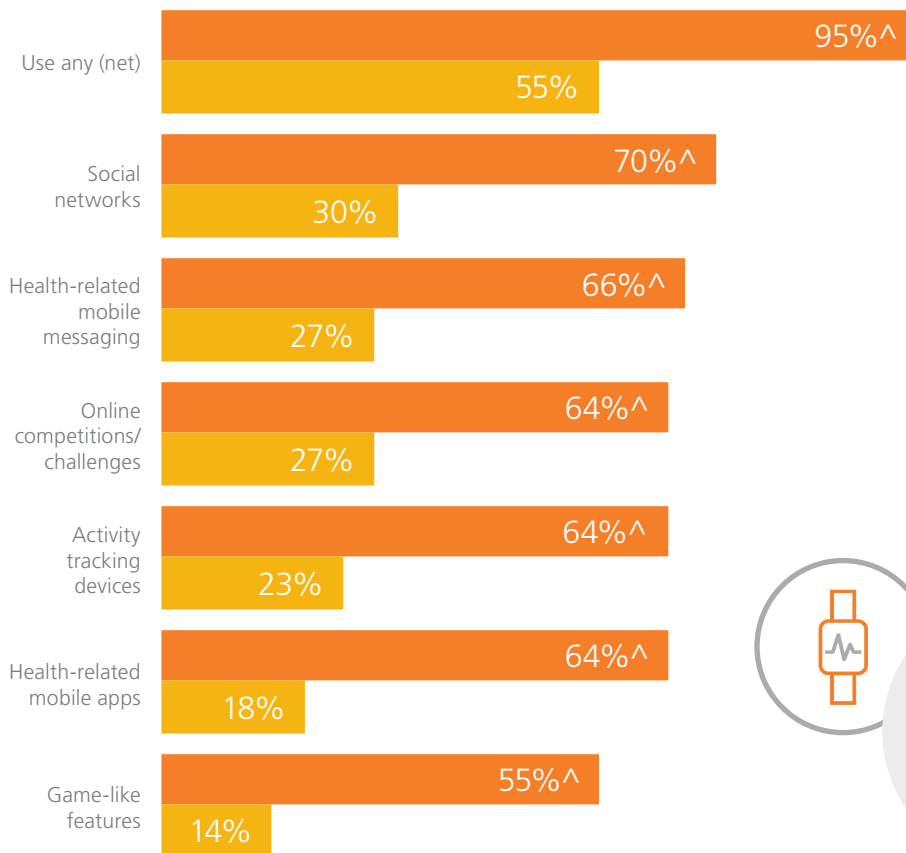



Percentage making physical changes to their work environment

### 3 Engagement technology: Harnessing the power of digital

With easier access to technology, the adoption of digital engagement strategies has grown drastically. **Ninety-five percent** of employers with a firmly established culture of health are using some form of engagement technology, from mobile messaging and activity trackers to health-related mobile apps, and messaging and social networks. The two most popular engagement technologies for established companies include social networks (**70 percent**) and health-related mobile messaging (**66 percent**). In contrast, only **30 percent** of companies without an established culture of health use social networks to engage their employees, and only **27 percent** use mobile messaging.

■ Firmly established ■ Not established

**Thought starter:**  
How could promoting group challenges and activities using multiple technologies better engage your employees?



Percentage using engagement technologies

## 4 Incentives: Rewarding healthy actions

Although nearly all of the employers we analyzed provide incentives, companies with an established culture of health invest more heavily in rewards. In fact, **99 percent** of established companies offer incentives to their employees (versus **89 percent** of those without a culture of health), and are more likely to offer them to family members as well.

### Total incentive values

When offered incentives, participants at companies with an established culture of health earn an average of \$100 more than employees at companies without a culture of health.

■ Firmly established ■ Not established



#### Thought starter:

Would employees be more inclined to participate in health and wellness programs if they were rewarded for simply taking the first step toward progress?



**\$585** Average possible incentive value (per participant per year)



**\$485** Average possible incentive value (per participant per year)



## 5 Measures of success

Having an established culture of health extends beyond physical health. Companies with an established culture consistently believe that their employees are confident in their overall health care abilities and well-being, including knowing how to navigate the health care system (**64 percent** versus only **11 percent** for unestablished companies), taking responsibility for their overall health/well-being (**59 percent** versus **5 percent**) and feeling that they have enough money to pay for health care in retirement (**45 percent** versus **2 percent**).

■ Firmly established ■ Not established

Employees know how to navigate health care system



Employees take responsibility for their overall health/well-being



Employees feel they have enough money to pay for their health care in their retirement



Percentage agreeing



### Thought starter:

How can offering health and wellness programs benefit your employees when it comes to increasing their ability to make informed health care decisions?



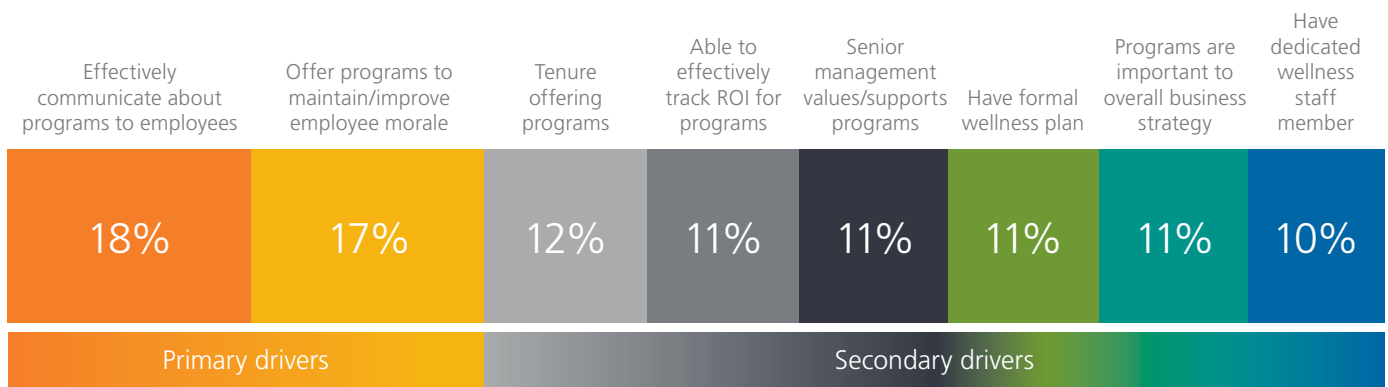
## Understanding the key drivers of a culture of health: Using a novel technology

We took our analysis a step further to really understand the factors that drive employer perceptions of achieving a culture of health. By conducting a **regression analysis**, also known as a “key driver” analysis, we were able to identify the factors that impact a certain variable and the degree to which they impact it.

The results are converted to a 0–100 scale and add up to 100 across all drivers. These scores show the relative impact of factors as they compare to each other. For example, a value of 20 percent can be interpreted as twice as impactful as a value of 10 percent.

### Key drivers: The surprising results

No single key driver emerged. Rather, several relatively equal strategies surfaced that employers might want to prioritize when creating a culture of health. These items include: focusing on communication, employee morale, persistence, tracking ROI, senior management buy-in, strategic planning, dedicated staff and making sure the strategy is important to the overall business plan.



### Conclusion

Establishing a culture of health requires prioritization of several key enablers. Implementing these insights can help your organization see more productive, loyal and satisfied employees.

### Contributors

We would like to thank the following people who have made valuable contributions to this paper: **National Business Group on Health:** Alisa Ray, Vice President, Benchmarking and Analysis, and Pamela Rich, Senior Manager Workforce Well-being. **OptumHealth:** Seth Serxner, PhD, Senior Vice President Population Health; Elisa Reliford, Senior Vice President; Rohit Kichlu, VP Employer Segment Marketing; and Erin Ratelis, Director of Thought Leadership Research and Content.

For more information about the culture of health analysis, contact us:

**1-866-386-3408**  
[resourcecenter@optum.com](mailto:resourcecenter@optum.com)  
[optum.com/resourcecenter](http://optum.com/resourcecenter)



11000 Optum Circle, Eden Prairie, MN 55344

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