

How to Start a Wellness Program with Local Businesses

Douglas J. Markham, DC

The topic of wellness programs is presently a very hot item among the United States business community. Many businesses are being forced to implement employee wellness programs because of increasing problems with employee absenteeism, productivity, and workers' compensation liabilities related to stress on the job. The field of wellness is very broad, ranging from cardiovascular fitness to proper nutrition. We, as doctors of chiropractic, are the authorities on the prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. Therefore, we are the most qualified health care professionals to analyze, educate, and correct the problems related to physical stress in the work place. It was a natural compulsion to develop a wellness program which primarily deals with the issue of physical stress in the work place related to improper work habits.

The forecast for chiropractic in the 1990s portends a very bright future. The state of Maine has just recently adopted a mandatory training law requiring companies to provide ergonomic training for employees who use video display terminals more than four hours per day. The purpose of the law is to reduce potential injuries by encouraging proper use of work stations. Several other states are also in the process of similar mandatory safety regulations for computer users and sedentary office workers. Private employees all across the country are feeling a growing need for a physical stress reduction segment in their employee wellness programs.

The first step in approaching the business community is creating a game plan. The first consideration is the size of the business that you want to approach. A good method is to approach one large company for every ten smaller companies or businesses. The majority of your success will come through this approach. Note: 75 percent of all American workers work for companies with 50 or less employees. Take the path of least resistance. Remember that you have a limited amount of time and energy for outside marketing in the community. You might prefer small businesses of 20 or less employees. These would include small bank branches, utility companies, etc. There is more of a family atmosphere with smaller businesses and the owners are usually more employee-oriented.

There are several marketing programs that deal with working with larger companies; however, the true gold mine lies in smaller businesses.

When creating a game plan for approaching businesses, it is important to do your homework in five basic areas:

1. Construct a list of businesses in a reasonably close proximity to your office.
2. Research the business you are going to approach.
3. Contact those people in authority of the business you are going to approach.

4. Approach a business and offer a limited number of services.

5. Start with businesses where you already have an inside connection.

Constructing a list of small businesses in your local area is fairly simple. Just page through your local Yellow Pages or chamber of commerce directory to develop a list of the businesses you prefer to approach. Consider the businesses close to your office. It is best to approach small businesses where you already have inside connections or what is referred to as a "warm lead." These include patients, civic organizations, and other sources where you are in contact with people in the local business community.

Many doctors with established practices have patients who are working in local companies and small businesses. Some of these patients are in upper management positions and sometimes are even the owners of their own business or company. These patients obviously believe in chiropractic and would be happy to allow you to present the physical stress reduction program to their employees. That is why it is important to know what your patients do and where they work. You never know when this can work to your advantage.

Civic organizations are very good places to get to know local captains of industry and merchants who may be receptive to chiropractic services for their employees. These civic organization include the local chamber of commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Optimists, etc. Include the businesses where you do business most often (i.e., your car dealer, bank, grocery store, favorite restaurants, etc.). These people know you and appreciate your business; they'll be more receptive toward chiropractic services for their employees, as opposed to businesses who don't know you personally.

Do not forget that your services are truly beneficial to their businesses. Don't be afraid to approach them with your services. A physical stress reduction program is an excellent tool for letting employees in various businesses know what you have to offer.

Keep in mind that any program you present should last as long as a standard 30-minute staff meeting. Most businesses will not mind allowing you to present a program to their employees during one of their regularly scheduled staff meetings. Your presentation should be delivered in the form of an organized slide or visual aid presentation. This program is broken down into four basic parts:

1. Statistics concerning back pain and lost productivity.
2. A review of the anatomy of the back and its mechanics.
3. Proper techniques for bending, lifting, standing, and sitting.
4. Special stretching and strengthening exercises to reduce physical stress.

Inform the business that you will come back after the presentation to perform a brief five to six minute evaluation with each employee at his work station. The work station evaluation is the key to acquiring new patients as a result of your efforts. This is where you take a brief history of the

employee's previous and current physical symptoms. The employee will then be observed at work and coached on proper work technique. This would include proper phone handling, computer terminal placement, and proper positioning of the employee's chair to decrease physical stress due to excessive sitting. The work station follow-up also deals with coaching employees who may be involved in jobs that require excessive or prolonged standing or lifting. Offer those employees with legitimate back discomfort an opportunity to be evaluated in your office through their regular insurance benefits. Dozens of new patients can result from this work station follow-up approach.

Remind the employer of the fact that your program is easy to implement and is designed to be presented in the standard 30-minute staff meeting. All they have to do is get their employees to the meeting. You should recommend that the company make the meeting mandatory for all employees. It has been my experience that volunteer meetings are not well-attended.

Also, point out the fact that most ergonomists would charge about \$50 per employee for the follow-up evaluation of the work station. This reinforces the value of your service to their company. Remind them that the reason you are not charging them is because of the opportunity of the positive exposure with their employees. Reassure them that your intentions are to offer those employees with legitimate back discomfort an opportunity to be evaluated through their regular benefits. This puts the responsibility of health back on the employee, to discourage future workers' compensation liabilities and absenteeism related to tension headaches, back pain, or other symptoms.

There are obviously many more helpful tips, but hopefully you have gained some helpful insights into approaching the business community with the much needed chiropractic services you have to offer.

The opportunities presently knocking at our profession's door are almost endless. Join the challenge by putting chiropractic in the work place in the 1990s. Approaching the business community is an excellent way to gain new patients and the professional respect that we deserve. Our success in the marketplace will be judged by our determination and ability to convince the American public and entrepreneurs that chiropractic is the major solution to their health care problems.

Your comments and inquiries may be mailed, phoned, or faxed:

Douglas J. Markham, D.C.
31225 La Baya, Suite 206
Westlake Village, California 91361
Phone: (818) 879-1138
Fax: (818) 889-7368

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