



Selling Wellness Services to Employers

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Somewhere between the episodic nature of the typical urgent care visit and the steady relationship between patient and primary provider lies a need for employers—your occupational medicine customers and prospects—to support the health of their employees.

This need may be especially great with many companies having trimmed their workforces; fewer employees doing more work than ever before means there is real economic value in keeping those workers well and on the job.

Given that instilling proper health habits serves to enhance the health status of a worker population, thereby reducing unnecessary costs for a parent company, wellness services might seem like an “easy sell.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

Consider the following:

- Historically, wellness services have been offered in a standalone, a la carte manner, along the lines of a weight management lecture, or an isolated smoking cessation program. Yet experts caution against wellness interventions that are not developed in the larger context of an integrated, long-term and systematic approach.
- Services have rarely been designed around the genuine needs of the worker population at a given company. Granted, Health Risk Appraisals have been out there for decades, but they were rarely done in conjunction with a wellness program and, when conducted, the connection between the results of an HRA and an ensuing intervention strategy has been spotty at best.
- Wellness services have seldom been marketed (rather than sold), and many clinics’ employer prospect uni-

verses were poorly educated about wellness services. Wellness services, standalone commodities that they were, invariably sat at the bottom of most sales professionals’ portfolios.

- Generally, it has proved difficult to articulate the value of a wellness program. The typical approach was simply to recite such buzz phrases as: “lowers cost,” “increases productivity,” “lowers absenteeism.” On the rare occasions when actual data were rolled out to support these platitudes, the information tended to be confusing and/or meaningless to the employer prospect.

The New Wellness Sales Paradigm

In the hope that we have learned from our mistakes, I offer six principles that support the new wellness services sales paradigm:

1. **Make each wellness package needs based.** Make wellness programs responsive to the genuine needs of a company’s workforce. This is where HRA assessment tools come in. A superior tool provides a roadmap to identify high-risk individuals, associate unhealthy health habits with an approximation of lost dollars, and serves as the foundation for a multistage wellness intervention strategy.
But it does not end there. Far too often, the results from an assessment instrument are not interpreted, are interpreted poorly, and/or do not lead to a prudent intervention strategy.
2. **Anoint “wellness services” with a new moniker.** Wellness sales professionals are often victims of the errors associated with selling wellness services in the past. Often, prospective buyers recoil at the mere mention of the term “wellness.” Try not to enter the battle with one arm tied behind your back. Come up with a synonym that suggests a refreshingly new, modern intervention, such as “employee health enhancement.”
3. **Recognize that marketing drives sales.** Ideally, marketing drives sales, not vice versa. The probability of success

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