

April 2009

Improving Employee Health Through Prevention



In 2007, General Electric (GE) established two new health initiatives focused on prevention. The *Healthy Worksite* program targets the approximately 600 global work sites with more than 100 employees; the preventive screening measurement program is currently focused on U.S. sites only. Together, the programs are aimed at fostering a corporate culture of health that can, in turn, improve the health and well-being of *all* employees.

The *Healthy Worksite* Wellness Program

Since 2004, GE has administered its successful *Health by Numbers 0 5 10 25*. With a focus on the individual, the program's mission is to help GE employees achieve optimal health by emphasizing the following numbers: 0 tobacco use, 5 fruits and vegetables per day, 10,000 steps a day and a body mass index of 25 or less.

In 2007, GE has expanded this program to include a new emphasis on the environment. GE now encourages work sites to promote and manage healthy activities through environmental changes. The company has also added a survey to measure how effectively work sites do so. The new program, *Healthy Worksite*, continues the previous program's focus on tobacco cessation, nutrition and physical activity. GE developed the following three-pronged strategy for success:

- **Communicate**—To communicate with employees and share health messages, GE uses a variety of means, including online resources, print posters, brochures and newsletters.
- **Connect**—To engage its employees in improving their personal health, GE encourages work sites to run interactive programs such as *Health by Numbers* challenges, “lunch and learns” and other support mechanisms.
- **Commit**—To facilitate healthy behavior, GE encourages work sites to make fundamental and lasting changes. Examples include establishing tobacco-free policies, providing on-site opportunities for physical activity and improving food options.



**CORPORATE
HEADQUARTERS**
Fairfield, CT

**NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES**
327,000

A work site coordinator is charged with managing the program at each location. The majority of work site coordinators are human resource managers, environmental health and safety professionals, or clinic and health care staff. At most locations, program coordination is done in addition to other duties.

The GE Corporate Medical Services team created step-by-step guides, or toolkits, to educate work site coordinators on program specifics. In addition, the corporate team created an interactive *Healthcare 101* online learning course to help drive employee education and program interaction. The U.S. version, hosted by Al Roker from NBC Universal, covers topics such as U.S. health care costs, the *Health by Numbers 0 5 10 25* program and preventive screenings. A global version of the course will be available in 2009.

“The creativity we are seeing is amazing. We have walking clubs, we have leaders donating money for pounds lost, we have competitions being created...we’ve created a global community.”

—Mark Russo, Project Manager, GE Health & Productivity

Preventive Screening Measurement Program

To improve employee utilization of preventive services, GE also launched a preventive screening measurement program. This program is designed to increase work site and business screening rates, thereby improving overall organizational health. GE measures work site screening rates in three areas: cholesterol, colon cancer and breast cancer.

GE provides quarterly reports to each work site showing the percentage of employees meeting the screening recommendations based on clinical eligibility. Work site data points are compared within business units and also to those at GE best-in-class sites.

Prior to developing its preventive screening measurement program, GE had to develop mechanisms to do the following:

- Capture data from screenings performed at the work site and from the health plan;
- Ensure data privacy by only publishing aggregate-level data;
- Communicate with employees about the importance of preventive screenings (through posters, emails, newsletters and online support); and
- Share quarterly reports with all levels of leadership (senior human resource managers, business line CEOs, business health care managers, medical directors and others).

Use of Purchaser's Guide

When the Business Group released *A Purchaser's Guide to Clinical Preventive Services*, GE was already working to improve the health of its employees. GE used information from the guide to evaluate its programs. The evidence presented in the guide reinforced the company's strategy of integrating preventive services and work site programs to engage employees. Other uses of the guide included the following:

- GE's Employee Health Services team used the guide to identify the screenings on which to focus;
- GE leveraged a vendor who used the CPT codes to access the utilization data for each clinical service; and
- GE used the Healthy People 2010 goals provided in the guide to compare current results with an industry benchmark; information from the CDC's Guide to Community Preventive Services was used to identify effective wellness programs for combating obesity and tobacco use.

“The Purchaser's Guide had reassured us that we were doing the right thing.”

—*Mark Russo*

“The Purchaser's Guide had everything in one place. We could look at the Healthy People 2010 goals and our current numbers and then develop targets. It was easy for us to use and very helpful.”

—*Adam Malinoski, Leader, GE Health and Wellness Initiatives*

Cost

According to GE, both programs were relatively inexpensive to implement. GE used free resources developed by the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Business Group on Health to minimize costs for the *Healthy Worksite* program. The company also compiled resources that had been previously developed by GE business units. The most expensive aspect of the implementation was translating program materials into nine different languages for a global audience. Similarly, the preventive services benchmarking program did not require much additional data mining. As a result, the additional cost was minimal.

Evaluation

GE considers its first year a success for both programs.

Healthy Worksites: When the program launched in 2007, GE aimed to achieve 60% participation among its 600+ global work sites with 100 or more employees. At the end of 2008, GE had surpassed 90% participation.

Preventive Screening: Through June 2008, GE achieved business-unit screening rates of 65–75% for all three of its targeted conditions (breast cancer, colon cancer and cholesterol). All business units are encouraged to achieve best-in-class. While there is still a great deal of variation among business units, success at the best businesses and sites has been attributed to top-down leadership support.

Next Steps

By the end of 2009, GE hopes to have 100% participation in the *Healthy Worksite* program. Scorecards detailing work site success in the three areas of health (tobacco cessation, nutrition and physical activity) and the three C's (Communicate, Connect, Commit) are currently being used to collect best practices and improve performance across the company. The data from these two programs (*Healthy Worksite* and Preventive Screening) will be combined with other health and wellness data (Health Coach utilization, disability cost, etc.) in a global recognition program rolling out in 2009.

Company Profile

Headquartered in Fairfield, CT, General Electric (GE) employs over 327,000 people globally. GE is imagination at work. From jet engines to power generation, financial services to water processing, and medical imaging to media content, GE people worldwide are dedicated to turning imaginative ideas into leading products and services that help solve some of the world's toughest problems.

CASE STUDY

April 2009



Improving Employee Health Through Prevention: An Employer Case Study of General Electric Company

This Case Study was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

About A Purchaser's Guide to Clinical Preventive Services: Moving Science into Coverage

A Purchaser's Guide to Clinical Preventive Services: Moving Science into Coverage is a comprehensive reference for employers on clinical preventive service benefit design. This document provides guidance for the selection of 47 clinical preventive services shown to be effective by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and other authoritative organizations. The Purchaser's Guide aims to improve the design and delivery of preventive health benefits by translating clinical recommendations into benefit language for self-insured employers. For more information, visit www.businessgrouphealth.org/benefitsttopics/topics/purchasers/fullguide.

About the Center for Prevention and Health Services

The Center houses Business Group projects related to the delivery of prevention and health services through employer-sponsored health plans and work site programs. Employers should look to the Center for the following:

- Current information and practical recommendations from federal agencies and professional associations;
- Analyses of large employer best practices; and
- Findings from recent clinical and health service research.

For more information, e-mail healthservices@businessgrouphealth.org.

About the National Business Group on Health

The National Business Group on Health is the national voice of large employers dedicated to finding innovative and forward-thinking solutions to the nation's most important health care issues. The Business Group represents more than 300 members, primarily Fortune 500 companies and large public sector employers, who provide health coverage for approximately 60 million U.S. workers, retirees and their families. The Business Group fosters the development of a quality health care delivery system and treatments based on scientific evidence of effectiveness. The Business Group works with other organizations to promote patient safety and expand the use of technology assessment to ensure access to superior new technology and the elimination of ineffective technology.

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