

AHA, IBM Watson Health and Welltok team up to transform heart health

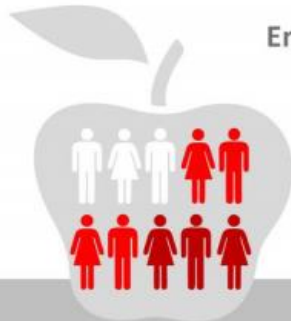
February 1 2016

The Benefits Of Workplace Health Programs

When it comes to getting employees engaged and reaping the benefits of workplace health programs, a supportive culture of health and senior management leadership are the keys to success, a new American Heart Association (AHA) survey finds.



Employees Overestimate Their Health Status



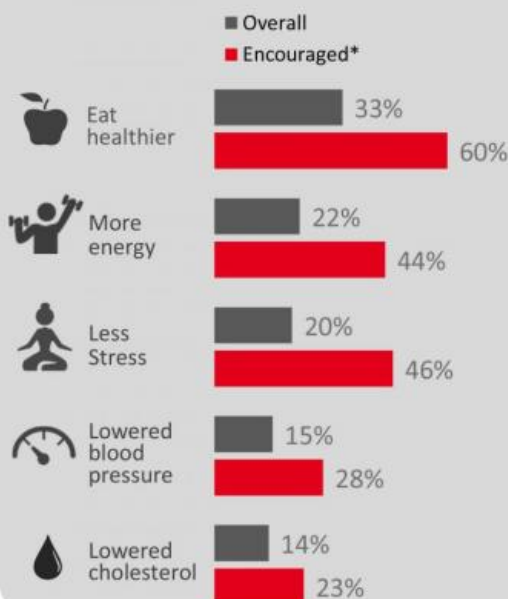
Of the **74%** who say they are in very good or good health, **42%** have been diagnosed with a chronic illness.

CEO Participation Matters

55% of employees believe it's extremely important, very important or important to see a CEO setting a good example in taking care of his or her own health.



Impact of Participation



Workplace Health Programs Are a Win-Win

Employee Satisfaction

Of employees who feel encouraged by senior management to participate in workplace health programs, **69%** report that those programs have a strong impact on job satisfaction



Recruitment

49% Say that companies that offers wellness programs are extremely or very attractive



Retention

Of employees who feel encouraged by senior management to participate in workplace health programs, **63%** cite the availability of programs as important to staying with their current employer



Methodology: AHA commissioned Nielsen to conduct an online survey within the United States among a representative sample of 2,004 adults (aged 18 and over) employed part or full time in organizations with 25 or more employees that offer a health care plan. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population of full or part time employees.

*Note: Those encouraged reported that their senior management encouraged participation extremely or very well.

Association

Today, the first day of American Heart Month, the American Heart Association (AHA) announced plans to develop a first of its kind workplace health solution that leverages the cognitive computing power of IBM Watson. In the first application of Watson to cardiovascular disease, AHA, IBM, and Welltok will create a new offering that combines AHA's science-based metrics and health assessments with cognitive analytics, delivered on Welltok's health optimization platform. The effort is intended to help alleviate the burden of cardiovascular diseases, which affect more than 85 million Americans today.

The program will help assess both the employer's workplace [health](#) environment, as well as employee health based on AHA metrics. Core to the offering is a new Workplace Health Achievement Index, which AHA also launched today. The Index uses best practices to measure and rank corporate health initiatives, measuring companies on their workplace health culture. The Index is a result of efforts by the AHA's CEO Roundtable, an organization of some of America's largest employers dedicated to workplace health. They have served as a learning laboratory to develop, test and refine the Index. In the new offering being developed, Watson will uncover cognitive insights by analyzing data from the Index to provide guidance on how an employer can support employee health, such as informing how corporations design, tailor and deliver health benefits and health promotion programs that maximize the health of the workforce.

Using Welltok's platform online or via mobile, an individual employee could opt to complete AHA's My Life Check questionnaire, which measures Life's Simple 7, the key cardiovascular health indicators—not smoking, eating healthy, being physically active, achieving and

maintaining a healthy weight, managing blood pressure, controlling cholesterol, and reducing blood sugar. Welltok leverages consumer insights gained from the questionnaire and data collected via wearable fitness trackers, wireless-enabled scales and blood pressure cuffs to provide personalized recommendations to help the individual make healthy choices that could reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.

"With Life's Simple 7 and the Workplace Health Achievement Index, we've presented a science-based blueprint for healthy living and corporate well-being," said Eduardo Sanchez, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer for Prevention, American Heart Association. "With this program, individuals and their employers will be able to benefit from a personalized, cognitive solution designed to help improve heart health and reduce healthcare costs. Our hope is that we can set a new standard for continuous quality improvement in workplace health."

IBM CEO Ginni Rometty is a member of the AHA CEO Roundtable and IBM will integrate the offering into the company's employee wellness strategy. The offering will tap Watson's natural language processing, deep question and answer capability and similarity analytics, and Watson will be trained on evidence-based heart health goals and measures in order to recommend specific ways employers can create heart healthy environments and engage with their employees.

"The new era of cognitive computing has the potential to help transform personal health and well-being, and that's why we are eager to see this offering in action to support the health and wellness of the workforce," said Kyu Rhee, MD, MPP, Chief Health Officer, IBM Watson Health. "This is the first time Watson is taking on heart health, and we look forward to working with more members of the AHA CEO Roundtable who serve as models for best in class corporate [heart health](#) initiatives."

The global burden of heart disease threatens a multinational workforce,

accounting for 1 in 3 deaths and more than \$312.6 billion in annual health spending and lost productivity. Poor diet, lack of regular physical activity and other major risk factors for heart disease and stroke are responsible for at least 25 percent of employers' healthcare costs.

A new study by AHA and Nielsen found that employees who feel encouraged by senior leadership to participate in workplace health programs are approximately twice as likely to eat healthy, and 69 percent report that workplace health initiatives have a strong impact on job satisfaction.

AHA research has shown that attaining a high Life's Simple 7 score can help reduce risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer and many other health problems. People who reach ideal health for all seven metrics ("ideal cardiovascular health") by age 50 may have significantly lower lifetime risk of [heart](#) disease and stroke.

"By putting this innovative program in the hands of consumers, we are guiding them at a personal level to maintain, and even improve their health status," said Jeff Margolis, chairman and CEO of Welltok. "We look forward to working with IBM and AHA, as well as the nation's largest employers, to optimize the health of employees across the U.S. and proactively address the human and financial toll of [heart disease](#)."

Welltok provides a HIPAA-compliant platform that allows employees to participate in health-related activities while protecting their privacy. Data from the Workplace Health Achievement Index and the application for Life's Simple 7 will be de-identified and stored in the Watson Health Cloud.

Provided by American Heart Association

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