

*Feature Interview*

## Corporate Fitness Works



**WH:** Please tell readers a little bit about your company and how you serve the WHP industry.

Corporate Fitness Works (CFW) is a certified, women-owned business that has been providing fitness center management, wellness services, facility design and consulting for the past three decades. We serve as the collaborative partner among Fortune 100 corporations, multi-cultural organizations, financial institutions, the U.S. military, federal and state governments, hospitals, universities, residential, and property management companies to design and deliver worksite health and fitness programs that integrate with well-being initiatives.

**WH:** From your perspective, how has onsite fitness programming evolved over the years?

Corporate Fitness Works started as a partnership between principals, Sheila Drohan and Brenda Loube in 1984. At that time, the notion of providing employees with onsite fitness facilities and programs was a new and novel idea. Employers started investing in onsite fitness programs mainly as an attractive amenity, soon realizing the benefits Brenda and Sheila knew all along. When given the opportunity to participate in health-focused programs, and when provided with a supportive environment to engage in regular physical activity, employees are healthier, have fewer absences, and experience improved morale and productivity.

Officially incorporated in 1988, Corporate Fitness Works experienced a big boom in onsite fitness center management

throughout the 1990s. In the new millennium, the emphasis of integrated wellness became more apparent and companies began investing in onsite health clinics, hosting health fairs and conducting biometric screenings. The fitness centers began bridging employee awareness with education by offering classes and coaching employees on how to take action to improve one's own personal health.

CFW is currently managing over 140 facilities in 26 states, and we have evolved to reflect today's mission of the onsite fitness program which is to further integrate the culture of health throughout an organization. We work to link our clients' well-being partners to leverage mobile and virtual technologies that engage and empower employees' own health goals wherever they may be.

**WH:** Why the merger and what did it bring to the table in regard to expansion?

On April 1, 2014, Corporate Fitness Works acquired L&T Health and Fitness which was another certified, women-owned industry leader, with more than a quarter century of operational experience. The two companies share many commonalities in leadership and values and we are very excited for many reasons. A women owned company buying another women owned company is not an everyday occurrence. The acquisition clearly positions Corporate Fitness Works as a leader in the industry and furthers our promise to Move Everybody to enhanced health and well-being. The response to our merger has been remarkable. In the past 8 months we have added over 40 new clients. It is clear to us that companies are looking for a service oriented partner with a dedicated team of health promotion and fitness professionals that are ready to tailor a program to the unique needs of the organization and the employees and we are in a perfect position to do just that!

**WH:** What does the future hold for Corporate Fitness Works and the field of WHP?

This is such a thrilling time to be a part of this industry. The need for better health and well-being has never been greater. Employers need expert guidance on how to build and implement collaborative programs based upon best practices that comply with Affordable Care Act requirements. The five-year goal of Corporate Fitness Works is to exceed client satisfaction, grow and develop our team by providing professional opportunities, and to continue to move the meter on impacting health for those we serve.

# The Deep and Comprehensive Challenge of Workplaces



Fuse/Thinkstock

The more I work with health promotion, the more I understand why it is so hard for workplaces to adopt effective health promotion interventions. Many of them start intervening in areas

such as nutrition and physical activity by simply raising awareness and letting people know what they should do to improve their health.

From my perspective however, assuming that people will change their behaviors just because they were told to, is the most common mistake many WHP practitioners make!

Creating supportive environments that facilitate the adoption of a healthy lifestyles is crucial for effective interventions. Organizations cannot expect people to be more physically active if they don't provide some type of means for them to do so. For instance, by creating attractive and safe stairwells to use as a desirable alternative to jumping into an elevator, the organization is providing a means to increase physical activity. Another means may involve developing pleasant and accessible outdoor spaces to walk or sit quietly and relax during lunch hours. Nutritional options could include providing healthy meal choices at the canteen instead of supplying pies and fries; or offering free fruit as an organizational policy instead of cookies on demand, and so on.

The point is, we need tools and appropriate systems to change behaviors. Once those are in place, raising awareness finds echo within and health promotion programs flourish.

**Interested in Contributing?** We are always looking for articles to include and expand the IAWHP newsletter. If you are interested in submitting a manuscript or have an idea for a new section, contact the newsletter editor at MERosePhD@gmail.com with your section idea, topic/title of your article, a brief outline, the section of the newsletter in which your article would fit, and a "complete by" date.

Worksite Health is published quarterly and serves as the official publication of the International Association for Worksite Health Promotion (IAWHP). Inquiries about submissions can be directed to Mary Ellen Rose, PhD, Senior Editor, at MERosePhD@gmail.com



## IAWHP's Mission

To advance the global community of worksite health promotion practitioners through high-quality information, services, educational activities, personal and professional development and networking opportunities.

International Association for Worksite Health Promotion  
401 West Michigan Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Workplaces also need to understand that the return on investment of their business dwells in their workers. They need to see that investing in people is the best business because not only will it turn them into more productive workers, but it will also increase their sense of belonging, social inclusion and thus the likelihood of loyalty to their organization. The more workplaces understand this paradigm, the more they can explore that field.

Which brings us to another good point for any health promotion program to be fully developed: explore. There are many dimensions and layers within health promotion programs which encompass spiritual, emotional and environmental aspects. These other dimensions require effort that reaches far beyond being more active and eating vegetables and fruits.

Creating supportive environments involves creating positive social relations. Systems that support honest conversations, friendly teams and policies that protect people from being harassed, victimized and isolated. This also means that CEOs and managers have to be involved in this self-awareness dimension in which they are able to understand the impact they cause in orders, the message and examples they send out, and the dynamics they perpetuate within an organization. The only way to change an organization is by changing individuals.

Before engaging in any health promotion initiative, workplaces have to change or adapt their framework to enable changes to happen and provide people with the right mindset. In this way, employees can be fully prepared for the challenges they will face within and among themselves.

It is a journey that not everyone is willing to endeavor because it can be challenging and discomforting, but that is exactly what makes it so special. It is a necessary journey for any sort of evolution. Whether the journey is professional, personal, or organizational, I believe we are going to embrace the challenges of advancing growth. All will eventually understand that there is no other path in life, only forward. Thus, I say, courage and persistence.

*Flavia Prospero is a health promotion practitioner, consultant and researcher in Australia.*

## IAWHP Editorial Board

### Senior Editor

Mary Ellen Rose, Ph.D.

### Associate Editors

Wolf Kirsten, MS

Nicolaas Pronk, PhD

Brenda Loube, MS, FAWHP

Lauve M. Metcalfe, MS, FAWHP

### Production

Heather Turner, Assistant Director of Membership and Chapter Services,

American College of Sports Medicine

David Brewer, Creative Services Manager,

American College of Sports Medicine

**Learn more about IAWHP at [www.iawhp.org](http://www.iawhp.org).**

## Wellness by Stealth



Digital Vision/Thinkstock

What is the best thing worksite health promotion can do to reduce coronary heart disease?

- A. Start a walking club.
- B. Sponsor a “Know Your Numbers” campaign.
- C. Train managers to treat employees fairly and respectfully.

Option A will touch the people who show up, if and when they show up. At least for the period of time that the walking club is active, some people will benefit from lowering their blood pressure, maybe even losing a few pounds. Research shows that this kind of intervention has a short-lived impact.

Option B gets people to talk to their doctors. Strengthening the doctor-patient relationship is certainly a good thing, especially if it leads to healthful changes. Like the walking club, however, this intervention will only touch the people who join and only if their doctor is persuasive and persistent about helping them make changes.

That brings us to Option C, which does not look like a wellness intervention at all, but it is by far the most effective intervention that an employer could do to decrease coronary heart disease.

In fact, the manager training program could reduce employees’ risk of coronary heart disease, non-fatal heart attack, and angina by 55 percent—even if no one changes his diet or physical activity (DeVogli et al 2009).

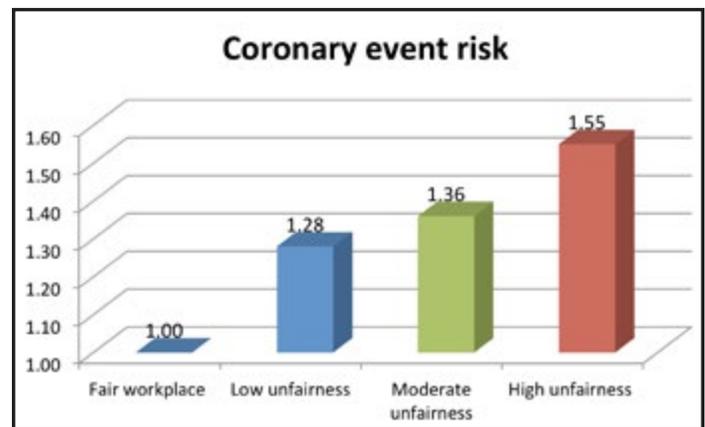
“Participants reporting higher levels of unfairness [at work] are more likely to experience an incident coronary event...”  
Unfairness and health: evidence from the Whitehall II Study (DeVogli et al 2009).

The study concluded that employees treated unfairly have a 55 percent higher risk of having coronary heart disease, a non-fatal heart attack or angina even after taking into account the employees’ age, gender, type of job, and pre-existing risk for heart disease.

The manager training program will help everyone’s health, not just the people who show up for wellness programs. It is wellness by stealth.

I am weary of wellness programs that focus on what the employee does after hours. The employer controls the environment for half of the employees’ waking hours. And I don’t mean serving bagels and fruit instead of donuts. Who cares what is served at staff meetings, if your job is insecure or your boss keeps secrets from you?

Stress and resentment are much bigger health hazards, in other words, than glazed donuts.



This model for worksite wellness has not gained traction even though the research on job related factors’ impact on health is long-standing and extensive. The first Whitehall study of British civil servants started in 1967, which showed a link between a person’s job class and his heart disease risk. The 10th wave of data collection in this study began in January of 2011.

Instead of haranguing employees about their personal habits, worksite health promotion could turn the lens onto the company and its “health” style. This approach would be remarkably more effective and simpler. It would need no incentive payments, no invasive questionnaires, and no confidential data.

Employers have much more influence on health within their own power than they realize. The time is ripe for an entirely different style of wellness intervention.

Linda K. Riddell, MS is a population health scientist and blogger. For her commentary on health care cost issues, see her blog *Sickonomics*. You can reach her at [LRiddell@healthconomy.net](mailto:LRiddell@healthconomy.net).

# Cobb, Strecker, Dunphy & Zimmermann, Inc. Journey to Wellness



HealthPartners

In the heart of the hustle and bustle of downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota, Cobb, Strecker, Dunphy & Zimmermann, Inc. (CSDZ), an independent insurance and surety agency, is working to improve worksite wellness. Established in 1919 to serve the design, manufacturing and construction industries, CSDZ employees serve to protect their clients. In 2006, CSDZ made the same promise to protect their employees by making an investment in their health and well-being.

To begin, CSDZ formed a wellness committee of volunteer employees and leaders. Their first charge was to define what wellness meant to CSDZ and their employees. The group agreed there are a variety of factors affecting health and happiness—and it's important to meet people where they are in life. The committee also agreed with the idea that wellness is more than physical; it also includes mental, spiritual and financial well-being. Thus, the "Journey to Wellness" program began.

With a program mission and committee in place, the next action was to perform health screenings in the office. The impact could be seen immediately because a few employees, who weren't regularly visiting the doctor, learned they had high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Their conditions could have continued to go undetected, but after their health screening, these employees were able to lower cholesterol and blood pressure through a healthy diet and exercise.



HealthPartners

Employee feedback has been integral to the Journey to Wellness program design. By asking and listening to what employees want, Journey to Wellness has developed walking routes, Lunch and Learns, fruit and veggie challenges and more.

In addition to special programs, a free 45-minute yoga class is offered each Thursday in a conference room at the CSDZ office, and employees have access to a gym on the first floor of their building.

Journey to Wellness also includes out-of-the-box programs to get employees away from their desk and having fun. Sharon Scharf, Director of Human Resources, recently hosted a Poker walk contest and patched together an obstacle golf putting challenge for employees. Employees enjoyed the challenge and friendly competition with colleagues.

"It's so important to have happy and healthy employees. Any tools you can offer will help employees be more productive, and clients will be happier too," said Steve Gfroerer, Chief Financial Officer and early champion for investing in employee wellness.

CSDZ plans to continue to do health assessments and listen to employees. The wellness committee believes that the only way to stay relevant and effective is to keep up with what they are asking for.

"Our program is going where our employees are going," said Steve. "Currently, a lot of our employees are in the 'sandwich generation,' with kids and parents to take care of, so it's a priority to connect them with resources to help reduce and manage stress. It's all about being flexible and evolving as our employees change and evolve."

"It's a family-oriented approach here. We're a team and we work together. We'll continue to take an approach of trust, dedication and teamwork as we support one another not only in our work responsibilities, but also in our health and well-being goals," said Sharon.

"CSDZ's participatory approach to worksite health promotion is a great example of creating a successful and highly relevant program that reflects employees' interest," said Nico Pronk, Vice President for Health Management and Chief Science Officer at HealthPartners.



## Journey to Wellness mission statement:

The Cobb, Strecker, Dunphy & Zimmermann Journey to Wellness program strives to enhance the overall physical, mental, spiritual and financial health of each employee both at work and at home.

## Employee engagement by the numbers:

- 95 percent participation in biometrics screenings
- 78 percent participation in health assessment
- 77 percent participation in Total Wellness programs
- 100 percent participation in family and volunteer activities

*CSDZ was a 2014 winner of HealthPartners Workplace Well-being Awards recognizing leaders in employer-based health and well-being programs in Minnesota. HealthPartners is the largest consumer-governed, non-profit health care organization in the nation with a mission to improve health and well-being in partnership with members, patients and the community. For more information, visit [healthpartners.com](http://healthpartners.com).*

## How to Keep Employees Fit: du Shows the Way



*Telecom operator boosts staff wellness, productivity with in-house clinic, gym, pool and a calendar packed with fitness activities.*

It's 7.30 a.m. on a Monday morning and Pankaj Jain, digital business manager at du, is warming up at the telecom operator's in-house gym. He is all set for the regime drawn up for him by personal trainer Sean Crombie. It includes everything from squat jumps, bear crawls and push-ups to step-ups, vertical leg crunches and jumping jacks.

"It's rigorous and I do it at least three times a week," said Jain. "We work nine hours a day and can come in anytime between 7 and 9:00 a.m. We factor about 35 to 40 minutes of gym time too. It's so convenient to exercise at the office itself instead of having to go out."

Like him, some 300 du employees regularly use the gym. "We offer a varied regime to keep people of different backgrounds motivated. We have something for everyone—circuit classes, running classes, yoga, weight loss competitions, etc," said Regime Fitness manager Adam McGregor, adding that the gym membership is free.

Located on the sixth floor of the imposing 45-storey du Tower in Dubai Media City, the gym and its adjoining swimming pool can compare with the city's best fitness facilities. Their provision is part of a concerted effort by du to promote a healthier lifestyle among its 1,800 employees under a nationwide wellness program.

"Unlike one-off, sporadic health campaigns and blood donation camps held elsewhere, du has a sustained year-round calendar of wellness activities," said Dr. Mansoor Anwar, du's director of medical and occupational health, an Emirati physician who has been specially recruited to take the wellness program forward.

From helping employees to cope with lifestyle diseases, stress and issues with line managers to assessing absenteeism, planning their phased returns after prolonged illness and maintaining their electronic medical records, Dr. Anwar covers a wide range of functions. "The aim is to optimize employee health and personal wellness. Improved employee health is linked with increased engagement and productivity. It checks absenteeism and results in better retention. The idea is to give employees tools to get healthier so they can excel both in and out of the workplace," he said.

Any employee who visits the walk-in clinic enjoys the benefit of a full-fledged consultation with Dr. Anwar. "We are eligible to prescribe investigations and medications. We also have a pharmacy tie-up and get the medicines delivered to the employees at their desks. We currently have two clinics—one at Media City and the other at Academic City."

He said last year du rebranded its wellness plan exclusively for senior executives and linked their wellness with performance. "We made it a mandate that every top executive (vice-president and above) has a wellness plan. Their weight-related and other parameters are assessed at the beginning of the year. Accordingly, we set targets for them. Their ability to meet the targets is factored in their performance."

Dr. Anwar said the response to weight loss competitions, open to all employees, has been overwhelming.

### Competitions



"We've had two seasons of 'The Biggest Winner' competitions so far. The first held in October 2013 attracted 225 participants while the second launched in June this year saw more than 270 participants."

Susan George who along with Pankaj Jain and five others emerged as the winning team, said: "The focus was to lose body fat. We were able to lose a total of 33.5 percent of body fat because we were consistent at the gym. I concentrated on exercising and eating right," said the supply chain products senior manager.



Collection department team leader Lubna Hussain, an individual category winner, said regular gymming, aerobics and a healthy diet did the trick for her. “My managers were supportive and kept me motivated. They would check if I had hidden any chocolates on my desk. They also made sure I had no birthday cake.”

e-business manager Waleed El Shennawy, another individual winner, who lost five kg said: “I want to shed another 10 kg. I have started avoiding colas, chocolates and ice cream.”

Helping matters has been the introduction of healthy food vending machines on du office floors. Employees are also encouraged to take part in football matches, marathon runs, global corporate challenges and other events. Dr. Anwar said campaigns on diabetes, heart health, smoking, vaccinations, etc, are a regular feature on du’s wellness calendar. Employees can also use mobile apps to track their progress.

*Dr. Mansoor Anwar is the Director – Medical & Occupational Health Services for du*

## Editor’s Corner



Monkey Business Images/Monkey Business/Thinkstock

Worksite health promotion (WHP) has come a long way in the more than three decades that I have personally observed its growth. Back in the 1970s a sampling of large corporations had introduced the concept of “corporate fitness” into the U.S. market but those innovators were few and far between. Corporate fitness represented a movement toward worksite health promotion, but those first efforts essentially meant a company had installed a small gym on-site and were trying to offer healthy exercise options for their employees. Fortunately for the International Association for Worksite Health Promotion, our membership of health professionals include many that have lived and worked in this field since that initial spark of corporate fitness so long ago!

In 2003, I worked with Dr. Robert Karch to develop a simpler model of global health promotion that was built upon the work he had established over the previous two plus decades. Although it was more than twenty years into this discipline’s progress, an extensive literature review I conducted at that time revealed there was very little international agreement about health promotion as a defined and distinct field of study. Additionally, the U.S. seemed to be far behind many other nations in the actual implementation of worksite health promoting initiatives. The PIECES® model that emerged from my research, while innovative and simple, was still ahead of the curve and a challenge to institute into practices beyond academia.

Fast forward to 2014 and worksite health promotion is not only an internationally recognizable concept, it has also become a necessity for many U.S. companies that are seeking ways to control healthcare costs. Although the worksite health promotion terminology is often interchanged with “corporate fitness”, “worksite wellness” and “developing a culture of health in the workplace,” the general idea behind the efforts are similar in scope.

Today health scientists are actively building a series of best practices from research conducted on WHP initiatives that have been in place for a few years. However, there is more work yet to be done before we can apply the knowledge attained from the past into a more coherent, international, comprehensive approach to WHP going forward.

As hundreds of new companies and individuals join the WHP movement, many are learning how to actively collect data and measure outcomes from their WHP initiatives. We are looking forward to hearing from these new WHP adopters and sharing their experiences with our IAWHP membership. It is my job as the Senior Editor for this newsletter to seek out and publish the best of the best that is out there in global WHP and record it within these pages. My hope is that rather than waiting for me to find you, those of you reading this newsletter will take a moment to reach out to me and share your experiences, case studies, perspectives and research! The more we know as an organization, the better we can lead others as we move boldly into the future!

*Mary Ellen Rose, Ph.D. is the Chief Science Officer for the Institute for Healthy Destination Accreditation and owner of PIECES for Life, a WHP consulting firm. She has also served as an IAWHP Board Member and active volunteer with the organization for three years.*

**IAWHP Pre-Conference**  
**Worksite Health Promotion: Enhancing Your Impact, Expanding Your Reach**  
March 31, 2015 • Phoenix, Arizona  
Learn more at [www.iawhp.org](http://www.iawhp.org)