

JOB

S, AUTO&CLASSIFIEDS

careerbuilder.com



The wellness factor

Preventative maintenance is essential to keep a car in good working order. For employees, this maintenance is called wellness, and employers are doing more and more these days to maximize their wellness plans.

By Mark Fadden
Special to the Star-Telegram

As a writer, or “scribbler” as Stephen King calls us, I read a lot. Much to my wife’s chagrin, magazines are scattered all over my home office and piled on the nightstand. I am a lover of words and, while our parents may have tried to teach us that while sticks and stone can break bones, words can never hurt, I realize the power of words. They have great power over us.

That’s why when I came across these words the other day in one of my magazines, I was shocked. “The average American spends only 33 minutes on food preparation each day...and 5 hours, 11 minutes each day watching TV” (sources: USDA Economic Research Service, Nielsen Ratings). I thought about that for several minutes. Granted this is a little dramatic, but here goes: that means we spend ten times the amount of time escaping the rigors of life rather than preparing our bodies to tackle them. Ten times. With numbers like that, even a scribbler can see that we don’t spend enough time taking care of ourselves, which is the reason healthcare has become the huge issue it is now.

The ties that bind

For decades, healthcare has been tied to employment in America. The debate about this link has never been more arduous than it is now with the introduction of the Affordable Care Act, more commonly referred to as “Obamacare.”

According to a recent publication by the Employee Benefits Research Institute (EBRI), two-thirds of all those under age 65, amounting to 151.7 million Americans, currently get their health care coverage through an employer. About 18 percent of the U.S. population, or 43 million Americans, is uninsured because their jobs do not provide health care coverage or they have declined the coverage that is offered. Some think the link between having insurance and being gainfully employed should be broken, which is also at the core of the current Obamacare debate.

The questions seem endless. Will fewer Americans ultimately be covered by private health insurance? Would the number of uninsured fall or rise? Will the health insurance exchanges touted by the Obamacare plan transform the economics of health insurance? Will government’s tinkering with this market cause my premiums, or my taxes, to go up?

Only time can give us the answers to these questions. However, with all of the pomp and circumstance that Washington is giving to this issue, it’s not the real root of the problem. The root of the problem is how we treat ourselves.

Treat the cause, not the symptoms

Wherever you stand on the Obamacare debate, I bet you’ll agree that as Americans, we could do a lot better in taking care of ourselves. In addition to the little nugget up in the first paragraph of this article, here are some more statistics from the American Heart Association you may find hard to swallow: “Among Americans age 20 and older, 154.7 million are overweight. Of these, 78.4 million are obese. The total excess cost related to the current prevalence of adolescent overweight and obesity is estimated to be \$254 billion (\$208 billion in lost productivity secondary to premature morbidity and mortality and \$46 billion in direct medical costs). If current trends in the growth of obesity continue,



total healthcare costs attributable to obesity could reach \$861 to \$957 billion by 2030, which would account for 16 to 18 percent of US health expenditures.”

With numbers like these staring us in the face, it’s no wonder that employers are scrambling to try and get us to take better care of ourselves, if for nothing else than to improve their bottom lines.

Be well

So just how important is it for companies to have a wellness plan in place? And, as an employee, how important is our wellness? According to Abby Cox, MPH, CHES, who is Senior Engagement Manager with Cooper Consulting Partners, a Cooper Aerobics company that helps employers improve employee health and control health care costs, it’s absolutely critical. “Corporate health management programs can have a significant impact on an organization’s bottom line. When designed

strategically and aligned with organizational metrics, health and wellness programs have been shown to increase productivity, reduce absenteeism, lower healthcare cost trends, and improve employee health risk status. Strategic health management programs align business metrics with employee health risk status and reward employees for their engagement in the program. Programming at the worksite might include health risk assessment tools, walking programs, fitness center subsidies and behavior change education.”

In fact, wellness has become such a critical component to an employer’s bottom line that many offer incentives to their employees for keeping healthy. “One of the trends in corporate health management programs is to reward employees through a “preferred” premium rate,” said Cox. “Organizations that have strategically decided to reward employees through

the health plan may require employees to complete certain health objectives or activities in order to earn a lower, less costly premium rate. In addition to preferred premium rates, other incentives might include cash prizes, raffle drawings and paid time off.”

Cox also highlighted the role of personal responsibility of the employee in these incentive, or “outcomes-based,” programs. “Outcomes-based programs, whether tied to a tier system or not, are very valuable because it fosters personal accountability. By requiring employees to take responsibility for their own health — by meeting a health outcome or show improvement in a health outcome to receive a less costly premium rate — is very powerful. Outcomes programs put just the right amount of tension on an individual to get them to act and improve their health.”



amazon fulfillment

Amazon is now hiring in the Dallas/Fort Worth area!

We’re looking for hundreds of Seasonal Fulfillment Associates to help us during our busiest time of the year.

We want you! Why should you want us?

How about...

- * Climate-Controlled Facilities
- * Medical and Prescription Drug Benefits
- * Full-time Schedule
- * Overtime Opportunities
- * Earn Paid Time Off
- * Casual Dress

Cool!

T-shirts and jeans?

Perfect!



Apply online at Amazon.com/Seasonal

The ideal Amazonian candidate possesses a strong work ethic, attention to detail, the ability to meet deadlines, positive work attitude, leadership skills and a commitment to customer service excellence as it relates to product fulfillment.

Amazon is an Affirmative Action - Equal Opportunity Employer - M/F/V/D