



# INTERACTIVE HEALTH: CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTH



## Purpose of Project

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO), in collaboration with workplace wellness experts, sought companies from a variety of industries, business types and sizes to participate in a case-study project. These case studies focus on employers who have developed and fostered a healthy culture in the workplace, one that is designed with elements that support employee health and well-being. The case studies were developed based on HERO's **definition and elements** of a culture of health.

## Overview

For 25 years, Interactive Health has improved the health of companies by improving the health of their employees. Through data-driven, workplace wellness programs, Interactive Health creates meaningful connections between individuals and their health. They catch the early signs of diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and other preventable conditions, and in some cases, they identify conditions participants never knew they had. Then, through a comprehensive set of services ranging from one-on-one coaching to online wellness courses and interactive team-based challenges, Interactive Health supports participants as they work to make healthier lifestyle choices; 30 percent of the employees it identifies as pre-diabetic move their glucose to a healthy level in one year. This one metric — and there are many more — demonstrates that Interactive Health saves lives.

Founded in 1992, the company is based in Schaumburg, Illinois, and includes offices in Owings Mills, Maryland, and the West Loop neighborhood of Chicago. Interactive Health employs 450 full-time

professionals and serves more than 3,000 clients nationwide spanning more than 20 different industries. Along with the employees who work in the three offices, there is a large, home-based workforce that work at client locations. Interactive Health provides flexible wellness solutions for employers, working with brokers and consultants, and health plans and third-party administrators to ensure integration with other health management programs.

The organization also has provided a comprehensive wellness solution for their own employees and spouses for more than a decade. The signature health management program at Interactive Health is branded "**Inspire Health, Lead the Way**"; and employees view the wellness program, which is infused into everyday company activities, as part of their efforts to lead by example in their work with clients. Since the program inception, the strong expectation is that leaders participate in the program and support an environment where employees participate in the program together. Interactive Health pilots and evaluates new features, services, and activities for its customers, as proposed

by employees and potential partners. This test environment drives innovation and ensures that programs and processes work for both the company and its customers. Good health is not only Interactive Health's business proposition, it is the norm of the company culture.

## Key Elements of a Culture of Health and Well-Being

For its own company program, Interactive Health "Inspire Health, Lead the Way" builds its strategy around culture, prevention and wellness-led integrated benefits design. Maintaining a culture of health, collaboration, and team spirit is essential as the company continues to grow as an organization. At the same time, there is an enduring focus on prevention; supporting employees with resources and rich benefits, which are influenced by the data and insights uncovered through the wellness program. Every aspect of the program is measured and evaluated annually, resulting in continuous improvement.

Over the past few years, Interactive Health has (1) completed a merger of two companies with continued growth, (2) moved from a fully-to self-insured medical plan with stop-loss coverage, and (3) broadened eligibility for medical plan coverage to more employees with improved employee benefits — all with a goal of maintaining employee premiums at or close to current levels. The wellness program is a key enabler of this strategy; employees that are engaged with their health make use of preventive healthcare resources that enable them to take action on their health earlier and prevent and control chronic conditions that are key drivers of healthcare costs. The Interactive Health team has a young population, with more than 52 percent younger than 40 years old and about 70 percent female.

This demographic information is relevant to how

the company thinks about communications and program design. While younger employees may have many similar risk factors, they tend to utilize their healthcare resources less frequently. Moreover, their communication preferences and interactions tend to be different. And younger, predominantly female populations tend to experience higher levels of emotional distress. All of these factors are important to Interactive Health as they develop programming for their own employees and their clients.

## Internal Customer Orientation and Shared Values of Health

Along with the health and well-being program offered to its employees, Interactive Health has identified and committed to shared values between the company, their employees, and their customers. Ten foundational pillars are woven into their employee health and well-being program. These pillars are designed to build a stronger organization that fosters growth and collaboration and serve as guide to how employees at Interactive Health communicate and interact and how they serve their clients: fun, trustworthy, enthusiastic, caring, all in, collaborative, thinking big, confident, living our mission, and flexible.

I am  
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Trustworthy  
Enthusiastic  
CaRing  
All in  
Collaborative  
Thinking Big  
ConfIdent  
LiViNg our Mission  
FlEXible

H E A L T H

## **Executive and Organizational Leadership**

One of the elements affecting Interactive Health's culture of health is executive leadership. This starts at the top. Cathy Kenworthy, the former president and chief executive officer (CEO) and current Chief Marketing and Analytics Officer, is a key influencer of this culture of health. She is a board member of the local chapter of the American Heart Association and chairs the city's heart walks this year. Through this role, she rallied Interactive Health employees to donate 1,115 hours to the American Heart Association in 2016.



Cathy shares her positive outlook for the organization: "I am living proof in our organization that knowledge is power, and curiosity about one's health leads to better health. By participating in a health evaluation as a new employee at Interactive Health, I learned that I had an addressable but impactful health issue that needed attention. This was despite a diligent commitment to routinely see my primary care physician. I'm very grateful to be a part of an organization where we work as a team to support and encourage one another to be 'in the know' about our health."

Examples of the CEO's **"Inspire Health, Lead the Way"** culture-enhancing elements include:

- CEO health communication letters sent to employees before the launch of different health initiatives.
- CEO hosted quarterly town hall meetings with employees, that focus on wellness program offerings.
- CEO meetings with managers, which include the promotion of the wellness program, status updates, and outcomes of the wellness initiatives.

The CEO and the company have been recognized by the health industry for their leadership on health

and well-being by external groups. Interactive Health recently received the American Diabetes Association **Health Champion Designation** in 2017 and Illinois Healthiest Employers in 2016 in the 100 to 499

employee division. The Aspen Institute selected Cathy Kenworthy as a member of the second class of its Health Innovators Fellowship. The company has the American Hospital Association's exclusive endorsement for their workplace wellness solutions.

## **Strong Communication and Incentive Plan**

Executive communication strategies

are used in various ways. Examples:

- Promoting health and well-being to the population via social media campaigns and contests, including hashtag promotions, photos, YouTube videos, and other interactive social media elements.
- During team meetings and in department-level communications, information on nutrition education, physical activity, stress management, and other wellness activity promotions is shared. For the company's home-based workforce, the primary communication vehicles are email and social media. In the corporate offices, wellness messages are promoted through flyers placed at desks, posters, and digital signs in break rooms.
- The company uses an internal health portal, an intranet with a wellness page, and social media hashtag (e.g., #InspireHealth) promotions during the year. Text notifications were added to the wellness initiatives to drive participation in various programs, which led to a substantial increase in participation for various program activities.

For the **Inspire Health, Lead the Way** wellness program, incentives include a maximum \$900 premium

reduction for each program participant. Also, a Fitbit and more incentive dollars are linked to points for participating in a variety of well-being activities to help employees earn rewards as they get more active in the program. The activity point system includes participation in the health evaluation, community-based and charitable events, online workshops, challenges, and more. In addition to Interactive Health's work with the American Heart Association, they organize a Thanksgiving food drive; adopt families for the holidays; and prepare meals for Ronald McDonald House. They also allow their employees to donate their wellness incentives to charity and provide matching funds when employees do so.

### ***Resources and Policies for Employee Involvement and Empowerment***

The CEO and executive team provide funding and resources to deliver a simple program and ensure initiatives are connected to company business strategy and daily operations. Interactive Health has a full-time manager to design and implement the wellness program, rotating the assignment from year to year, and has an 11-member wellness committee. Further, 25 volunteer wellness champions spearhead the program, representing each department within the organization. The wellness committee and champions have broad latitude to make decisions about not just the program but also company policies. They encourage walking meetings and stretch breaks, create targeted health education programs for staff during work hours and even established a healthy food policy for meetings and events.



Each year, the people leading the program encourage Interactive Health employees and spouses to complete an on-site health evaluation, which includes a health assessment and biometric health screening, and serves as the foundation for the program. The health assessment is composed of lifestyle questions about mental health, nutrition, physical activity and sleep. With the biometric health screening, the company offers a venipuncture-based clinical evaluation. Through ActiveEngine™, Interactive Health's hub for information and action, individual health risks associated with 10 primary health conditions are identified and prioritized, specifically pre-diabetes, out-of-control diabetes, hypertension, high triglycerides, high LDL cholesterol, metabolic syndrome, tobacco use, anemia, emotional health issues, and a series of other critical issues prioritized for immediate intervention. This comprehensive view of each participant's health provides valuable and understandable information that empowers participants. Participants are encouraged to discuss the findings with their physicians, particularly in the case of high-risk health findings.

The company is tobacco free and has instituted various policies to support office- and home-based workers. Monthly workshops on well-being topics, including emotional health behaviors, are a part of the culture. #IWillListen is one example of a well-received program to bring attention to mental health, with an authentic and simple message. Finally, an increased amount of paid time off ("PTO") and a new peer-support program was added in 2016 to encourage taking time away from work and ensuring everyone uses their own PTO bank each year.

### ***Built Environment***

Interactive Health supports a healthy environment by providing sit/stand desks, air purification systems in office locations, walking paths, and coverage of

preventive care and flu shots through the benefit plan. The organization has on-site fitness center facilities, with membership offered at no charge to employees and has made investments in offerings such as on-site yoga, massage, and step challenges. The company offers to pay a portion of gym memberships for employees who work from home.

Three month-long challenges are offered to employees each year as well as one-day incentive campaigns and fun contests to encourage healthy lifestyles. An especially beloved program feature are the employee-initiated pop-up “flash challenges” promoted through social media (e.g., Instagram) and typically occurring at the busiest times of the year to reduce stress. These have included activities like hula-hoop challenges, bouncing-ball races, and putt-putt competitions.



### ***Community Connections and Altruism***

The company fosters local community connections and altruism through volunteering initiatives tied into the wellness program incentives. In 2016, Interactive Health employees clocked 1,115 philanthropic hours while supporting the American Heart Association. The company also encourages a variety of local philanthropic activities, including outings for Ronald McDonald Foundation meal preparation and collection of clothing items for local shelters.

### ***Key Metrics and Success Measures***

Interactive Health recognizes the wellness program must be measured, based on a specific definition

of success, to be effective and enduring. In 2016, Interactive Health continued to record 77% participation in **“Inspire Health, Lead the Way,”** including more than 60% participation in health evaluations among insured employees. Among repeat participants, 91% met their health goal in 2016 and 97% of participants reported the program was valuable. During this time, participants in the wellness program experienced a decline in claims costs. Below are a few metrics that reflect Interactive Health’s definition of success:

- 43% of the company’s high-risk participants in 2015 migrated to a healthier risk status within one year.
- 95% of low-risk participants in 2015 stayed low risk in 2016.
- More than 60% of participants faxed their health evaluation results to a physician. This is a particularly important measure of success, as connection to a primary care physician is a key goal of the program.
- Comparing claims data between 2015 and 2016, participants in the wellness program generated a 19% reduction in the cost per member per month while non-participants saw an increase of 24% during this same period.

Importantly, employee medical plan premium costs remained the same from 2016 to 2017. Further claims analysis will continue to tighten the connection between the company’s health plans and wellness program design.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, Interactive Health is committed to conducting employee satisfaction surveys to help guide program design. According to the 2016 surveys, employees are satisfied with the wellness program. More than 87% of respondents rated the program as “very good” or “excellent.” About 81% of employees also felt the managers prioritized their team’s participation in wellness activities. Statements from participants

include,

- “I felt that this was the best program ever!”
- “Maybe it’s just me, but this year I really felt like I was part of a team with a common goal.”

## In Summary

At Interactive Health, attention to its most important asset — its people — is paying off. The results show that their workforce is healthier. The program appears to be working well and is appreciated, resulting in a great corporate culture, productive and healthy employees, and a management team that fully supports the initiative.

The Wellness Committee continues to analyze data and listen to employee and external feedback to make sure the program remains focused and effective. New features are on deck for 2017, such as peer-to-peer health challenges, new team challenges, a broader spectrum of programming around emotional health, expansion of the #IWillListen campaign to help individuals identify and support coworkers with emotional health issues.

Company leadership ensures that targeted health and well-being resources are available for all – whether employees are at corporate headquarters, a regional office, working from home or based at a client location. **“Inspire Health, Lead the Way”** makes getting and staying healthy easy for everyone.

## Contributors to this Case Study

This case study is a product of the HERO Culture of Health (CoH) Study Committee and its Values of Culture Work Group. The CoH Study Committee was created to establish a widely accepted definition of a healthy culture to build consensus and understanding of its value when supporting the health and well-being of a population. Case study interviews and development of this report was led by HERO staff and members of the CoH Study Committee. HERO would like to extend a special thank you to the Center for Disease Control for additional support during the editing process.

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The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a national non-profit dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of workplace health and wellbeing that improves the health and well-being of workers, their spouses, dependents and retirees. HERO was established over 20 years ago and is a member driven organization where learning opportunities and research are led by committees. HERO’s work focuses on sharing best practices, advocating for improvements in the field, and providing practical solutions for employers who share HERO’s commitment to health and well-being for employees, families and communities.