



# INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTHCARE CASE STUDY: CREATING A CULTURE OF MOVEMENT AT WORK

## About Intermountain Healthcare

Intermountain Healthcare (Intermountain) is a not-for-profit health system based in Salt Lake City, Utah, with 22 hospitals and 185 clinics in its health services group; 1,100 doctors and caregivers in the Intermountain Medical Group; and a broad range of clinics, services, and health insurance plans from SelectHealth. It is the largest healthcare provider in the Intermountain West, with more than 39,000 employees and serving the healthcare needs of Utah and southeastern Idaho residents. For five consecutive years, SelectHealth was recognized by J.D. Power and Associates as the top ranked health plan for member satisfaction within the mountain area. Intermountain advances its mission of “helping people live the healthiest life possible,” in part, through its LiVe Well program.



## Why Address Physical Inactivity?

When Intermountain first launched the LiVe Well program, the steering committee identified physical activity as one of the first areas to focus on because it was a topic they felt would resonate with nearly everyone. Health Risk Assessment data confirmed physical activity was one of the top five areas of concern for Intermountain employees. Intermountain recognized that, like many American work places, the nature of many jobs and the work environment encouraged long periods of prolonged sitting or inactivity. Moreover, prolonged physical inactivity has been associated with premature mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, metabolic syndrome, and obesity. Providing employees with more options for being physical active at work supports LiVe Well goals to create and foster a sustainable culture of wellness, increase the overall well-being of employees, create shared accountability, and model good health for others.

## How Intermountain Created a Movement Culture at Work

### *Meeting Guidelines*

One of the first steps Intermountain took to create a movement-oriented culture was to develop meeting guidelines because many Intermountain employees spend a significant amount of time in meetings. While many of the meeting guidelines include recommendations to promote healthy catering, they also encourage meeting planners to incorporate opportunities for movement into any meeting that lasts for more than 90 minutes.

Specific recommendations for meetings include:

- Avoid scheduling meetings during lunch hours whenever possible to encourage people to use this time to take a walk or a movement-oriented break
- Decrease one-hour meetings to 50 minutes to allow employees a recovery break between meetings to stretch and walk

- Build movement breaks into meeting agendas whenever a meeting lasts 90 minutes or more
- Encourage participants to stand during meetings
- Arrange for a 15-minute movement break during a full-day meetings in addition to short 5-minute recovery breaks throughout the day

***Encourage Movement During Work***

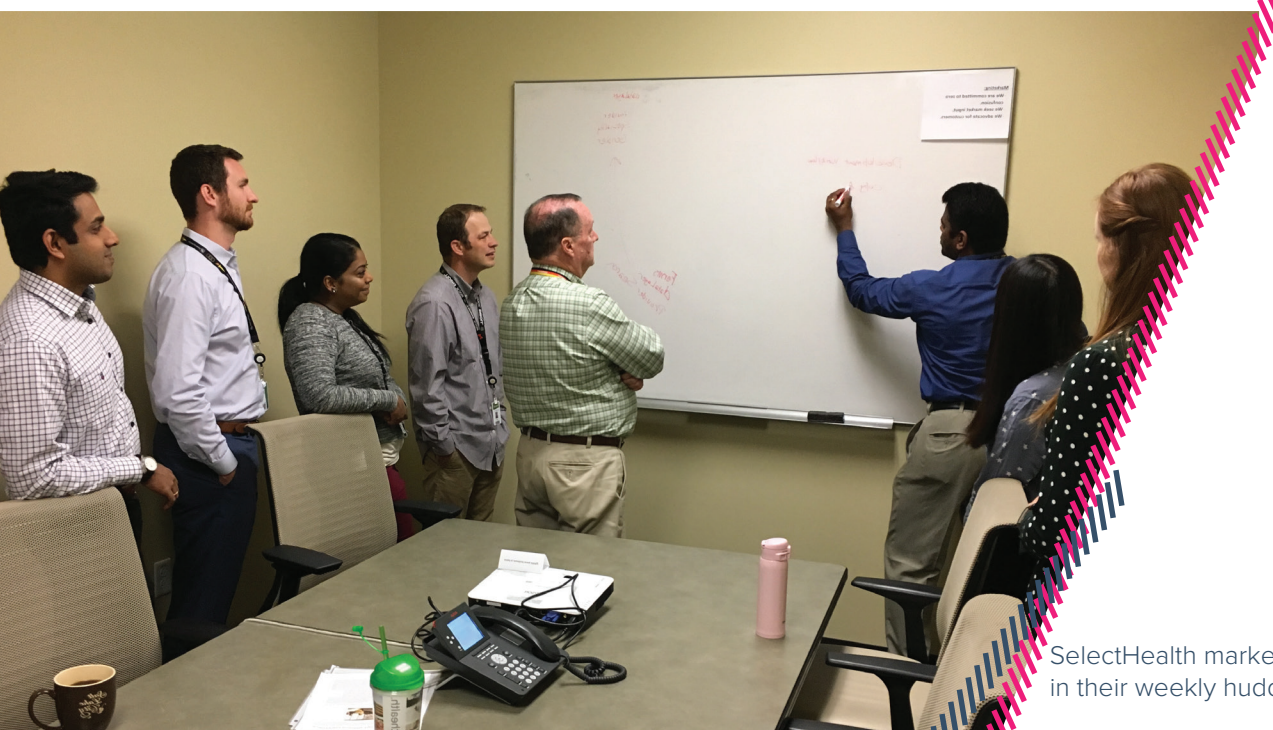
In addition to creating meeting guidelines, Intermountain also wanted to encourage movement outside of organized meetings. Posters were developed to educate employees on some safe ways to move while at their desk or work station. The posters featured Intermountain employees demonstrating eight different ways to move without having to leave their work area. Fun graphical elements, positive messages, and bright colors characterize the posters and the photos depict workers completing the exercises while wearing their typical work clothes. These posters convey the message that movement can be a convenient part of one’s work day, without requiring employees to leave

their work area or change into workout clothes. The posters also reinforce the message that moving during the work day is permitted and encouraged.

***Environmental Supports for Movement***

Additional efforts were made to increase opportunities within the work environment to promote movement during the work day. Specific actions included:

- Measured walking routes around all office buildings and locations to identify safe places for employees to walk, charting the number of steps and distance that could be completed on each route.
- Ensured stairwells are inviting by making them visible, bright, clean, and attractive. Fun and encouraging messaging was added to the walls of the stairwells to reinforce the positive behavior of choosing stairs over the elevator.
- Increasing bicycle storage and shower facilities to promote active commuting. Leaders were encouraged to ensure these areas were safe, secure, and promptly cleaned of snow or ice.



SelectHealth marketing department staff in their weekly huddle board meeting.

Intermountain LiVe Well Physical Activity at Work guidelines were created as part of the Manager's Toolbox on our Intermountain LiVe Well website. It is available to leaders throughout the enterprise along with a suite of other resources including: an overview of LiVe Well, how to be a LiVe Well manager, and ideas for how to support LiVe Well.



- Facilities were also added to increase access to onsite exercise and shower facilities and leaders encouraged employees to take advantage of the Intermountain Employee Discount Program for discounts at commercial gyms, recreation centers, and equipment.
- LiVe Well Gardens were planted at several locations to encourage physical activity and promote well-being.

### Social Support

Intermountain augmented their cultural efforts by fostering social support mechanisms related to movement during the work day. One of the most

**“Living well is kind of a contract. It goes both ways. The health care community takes care of us, but we have a responsibility to take care of ourselves as well. Part of that is eating well, part of that is taking care of our bodies, and part of it is taking care of our spirit. Supporting wellness at work has the potential to make every enterprise more successful.”**

**Dr. Marc Harrison**

essential elements was getting leadership buy-in and support so they created a Resource Guide for Intermountain leaders that stated why it was important for them to encourage physical activity at work and what specific strategies they could use to support movement during the work day. Specific recommendations include:

- Visibly supporting and communicating their support for LiVe Well campaigns and initiatives, making it “ok” to move and stretch during the work day
- Provide positive recognition to clinicians and employees who are serving as positive examples and role models to others
- Lead by example by holding walking and/or standing meetings
- Do what they can to support changes in facility improvements that make it safer and more convenient to move before, during, and after the work day
- Promote flexible schedules that allow employees to add movement to their day
- Encourage local participation in community walk/run events, sports leagues, and Intermountain sponsored events



- Organize lunchtime groups that promote movement and recovery
- Implement the new meeting guidelines

Intermountain also created a positive recognition program called “LiVe Well Heroes”, which allows employees to nominate their peers for their commitment to living well through healthy choices and actions. A small number of nominees are selected and honored by senior leaders and the Heroes’ invited guests at a LiVe Well celebration.

***Programs to Support Physical Activity***

With the cultural elements in place to create an environment that supported more movement at work, Intermountain added programs to help individual employees safely and effectively add more physical activity to their lives. Specific programs included:

- Pedometers were provided to all employees and new hires
- Online learning modules provided education on how to live a more active life
- Launched a 10,000 Step Campaign, featuring a raffled grand prize trip to Hawaii



Intermountain employees enjoying a walking meeting, which is a common way that to build movement into their work.

 **Conclusion**

Intermountain’s approach to increasing physical activity is comprehensive and multi-faceted. Cultural support in the form of meeting guidelines, environmental changes in facilities, and leadership education complements the programmatic efforts. Social support and positive recognition is also incorporated, so reinforcement operates from the top down and from the bottom up. Physical activity is only one of many different aspects of health and well-being addressed by LiVe Well, but perhaps ones of the most visible. Anyone visiting an Intermountain facility is sure to notice attractive stair wells, employees walking together and using standing desks. They may overhear employees sharing their number of steps earned or discussing tips from a LiVe Well module on getting more active. These are but a few indicators of Intermountain’s sustainable culture of wellness.



Dr. Marc Harrison, president and CEO of Intermountain Healthcare is an avid wellness advocate and triathlete who encourages employees to pursue a physically active, healthy lifestyle both at home and work: