



MAUI JIM: 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 that have developed and actively fostered a healthy culture in the workplace, one that is intentionally designed with elements and indicators that support employee health and well-being. The case studies were developed based on HERO's **definition and elements** of a culture of health.

Company Overview

Maui Jim is the world's third largest manufacturer of sunglasses, and with the patented lens technology of Polarized Plus2, each pair of Maui Jim sunglasses delivers a visual experience for its customers, alongside with UV protection. The company is based in Peoria, Illinois, with facilities in 13 countries. While the company started in Hawaii, a vast majority of the 1,000 employees work at the Illinois headquarters.

Customer service is paramount at Maui Jim, and employees are encouraged to do whatever it takes to please its customers. In fact, team members are rewarded for making interactions memorable. This approach comes through in the Maui Jim Promise: "Always show our true colors—true colors that come shining through in our superior customer service. We promise that you will always be greeted with a friendly voice and a dedicated representative. We want you to be happy. That's why we stand behind every pair of sunglasses we make."

Program Background

The Maui Jim wellness program centers on treating employees as family. The culture of wellness is built around two Hawaiian expressions: "ohana" and "aloha." The expression, "ohana" means "family," that families are bound together. The aloha spirit is the backbone of Hawaiian family culture, which embraces respect, trust, integrity, and creativity.

To live the aloha spirit and build and maintain a strong 'ohana, Maui Jim is committed to attracting and retaining the best individuals in the industry. To do this requires a holistic program of initiatives for all employees. Program highlights include:

- Annual biometric screenings and health assessments
- Lower healthcare premiums for those who remain low risk, or achieve a lower health risk status
- The Sweet 16 Challenge that emphasizes work-life balance, giving back, positive communication, and even doing something nice for others, such as not speeding while driving
- Fresh fruit offered free to everyone on site in break and lunch rooms every Monday

- Basketball games in the warehouse during breaks
- Financial planning seminars
- Coaching on various wellness topics

Culture of Health (CoH) Elements

The Maui Jim program manages many aspects of an employee’s well-being, focusing not just on physical wellness but also on social, financial, and community well-being. The following culture of health elements stand out as ones that make their program successful:

Leadership involvement

Leaders promote well-being from the top down with the philosophy of being healthy and happy, both at work and outside of work. Leaders set the tone throughout the company through a relaxed, open-door, and trusting business culture—



leaders even promote the casual work policy by wearing flip-flops and shorts, sometimes even during winter months. Leaders take part in on-site activities such as fitness programs, picnics, screenings, and lunch and learn events. Managers also often lead teams on walks and hikes during the workday.

Connection to the community

Community support is an important part of the Maui Jim culture. There are many examples of how Maui Jim employees express ‘ohana and aloha, and three stand out as unique to the company:

- Annual Maka Maka Run with proceeds donated to a local nonprofit that provides resources for low-income populations
- A CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) profit-

sharing program. Introduced this year, local farmers—via a non-profit organization—sell fresh produce to participating employees at Maui Jim. A portion of the profits from the sale of the produce benefit local low-income communities

- During the recent recession, Maui Jim paid employees to work at local nonprofits instead of laying them off. This approach was a triple win: it further connected Maui Jim to local nonprofits, it continued to underscore the organization’s dedication to employees, and it ensured that talent was retained when the market turned around

A supportive built environment

Most Maui Jim employees work at the headquarters complex, which is designed to encourage healthy living. Some of the more creative and progressive examples include:

- On-site gyms open 24/7 with lockers and showers. As part of ‘ohana, gyms are also available for spouses, helping everyone feel replenished and recharged and ready to take on the day
- An on-site open concept market, open 24/7, for employees to purchase fresh and healthy food at work
- A one-mile walking trail that circles the headquarters, used by employees and company leaders throughout the year
- Ergonomic consulting once per year

Rewards and recognition

Maui Jim looks to financial well-being as a cornerstone of their overall culture of health. Profit-sharing and stock options are offered to encourage ownership in



the company. Tuition reimbursement is also offered to all employees as a way for Maui Jim to invest in and grow leaders at all levels of the organization.

In addition to financial rewards, Maui Jim holds an annual company-wide luau in the summer and holiday party for employees. Frequent cookouts, ice cream socials, and other activities help focus on employee morale and turnover.

Training and learning opportunities

Learning is another strong culture of health pillar at Maui Jim, tying to the aloha spirit within the organization. High-potential employees have access to ongoing leadership courses and all employees can take financial literacy courses, which tie into the robust benefits package, so they are well educated on the importance of managing their future.

Educational seminars are offered at work by local experts, such as: runners, nutritionists for cooking demos, and fitness trainers conducting classes that are tailored to lunch and break times.

Key Results

Maui Jim has enjoyed success at many levels with their culture of health programming. The proof is in the results. Because the population is overwhelmingly “low risk,” healthcare costs are under control, and turnover is not an issue.

- Annual health assessments and biometrics screenings completion is typically high, at 95%, as these activities are tied to the program’s wellness incentive. In 2015, 80% of employees were considered low risk, compared to the industry norm of 60%—which is a testament to the culture and health-promoting opportunities at the company.
- Healthcare costs are monitored throughout each year and during the last four years have only increased 2%–3.
- Employee turnover is a key measurement. Employees proclaim the company the best place to work, and the company president, Mike Dalton, notes that, “The biggest thing for us is the employee. We have little, to no, turnover.”

Companies from any industry would welcome this level of employee loyalty and success.

Lessons Learned

While Maui Jim has seen overall success in their wellness program, awareness and engagement are areas of opportunity.

Company-wide events such as the luau, cookouts, and ice-cream socials have seen the most employee interest and participation. Fitness classes and gyms also get plenty of participation. However, when the company attempted to track and reward use at the

member level, employees were concerned about confidentiality and pushed back. Maui Jim then changed the focus from data collection to participation by encouraging members to use a pseudonym like the name of a favorite super hero.

With formal surveys, Maui Jim learned they have better success with face-to-face feedback, which is possible because a majority of employees work at the headquarters campus.

Some on-site classes, such as healthy habits coaching and nutritional cooking classes, have lower than expected participation. Maui Jim sees the importance of these classes and has looked for other ways to increase involvement, such as providing healthy lunch and learns during breaks, providing lunches for attendees, and holding classes after hours.



Conclusion

Maui Jim embraces the true Hawaiian view of 'ohana and aloha in every aspect of its culture of health. In doing so, Maui Jim also believes that happy employees produce a great product and the best customer service in the world. This overall approach has improved employee morale, lowered turnover, reduced healthcare costs, and increased customer satisfaction and profits—all while wearing shorts, Hawaiian shirts, and flip-flops.

“We don’t take ourselves seriously,” Maui Jim Company President Mike Dalton, said. “But we take what we do [making customers happy] very, very seriously.”

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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for additional support during the editing process.

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