



NEWS RELEASE

(For immediate release)

Want more bang for your wellness buck? New study shows a comprehensive approach is needed for successful workplace wellness initiatives

Health Enhancement Research Organization study shows that organizational and leadership support, comprehensive programs, program integration, and incentives are key strategies to increase the effectiveness of workplace health and well-being initiatives

WACONIA, MN (January 27, 2020) — Everyone wants more for their money. Employers especially are balancing an investment in employee well-being and efforts to create a health-supporting workplace culture with a need to demonstrate tangible outcomes to senior leadership, an executive board, or investors. A new study from the Health Enhancement Research Organization ([HERO](#)) unlocks the keys to successful employee well-being initiatives. The study, [Development and Validity of a Workplace Health Promotion Best Practices Assessment](#), identifies four areas of well-being best practices that have proven to be predictive of success, including: organizational and leadership support, incentives, comprehensive programs, and program integration.

The study draws upon data from 812 companies that completed the HERO Health and Well-being Best Practices [Scorecard](#) in Collaboration with Mercer® between January 2015 and October 2017. The HERO Scorecard is a free, online assessment tool that companies of any size and industry can use to evaluate their health and well-being initiatives, benchmark themselves against other companies, and better understand how they can improve their efforts. The companies included in the study sample collectively represent more than 4.7 million employees.

According to Mary Imboden, Ph.D., lead author on the study and a HERO research associate, investigators analyzed information about the well-being strategies that were used and how effective the organizations were in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their health and well-being initiatives. Of all the practices listed on the HERO Scorecard, 24 emerged as the most predictive of successful initiatives, and the strongest drivers were in the areas of organizational and leadership support and incentives.

“While this study reinforces the knowledge that leaders have tremendous influence when it comes to encouraging buy-in for well-being initiatives, increasing participation and outcomes requires a more comprehensive approach,” said Imboden. “Employers want to know how to move the needle on their well-being outcomes, and this study illustrates the importance of a comprehensive approach and which strategies will get you farther, faster.”

The HERO study, which was published recently in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, details the specific practices most strongly associated with effective initiatives, including:

- Demonstrate organizational commitment to health and well-being.
- Engage employees at all levels of the organization.
- Develop a strategic plan and reporting for multiple stakeholders.
- Target communications to diverse groups.
- Offer financial incentives for specific activities.
- Allow benefit-eligible spouses/partners to earn incentives.
- Offer individualized, population-based programs in multiple channels.
- Offer lifestyle and disease management programs.
- Ensure programs include robust features (e.g., social connections).
- Provide tools to track health.
- Integrate programs, communication, data, and strategy.
- Integrate well-being programs with other employee benefits.

According to Sara Johnson, Ph.D., co-president and CEO of Pro-Change Behavior Systems, Inc., whose organization led the analyses, the results from this most recent study were consistent with multiple areas of research, including the HERO Culture of Health Study Committee’s inclusion of executive leadership, organizational leadership, and policies and procedures among the 24 key elements of an organization’s culture of health.

“There are many strategies employers can use to advance employee health and well-being, but research has once again shown that, for best results, a comprehensive approach is the way to go,” said Johnson. “The fact that leadership has such a strong influence is good news for employers of all sizes because leadership and cultural support for health and well-being is possible everywhere.”

https://hero-health.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HERO_Infographic_Scorecard-engagement_FINAL-FOR-DIST_011320.pdf

To learn more, visit <https://hero-health.org>.

Experts involved in this study included: *Jessica Grossmeier, Ph.D.*, principal investigator and vice president of research for HERO; *Mary Imboden, Ph.D.*, research study lead author and research associate for HERO; *Pro-Change Behavior Systems, Inc.*, which served as lead data analyst and study co-author; *Mangen Research Associates*, which served as consulting statistician and study co-author; *Jennifer Pitts* provided literature review and served as study co-author; *Steven Noeldner*, HERO Research Committee chair, HERO Scorecard co-developer, and study co-author; *Kristi Rahrig Jenkins*,

HERO Research Study Subcommittee co-chair and study co-author; **Shawn Mason**, HERO Research Study Subcommittee member and study co-author; and the **Mercer research team**.

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About HERO – Based in Waconia, MN, HERO (the Health Enhancement Research Organization) is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 corporation that was established in 1997. HERO is dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices that improving the health and well-being of employees, their families and communities. To learn more, visit www.hero-health.org. Follow us on [Twitter](#) @heroehm, [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

About Pro-Change Behavior Systems – Pro-Change Behavior Systems is celebrating its 20th year as an internationally recognized research and development company comprised of behavior change scientists and software developers dedicated to the systematic implementation of best practices of behavior change in the development and evaluation of well-being solutions. To learn more, visit www.prochange.com.