

# Corporate Wellness. *4Leaf Vision* of a whole new ballgame



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**Trillions of \$\$.** Up to 80% of the cost of healthcare in the United States is driven by our food choices. For most businesses (and other large organizations), disease and the cost of healthcare are huge problems. Not only does "disease care" cost a lot of money, it also takes a mighty toll on employee productivity, creativity, absenteeism and morale.

The numbers are staggering. A 2014 Towers Watson survey of 595 American corporations put the average total health expenditures per employee in 2013 at \$11,938. So for an organization of 1,000 people, that's an annual medical bill of roughly \$12 million (mostly paid by the company). In a company with 10,000 employees, the employer portion approaches \$100 million.

**Traditional corporate wellness programs don't work.** Virtually all of the 595 companies in the survey already have a wellness program in place---yet the cost of healthcare for employers keeps going up. That's because those programs are missing the single most important ingredient---The FOOD.

By simply helping employees and their families adopt a true, health-promoting way of eating, those medical bills can be cut in half. We estimate that for any organization---the cost of healthcare can be cut by 20% to 50% or more. Why the wide range in the estimate?

**Leadership.** That's the big variable. The question is: *How important will this health promotion initiative be in your organization?*

The degree of success for this type of project is directly proportional to the strength of *leadership* from the top executive in the organization---the CEO, the president, the mayor or the governor. If it's not important to the CEO, this program will not work very well.

**But will the people actually change?** Yes! When people become educated about the "big picture" impact of their food choices---many of them will voluntarily change---for any number of reasons. But, by offering an opportunity to participate in a well-organized corporate program, the odds of that positive change rise sharply. **Five reasons:**

1. **Leadership.** With a CEO and executive team that truly "get it" about food, they are equipped to greatly influence behavior in a group setting---by making food-based wellness an integral part of the company culture.
2. **Education.** The enterprise can organize and conduct training at the place of business---during working hours. Employee cafeterias can become huge assets during this process.
3. **Peer support.** By organizing program participants into groups or teams, each employee will have the benefit of receiving support and encouragement from their teammates---and they will all be accountable to each other.
4. **Green Initiatives.** Most corporations already have *green* initiatives but are missing the single biggest opportunity to truly make a difference---while enhancing their public image in the marketplace.
5. **Incentive\$.** The CEO can authorize financial incentives tied to participation and level of success...discounts on company products, lower

employee cost of health insurance, discounts in company cafeteria, and even cash bonuses.

**More good news.** Certainly, the opportunity for a medium to large organization (10,000 employees) to save \$40 or \$50 million a year on health care costs would be fantastic! But there's more.

There are other benefits from such a program that might even be more important to the long-term success of the enterprise...

*Less absenteeism, higher productivity, better morale, less employee turnover and enhanced public image: most admired, best place to work, greenest company & the nation's healthiest workforce.*



**Strategic advantage.** As the first wave of CEOs begin to take advantage of the many benefits that come from a healthier workforce, other companies who don't undertake similar initiatives will have trouble competing with those who do.

The bottom line: True health promotion improves the ability of an enterprise to gain market share; a POWERFUL reason why it must be sponsored and led by the CEO.

Sincerely,

*Jim Hicks*

J. Morris Hicks (July 23, 2014)

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