

Employee health codes of conduct

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Most Employees Like the Idea of a Health Contract



© ROBBINS & WANSINK (J. of Workplace Health Mgmt 2015); Wansink (Slim By Design 2014)

A Health Code of Conduct," lead author and doctoral candidate Rebecca Robbins explains, "Is a contract that employees sign at the start of employment to opt into a work culture that promotes and rewards employee health and wellness through monetary rewards, such as prescription discounts and reduced co-pays, and through recognition programs." Credit: Daniel Miller

Workplace wellness can be a positive source of health and empowerment for employees. While many employers have found that wellness programs are ineffective at engaging employees, a new strategy proposed by Cornell UnivInternational Journal of Workplace Health Managementersity researchers may be just the solution!

According to the new study published in the *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, Health Codes of Conduct (HCC) offer an empowering and effective way to engage employees in wellness initiatives. "A Health Code of Conduct," lead author and doctoral candidate Rebecca Robbins explains, "Is a contract that employees sign at the start of employment to opt into a work culture that promotes and rewards employee health and wellness through monetary rewards, such as prescription discounts and reduced co-pays, and through recognition programs."

Robbins and co-author Brian Wansink, Director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab and author of *Slim by Design: Mindless Eating Solutions for Everyday Life*, surveyed 149 working adults and interviewed and additional 8 working adults and to examine the reactions that employees had towards the idea of implementing a Health Code of Conduct and what health strategies they thought would be most effective in keeping workers engaged and healthy.

All of the people interviewed and surveyed were moderately to strongly supportive of implementing Health Codes of Conduct with the exception of obese participants. Features of the HCC that were most supported by participants were those that were easy to implement such as requiring employees to take an annual physical, encouraging employees to follow exercise routines and simply telling employees to stay home when sick.

Robbins' and Wansink's findings illustrate that adoption of Health Codes of Conduct in workplaces is a feasible way for managers to effectively engage employees in wellness activities including initiatives such as annual exams, screenings, and physical activity requirements. Wansink notes, "Rewarding employees for complying with health initiatives can be as easy as lowering co-pays, offering prescription discounts, vacation days, and vaccinations. Offering recognition is also a great way to show employees that their [health](#) and wellbeing are valued by the company."

Provided by Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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