

In This Issue



From Dean and Alan

2008 was a year of incredible growth for the company, both in the US and abroad. Dean and Alan discuss new products, technology and partnerships. [>read more](#)



2009 Promo Kit

Striving for better and better customization and service promotion, Workplace Options incorporates new features and materials in the 2009 Promotional Kit. [>read more](#)



Many Happy Returns

Work-Life expert, Sharon O'Malley reveals how workplace wellness initiatives produce return on investment, as well as boost employee morale. [>read more](#)



Well Worth It

Workplace Options' Rita Piper, Vice President of Wellness Services, discusses a variety of Advantage Live Well plans designed to suit individual clients' objectives. [>read more](#)



Around the Clock

Through Advantage Answer 24, Workplace Options' Masters-level clinicians provide 24/7 advanced client support. [>read more](#)



Around the Globe

Workplace Options' Senior Vice President of Global Products, Mary Ellen Gornick, discusses worldwide service delivery via Advantage Worldwide. [>read more](#)



The Newly Upgraded Work-Life Website

The Advantage 2.0 Website has successfully upgraded design/content flexibility, and customization for clients and their employees. [>read more](#)

Your Options

keeping our partners well-informed

Fall/Winter 2008



WORKPLACE OPTIONS

2008 has been a year of incredible growth and change for Workplace Options. It is with great pride that we remain the largest provider of work-life services in the United States. We continue to enhance our offerings with new products and technologies that maintain our role as the work-life industry leader.

Another Year of Great Developments

We continue to expand internationally as well. Employee Advisory Resource (EAR), with its service centers located in London and Dublin, is the hub for our international services. We are currently providing work-life and EAP support to employees in over 100 countries throughout the globe. Our latest enhancement is the ability to offer our world class training programs to the international market.

Here at home, we have received an amazing response from the launch of our new end user website, Advantage 2.0. Our wellness products are helping to keep employees fit and healthy. And our beautiful new service center in Raleigh is staffed 24/7 to assist our callers and those of our EAP partners through the services of Advantage Answer 24. We invite you to read more about these newest products in this issue of Your Options.

We would also like to welcome some new members to our team and let you know about some changes in our executive staff. Adrienne Bacchus, our Vice President of Account Management, brings with her 19 years of experience in the work-life and EAP fields. She replaces Rita Piper, who was named Vice President of Wellness Services. With her keen interest in fitness and health, and her intimate knowledge of the work-life industry, Rita is very excited about her new role at WPO. Darrell

Shiple, long time Director of our Raleigh operation, has been named Vice President of U.S. Service Delivery. Mary Ellen Gornick has assumed the role of Senior Vice President of Global Products, and is working hard to expand our reach even further.

We'd like to invite you to take a look at our new Corporate website: www.workplaceoptions.com. The site now has a completely new look and feel. While you are there, check some of our latest employee polls and up to date press releases about what is going on at WPO.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Your Options. Work-life expert Sharon O'Malley reports on the latest innovations in workplace wellness programs. Rita Piper shares information about WPO's wellness offerings. Darrell Shiple lets you into the world of the night owls who staff our call center overnight. Lisa Zereski shares with us the many new features of Advantage 2.0. Finally, take a peek at our 2009 Promotional Kit.

As always, thank you for helping with the continued success of Workplace Options.

Dean and Alan



WE'VE LISTENED TO YOUR CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM THE 2008 PROMOTIONAL KIT, AND WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON WAYS TO DELIVER AN EVEN MORE USEFUL KIT FOR YOUR 2009 PROMOTIONAL SUCCESS!

Always Striving to Make Service Promotion Even Easier

By Sandy Egan, Director of Service Promotion



Workplace Options has always placed a high value on delivering products and services that are flexible, affordable, and customizable. The same philosophy extends not only to our work-life/EAP offerings, but also to the tools we provide our clients to promote the services.

That's why, every year, we make efforts to respond to the client feedback we received from the previous year's Promotional Kit, in order to make it even easier for clients to promote the services to the workplaces and employees who benefit from them.

The 2009 Promotional Kit strives to enhance our clients' promotional experience by including:

- An unprecedented level of material customization
- Extended Spanish-language support
- 72 Monthly Message files, promoting each monthly theme (each of the 12 months have English and Spanish versions for 3 service levels)

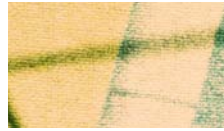
- 12 monthly themed posters, as well as 2 additional resource and referral posters
- Our most user-friendly CD interface to facilitate quick and easy access to just the files you need

We are in the process of putting the finishing touches on the new Promotional Kit, and your Account Managers will be updating you shortly on when you can expect to receive it. Upon receipt of your kit, you will also be invited to a Webinar, which will provide an overview of the contents, and suggestions for materials implementation. We hope you will join us for that.

In addition to providing the promotional materials on CD, we will also post them as downloadable documents on our website: www.workplaceoptions.com

In looking forward to another productive year in 2009, we also continue to welcome your comments and feedback.

Sharon O'Malley reveals how workplace wellness initiatives produce return on investment, as well as boost employee morale



MANY HAPPY RETURNS

If your organization hasn't started a formal wellness program to help employees make lifestyle choices that can reduce their health care worries and claims, you're missing out on the savings a healthier work force can reap. Research on corporate wellness programs reveals that the benefit-to-cost ratio ranges from \$1.49 to \$4.91 in benefits for every dollar spent on the program.

Overall, wellness programs are believed to save employers between 3 percent and 6 percent on health plan costs—not including the savings organizations reap from having a healthier work force that's more productive and out sick less often.

One example: An energy company with a new wellness program was able to reduce absenteeism by 17.5 percent, saving \$243 per employee per year.

Almost 70 percent of employers offer some sort of wellness program, estimates the Society for Human Resource Management. It's no wonder: In seven years, employer health insurance premiums have risen four times faster than wages. And healthcare experts say much American disease—attributed to the effects of overeating, lack of exercise, cigarettes and alcohol—could be prevented. Organizations are trying to reduce those costs by helping their employees prevent chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.

Typical programs offer ways for employees to lose weight, exercise more, stop smoking and adopt other healthy behaviors. In addition, more organizations are asking employees to take a health risk assessment, which can reveal unhealthy behaviors so the employer can help direct the employee to resources to change them. Some employers even pair at-risk employees with health coaches, who can keep the employee on track and offer advice.

Most common is the wellness program that pays. The Society for Human Resource Management estimates that 43 percent of companies offer their employees incentives to display healthy behaviors or stop unhealthy ones. Some firms offer a cash reward per pound of weight lost, for instance, or prizes for participating in exercise programs. Others provide a discount on health premiums to employees who don't smoke or who quit. Many pay for gym memberships and Weight Watchers sessions.

A few aren't just encouraging participation; they require it. The controversial practice, which has already landed Scotts Miracle-Gro in court, imposes sanctions—denial of health coverage and even termination—on employees who refuse.

Scotts Miracle-Gro's well-publicized mandatory program forbids employees to smoke—even at home—in states where

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Whether mandatory or voluntary, wellness programs offer benefits beyond lower health care costs.

EMPLOYERS CREDIT THEIR WELLNESS EFFORTS WITH SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN PRODUCTIVITY AND BETTER MORALE.

it's legal for an employer to do that. The firm does random tobacco testing and says it will fire smokers. One employee who says he was fired for this reason has sued the company.

In addition, Scotts employees who refuse to take an exhaustive health-risk assessment pay \$40 a month extra for health premiums.

Lawyers warn that mandatory wellness programs can step on laws ranging from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to the Americans with Disabilities Act to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. Yet some predict organizations will figure out how to require participation in wellness programs without breaking the law.

Whether mandatory or voluntary, wellness programs offer benefits beyond lower health care costs. Employers credit their wellness efforts with significant gains in productivity and better morale.

Examples: A large federal agency reported a 12.5 percent higher increase in productivity among employees who participate in its fitness program than among those who don't. A major advertising firm says 63 percent of employees who enrolled in its fitness program credit it with a boost in their productivity. And 75 percent said it improved their morale.

In addition, participants report they have improved their energy and professional image, and their employers are seeing less turnover and, overall, healthier employees.

Aside from preventing chronic illnesses, wellness programs can help reduce day-to-day stress and the use of sick leave. Employees who eat right, sleep enough, exercise regularly and stay away from cigarettes and alcohol often fare better when it comes to ailments like hypertension, migraine headaches and even allergies, say healthcare experts. That means they call in sick less often, and when they are at work, they don't suffer from "presenteeism"—a state of showing up for work but not feeling well enough to be productive.

Still, small employers have been reluctant to embrace wellness programs, perhaps because wellness is one of those "it-costs-money-to-make-money" propositions. When you engage employees in a wellness program, the first thing you do is send them to the doctor to gauge their health and their risks. So people who rarely or never go to the doctor make appointments and go. Some of them will discover that they're sick and need treatment.

That costs money. In fact, a wellness program that properly assesses the health of a work force will initially increase claims-related costs by around 1 percent or 2 percent. The 3 percent to 6 percent savings comes later, when those same employees are healthy because that first trip to the doctor stopped a potentially expensive medical condition from materializing.

Small business owners often feel they can't absorb that 1 percent to 2 percent. In addition, small businesses often can't afford to pay for formal risk assessments, on-site gyms and other

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You don't always need a huge volume to get a small discount or free delivery—

PERKS THAT COULD ENCOURAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEMSELVES.



Work-Life expert, Sharon O'Malley is editor of HR Specialist: Compensation & Benefits (www.thehrspecialist.com).

wellness benefits that might keep their workers healthy, figuring they don't have enough volume to recoup the expense via fewer medical claims. That doesn't mean small employers can't take small steps to help their employees stay healthy and show them they care about their well-being. Here are some possibilities:

Ask your insurance provider if your employees can tap its online risk assessment or educational materials about prevention and treatment. Inquire about self-tracking exercise programs so if even one employee wants to participate or download information, it's available.

Spread success stories around the office. If an employee is healthy because of an early diagnosis and wants to share his or her story, publicize it in the employee newsletter and during a staff meeting. Or share success stories from newspapers and trade publications.

In a small company, HR is likely to hear about the employees' common health problems, like high cholesterol or asthma. Purchase disease management programs that target the diseases that you know your small staff struggles with.

Form an employee wellness committee to figure out how the organization can help employees stay fit and healthy on a limited budget. Members can recruit co-workers to sign up for gym memberships, for example, and then approach the gym for a group discount.

Partner with nearby small employers to pump up your purchasing power. If three of your employees want to join a gym, that might not be enough to trigger a discount. But if five businesses each have three gym rats, that might do the trick.

Ask local vendors how they can help. One company arranged with a local grocer to take orders from employees for fresh fruits and vegetables and deliver them to the office for free. The employees pay for their own produce, while the organization makes it easy for them to add these healthy foods to their diets.

You don't always need a huge volume to get a small discount or free delivery—perks that could encourage your employees to take better care of themselves. Even if you help your employees get a little bit healthier, you could reap some cost savings in the long run.

Workplace Options is excited about the continued success of our Advantage Live Well menu of workplace wellness solutions, including enhancements to Wellness Coaching.

Live Well. Well Worth It.

By Rita Piper, Vice President of Wellness Services

Why are companies eager to implement wellness services and programs? According to the Milken Institute, a Santa Monica think tank, the economic impact of chronic illness takes a toll on workplace productivity in the form of missed work and reduced performance. Using services that emphasize changing lifestyles along with prevention and early detection of disease could reduce the number of illnesses by 40 million cases and save \$1.6 trillion by 2023.

What trends are we finding in workplace wellness? More companies are offering financial incentives to employees who have healthy lifestyle habits, take a health risk assessment, connect with a wellness coach or participate in other wellness and fitness programs. A survey by Watson Wyatt and the National Business Group on Health (NBGH) shows that 44 percent of large employers presently offer health coaches and another 13 percent plan to offer them next year. Another survey by Watson Wyatt and the NBGH shows that 46 percent of employers currently offer incentives/penalties for healthy/unhealthy behaviors and another 26 percent plan to do so this year.

Workplace Options' Live Well products can provide your clients with the boost they need to develop a healthier workforce.

For the highest return on investment, we recommend a three-prong approach:

1. **On-Site Biometric Screenings** including cholesterol panel plus glucose, blood pressure and body fat.
2. **Health Risk Assessment**, which is a state-of-the-art comprehensive on-line assessment generating both personal and aggregate reports that identify strategic areas of health and wellness concerns in key categories:
 - Heart Health
 - Fitness

- Nutrition
- Smoking
- Weight Management
- Stress
- Cancer
- Safety

3. **Incentive-based Wellness Coaching** with outbound calling to the top 20% of high-risk population based on HRA and screening results. The program includes consultation with a Wellness Coach via the phone or internet for:

- Weight management
- Nutrition
- Smoking cessation
- Fitness and exercise
- Chronic or specialty conditions

Additionally, the Wellness Coaching program includes access to a customized Coaching Web Portal that provides:

- Online interactive behavioral modification modules: Living Lean, Living Smoke Free, Living Fit
- Online articles and tools including more than 40 questionnaires and health profiles, multi-media instruction, diet and fitness tracking tools, and downloadable tipsheets
- Online video blogs; live Internet radio educational sessions

We encourage you to speak with your Account Manager about the enhanced wellness offerings designed as effective tools in reining in health care costs, and more importantly in creating a workplace that's healthy for everyone.



Advantage Answer 24 provides support

AROUND THE CLOCK

By Darrell Shipley,
Vice President of U.S. Service Delivery

“Can you provide my website login and password?”

“I need to speak with a chemistry teacher for freshman level chemistry questions.”

“I am currently homeless and need emergency shelter information.”

“My husband is drinking and just lost his third position, can you provide referrals for substance abuse treatment options?”

“I am drinking heavily and am having thoughts of killing myself – I need to talk to someone.”

In the first eight months of the Advantage 24 program our EAP counselors have heard all of these comments and many others. Our Masters-level clinicians have undergone extensive training in multiple case management programs to be able to provide the most advanced clinical support available telephonically. The 16 counselors working 24 hours a day, seven days a week have taken calls from Ireland, the United Kingdom, all 50 States and several other countries. The counselors have become proficient in contacting emergency referrals and sending emergency response teams to the five boroughs in New York City as well as remote areas of the West of Ireland.

There certainly have been challenges with dialects and accents, phraseology and expectations, but sound clinical skills have overcome these challenges and the counselors have developed resources and expertise in delivery of service which they are sharing with their partners both domestically and abroad.

The counselors have varying backgrounds from child welfare to medical social work. All have multiple years of clinical experience and bring empathic abilities as well as a wealth of clinical skills covering mental health and substance abuse issues.

“We are a team offering sound clinical expertise to our clients and providing support to our team members. We have learned a great deal in the past eight months – mostly about flexibility and change,” stated Sharon Kilpatrick, team lead.

The team is looking forward the next set of challenges as we grow to serve additional clients.



Advantage Worldwide provides support

AROUND THE GLOBE

By Mary Ellen Gornick,
Senior Vice President of Global Products

As industrialization and globalization progress, they give rise to mental health concerns. Across the globe, there is evidence that individuals are struggling with the day-to-day challenges of living, while experiencing significant societal transitions. Corporations are affected by these factors in workforce performance and are seeking to contain the related business costs. Employee Assistance Programs provide the necessary support.

Advantage Worldwide Workplace Options (WPO), in conjunction with its UK division Employee Advisory Resource (EAR), has launched Advantage Worldwide, which provides Employee Assistance and Work-Life Services in over 100 countries. Whether it is for a handful of expatriate workers or entire international divisions, Workplace Options' network of 8,000 employee assistance providers deliver a common global platform of exceptional employee support services.

Delivering programs in over 100 countries with different languages and cultures can be daunting. WPO provides a service that maximizes common elements: Delivering a program for employees and their families that is voluntary and confidential, and accessible 24/7/365 via web or phone. Members are offered a six (6)-session model with face-to-face or short-term telephonic counseling. There is centralized oversight of clinical quality and standards of practice. Providers use a centralized, web based case management system that includes innovative outcome measurement and tracking on all cases. All issues receive timely response and resolution.

With the WPO model, customizations and adaptations are made to the core program as

needed. When designing an International Employee Assistance Program (IEAP) we focus on the cultural congruence of both the culture of the client company and the country in which the program is delivered. This includes working with the local Human Resources on the best approach to branding and implementing the program. Clinical services are offered for both English speakers and non-English speakers. Promotional material is customized to the language spoken at the worksite. Additional features that are available are Manager Assistance, Training and Critical Incident Support.

Global Account Management Accounts are supported by Global Account Management (GAM) responsible for overall strategy, service goals and provision.

Integrated Reporting WPO's reporting is designed to deliver both regional and global utilization and trend information. It is provided in a consistent and aggregated format. In addition to a formal report, all data can be exported for uploading into the client's own data warehouse and reporting systems for further analysis against other benefit initiatives.

To learn more about Advantage Worldwide, contact your account manager or sales at 866-792-3610.

THE ADVANTAGE 2.0 WEBSITE HAS SUCCESSFULLY UPGRADED DESIGN/CONTENT FLEXIBILITY, AND CUSTOMIZATION FOR CLIENTS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES



Giving Your Work-Life Website Every Advantage

By Lisa Zereski, Director of Product and Content Development

This year, WPO proudly unveiled Advantage 2.0 Web. This will take all the features our clients love from the current website and add unparalleled design and content flexibility and customization.

Some of the exciting new features include:

- Word and Advanced Search
- Choice of two standard layouts
- Customized layout options which include
 - Top, bottom, left, or right navigation
 - Custom navigational menu items
 - Number of columns
 - Inclusion and placement of any homepage layout feature such as navigation, centers, feature articles, News for You
- Choice of displaying record “teasers”
- An associated Spanish website that is fully navigable

Clients will also be able to add two new products to Advantage 2.0 Web:

ADVANTAGE CARE CENTER is a Web-based application that is most easily described as a private, invitation-only MySpace or Facebook. The Care Center makes it easy for its members to invite others to the Care Center, upload and manage a list of contacts,

photos, videos, audio files, journal or blog entries, RSS feeds, a calendar of events, and use a Wiki-type feature to add articles of interest to the website.

Care Center can be utilized by families as an efficient and fun way to share information about loved ones and coordinate care or errands within their Care Center circle. It could also be a valuable addition for those clients with Advantage Care Coach. Pairing these two products would allow the Care Coach to give a “tour” of Care Center to the family member charged with “administering” the site or even add articles or resources to the site if invited by the family as a member of their Care Center.

Workplace Options sees this being utilized by families with a new baby, young children, children with special needs, elders who require some assistance, children who are away at school, military family members who are away from home, or even beloved pets!

ADVANTAGE CARE SPACE *Coming in 2009!* brings social networking to Advantage Web 2.0. Through Care Space, Workplace Options will build community and peer support among its readers by hosting moderated discussions on parenting and caregiving. In addition to participating in the moderated discussions, readers can create their own pages within Care Space to continue discussions, or share additional tips, photos or anecdotes.