



SIMPLE CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG IMPACT: HEALTHIER MEETINGS

Meetings are an essential part of modern American business. For most organizations, meetings are extremely valuable for strengthening workplace communication, developing strategy, tackling challenges and reaching goals. They also encourage co-worker conversation, collaboration and socialization.ⁱ Since the average employee spends about 37% of their working hours in meetings, workplaces have a huge opportunity to improve the health and well-being of their employees by adopting healthier meeting practices.ⁱⁱ Businesses should share this information with employees to help cultivate a work environment where small changes can make a big impact.

What constitutes a healthier meeting?

A healthy meeting supports physical activity, proper nutrition, positive morale and a healthy environment.ⁱⁱⁱ

Why should businesses adopt healthier meeting practices?

- Meetings are typically characterized by unhealthy food choices, physical inactivity and time away from productive work. This only reinforces unhealthy employee behavior.^{iv}
- Healthier meetings increase employee activity and engagement levels.^v
- Making healthier food and beverage choices available at meetings is one way to encourage employees to eat a healthy diet.^{vi}
- Incorporating physical activity into meetings is a great way to encourage employees to move.

Using this information in the workplace:

Low cost or no cost ideas:

Physical activity:

- Start with a stretch and take a relaxation break in the middle or intermittently throughout the meeting.
- For less formal meetings, have everyone bring their cell phone and turn on the ringer. Each time someone gets a notification, everyone must stand up for 10 seconds.
- If space allows and the group is small enough, try a walking meeting.
- You could also try standing meetings if time allows.

Nutrition:

- Try not to offer food or beverages at meetings. If it is appropriate for food to be provided, make healthier choices for your employees – including vegetable or fruit platters, low fat cheese and crackers, water, etc.
- Collect employees' favorite healthy recipes and make copies to distribute at the meeting.
- Have employees bring in a dish for a "healthy potluck".
- Offer healthier food choices if food is appropriate. See the toolkits listed below for some fresh ideas.

Morale:

- Recognize an employee birthday, anniversary or other special event.
- Vary meeting formats. Include prizes for good ideas.
- Allow staff members to occasionally lead a meeting.
- Start the meeting on a high note by having each participant share something positive. Here are some ideas:
 - Name one thing you've accomplished since the last meeting that you're proud of
 - Name a person who has helped you since he last meeting.
 - What is something you're looking forward to in the coming week/month?
- Have everyone pick a quote from the "quote jar" to share inspirational thoughts or advice.



- Acknowledge successes of great employee performance throughout meetings.
- Leave on a strong note by summarizing the meeting and encouraging the team.

Toolkits you can use:

- The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity developed a “Healthy Meeting Toolkit” that any business could implement to strengthen the culture of health and wellness in the workplace. Download the PDF at: <http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/Healthy-Meeting-Toolkit.pdf>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer tips for “Offering Healthier Options and Physical Activity at Workplace Meetings and Events.” Download the PDF at: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/tips-for-offering-healthier-options-and-pa-at-workplace.pdf>
- The American Cancer Society developed “A Tool for Planning Healthy Meetings and Events” that can help employers become more health conscious. Download the PDF at: http://www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/wpassets/meetingwell_guidebook_f251300.pdf
- The University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health offers many suggestions for healthy food options for meetings, seminars and catered events. Download the PDF at: <http://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/degrees-programs/nutrition/SPH%20Guidelines%20for%20Offering%20Healthy%20Foods.pdf>

Planning your process:

Step 1 – Identify champion – Who is in charge of the healthy meetings initiative? How do you identify champions within different departments or groups within your organization?

Step 2 – Determine communication strategy – How are you going to communicate your healthy meeting program to employees? How do you communicate to your employees the importance of healthy meetings?

Step 3 – Develop implementation methodology – How much time are you going to dedicate to this initiative? What is the strategy to make the program sustainable? Are you going to adopt healthy meeting practices for all types of meetings or just some?

Step 4 – Execute plan – Use the low cost, no cost ideas above to start making your meetings healthier.

Step 5 – Evaluate – Collect feedback from your employees on their feelings and opinions about the new healthy meeting initiative. Are the habits set forth by the initiative translating into healthy changes in other areas of employees’ lives? How can you modify the program so it is more effective in the future?

Step 6 – Celebrate success – Celebrate your progress in helping increase employee health and well-being!

For more information on this topic, or suggestions on potential speakers to bring into your organization, contact the Wellness Council of Indiana Helpline at (317) 264-2168. Stay tuned for ***Simple Changes that Make a Big Impact.***



ⁱRogelberg, Steven G., Cliff Scott, and John Kello. "The Science and Fiction of Meetings." *MIT Sloan Management View* 48.2 (2007): 18-21. Web.

ⁱⁱ "A Study of Trends, Costs, and Attitudes toward Business Travel and Teleconferencing, and Their Impact on Productivity: A Verizon Conferencing White Paper." *Meetings in America*. Infocom, 2015. Web. <<https://e-meetings.verizonbusiness.com/global/en/meetingsinamerica/uswhitepaper.php>>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Healthy Meeting Toolkit*. National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, n.d. Web.

^{iv} *Healthy Meetings Essentials*. Kaiser Permanente Healthy Workforce, Aug. 2010. Web.

^v McMullen, Laura. "How to Lead a Healthy Meeting." *U.S. News & World Report*, 27 Feb. 2014. Web.

^{vi} *Choosing Foods and Beverages for Healthy Meetings, Conferences and Events*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d. Web.