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Preparation

Setting Goals & Objectives

By setting clearly defined and agreed-upon (between contestants of competing companies) goals and objectives right from the start, your contest or health initiative will be better positioned to achieve measurable results.

FOR EXAMPLE

The overall goals of the first Arkansas Fitness Challenge were to:

- Increase physical activity among employees.
- Begin to reduce the incidence of obesity among employees.
- Motivate employees to improve their health.
- Build employee morale and satisfaction.

The specific objectives for the Arkansas Fitness Challenge were:

- To engage non-exercising employees in consistent exercise in eligible categories for 30 minutes at least three times per week.
- To encourage already exercising employees to exercise in eligible categories 30 minutes every day.

As you set your contest goals and objectives, begin with the end in mind — build the measures into your evaluation tool. Then, as you plan your contest structure, build in steps along the way to help employees achieve these corporate goals and objectives with the idea that they also will be accomplishing personal goals:

- Look for existing exercise opportunities.
- Provide them with ideas of how to accomplish their exercise goals in more than one way.
- Look around the workplace for low-cost or no-cost ways to make it easy for employees to contribute to meeting the contest goals and objectives you've outlined.

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Steering Committee

Gaining the commitment of management and identifying team leaders who can provide the time, people and resources for planning and implementing the project is very important. Demonstrating how the project meets the overall goals of your organization can make it easier to gain budgetary approval for the contest and build support in the organization. Key strategies might include the following considerations:

Identifying an executive champion lends visibility and backing to the project.

The CEO or the director of your organization may be the best choice, especially if they have a personal commitment to improving/maintaining their health or the health of their employees, and have good “people” skills. If not your chief manager, select a fitness “cheerleader” in your organization to champion the cause.

Selecting internal champions with a variety of skills will help you plan, organize and lead local team efforts.

This Steering Committee should be composed of representatives necessary to accomplish your project and may include people from departments such as advertising and/or communications, Web team or information systems, human resources, educational development and training, or representatives from wellness committees already established in your organization. This committee can include representatives from various departments who have an interest in the organization’s health-and-wellness activities. Designating an historian to compile all information and materials is a good idea.

Many organizations may not have the staff to pull from lots of areas. Some companies may need to outsource some skills.

If your company has locations statewide, you should tap regional representatives that can keep that perspective in the planning. Regional leaders are a critical part of your committee.

Include representatives ranging from management to frontline/hourly workers who:

- Have strong organizational skills.
- Are outgoing and enthusiastic.
- Have an interest in the health of employees.
- Have expertise in relevant areas.
- Have their manager's support.

Involving your champion in the planning process and keeping him/her informed of progress along the way; and incorporating his/her advice or direction throughout the contest will help maintain consistency in key messages and motivation.

Keeping management informed of your planning and progress can help avoid erroneous assumptions and decisions.





Contest Timeline

Part of the success of your contest will depend on when and where it is held. The Steering Committee will want to set a date that doesn't conflict with other organizational events such as holidays, prime vacation periods, or heavy work schedules due to annual production or processing schedules. Since fitness events usually require some outdoor activity that can be accomplished by all employees (such as walking) choosing a comfortable time of year will enhance participation in the contest. Spring or fall months are usually good choices because weather is conducive for outdoor activities and holidays and peak vacation times are avoided.

Here's an idea of how to plan your time:

Six to eight months before the contest:

- Set objectives and goals.
- Submit proposal to management that includes general structure, guidelines, incentives and prizes.
- Develop budget and determine budget source. Budget will need to include the design and printing of promotional materials along with incentives and prizes.
- Form Steering Committee and assign tasks. (*See Sample Task Assignment Timeline Worksheet in Resource section.*)
- Choose rival organization(s) for contest, seek participation, and begin coordination of shared activities.

Three to six months before the contest:

- Develop internal and external communication and promotions plans; begin creating promotional and information materials for both — drafting text/messages for communications pieces, planning and producing any needed graphics, photography, etc. to accompany communications pieces — submit for approval.
- Begin development of database infrastructure and Web site.

Three months before the contest:

- Finalize agreed-upon rules, registration and logging methods, methods of exchange of data between organizations and evaluation.
- Finalize kickoff and promotional event dates; synchronize schedules for key players.

Two months before the contest:

- Finalize prizes and incentives.
- Send communications pieces to printer.
- Test Web site features, links, etc.

One month before the contest:

- Hang posters and send promotional e-mails.
- Launch Web site with an internal contest to encourage employees to visit the Web pages.
- Finalize PowerPoint presentation to use for communicating with internal audiences.

Throughout the contest, follow an internal and external communication and promotions plan.

The contest should have an **external communications plan** developed by representatives of both entities involved in the contest. The plan should be followed to ensure key messages are communicated to the media and any other key external audiences/groups/interested parties. It will include shared events such as a kickoff news conference and/or wrap-up news conference.

Each entity in the fitness contest will develop its own **internal communications plan** — this is proprietary information for promoting the contest among employees in each camp — with the goal of winning the contest.

This is one sample timeline. A fitness contest can be organized and held in less time if required and resources are available.



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Contest Protection

An employee fitness contest is a fun and beneficial way to get your employees up and moving. The Arkansas Fitness Challenge is designed to meet employees right where they are whether they are starting an exercise program or already in a regular workout routine. However, even small steps can be a huge adjustment for some employees.

Physician Consultation — It is essential to communicate with your employees the need to consult with their physician prior to participating in your Employee Fitness Contest. A simple message should be part of all communications pieces to advise employees of this need.

FOR EXAMPLE

“Before beginning any exercise program, always consult your physician.”

If heeded, this step helps protect your employee from possible harm. In addition, it can help protect your company from liability.

Equipment Waiver — In many instances, employees may have access to exercise equipment that they desire to bring to the workplace for use, or you may partner with a local gym or fitness facility to bring equipment to the workplace during your contest. If so, you may want to consider producing a waiver for employees to sign to ensure your company is protected against liability. (*See sample in the Resource section of this Kit.*)

Educating your employees about exercise and safety aspects, and encouraging them to consult with their physician can help ensure they are prepared for the “challenge.”

In the Resource section, you will find these Preparation samples/examples:

- Task Assignment Timeline Worksheet
- External Communication and Promotions Plan
- Internal Communication and Promotions Plan
- Contest Promotion/Activity Calendar Tool
- Employee Exercise Equipment Waiver Example

