Headquartered in Norwalk, Connecticut, HEI Hotels & Resorts is a socially responsible investor and employer in the hospitality industry, operating 43 upscale properties in 16 states throughout the U.S. The company prides itself on some of the highest employee satisfaction scores in the industry, and views employee health as a key factor in driving productivity and ultimately, business success.

“We are a company of people, and there is nothing more important than our associates’ health and well-being.”

Gary Mendell, CEO, HEI Hotels & Resorts

Paving the path to better health:
A multiyear plan.

Recognizing that employees perform best when they are healthy, HEI implemented a comprehensive health and wellness initiative in late 2010 designed to get associates educated and motivated to improve their health. Working with Cigna, and their consultant, the company set out to implement a multiyear strategy to make health a top priority for its workforce. The goal was twofold:

• Improve employee awareness and engagement in health and wellness
• Help individuals measurably reduce their risk for future illness and disease

Get employees to “check in” to better health.

HEI leadership understood that to help its workforce get healthier, they first had to get them engaged. Working with Cigna, the company introduced Healthy Connections, a strategic employee health and wellness program to get employees interested in better health – and motivated to take action to achieve it.

Population facts

• 2,120 employees covered on the medical plan: 49% male, 51% female
• Multi-shift workforce operating 24/7/365
• Located in multiple locations (43) in 16 states
• Typical U.S. health risks: weight, cholesterol, blood pressure, glucose and tobacco

Actions

• Multiyear strategic program
• Strong executive leadership and ongoing promotion and communications
• Partnered with Cigna in Better Health. Guaranteed.
• Implemented comprehensive worksite wellness program
• Moved to full-replacement consumer directed health plan (CDHP)
• Offered incentives to complete health assessment and biometric screening

Outcomes

• Higher health engagement
• Decrease in health risks
• Decrease in high-cost health claims
Creating a culture of health.

- Moved from multiple traditional plans to one CDHP: Cigna Choice Fund® HRA
- Incentives offered for completing health assessment and biometric screening; health assessment available to all associates.
- Health advocacy programs offered to support physical, mental and social well-being:
  - Cigna Health Advisor® – health coaching
  - Chronic condition support – tobacco, weight and stress lifestyle management
  - Cigna Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – counseling services and work/life balance support
  - Cigna Pharmacy and Cigna Dental plans – to provide true whole health support
  - Cigna mobile learning lab
- Ongoing health and wellness promotion, including company-wide and local initiatives:
  - Eight-week walking challenge
  - Nutrition seminars
  - “Know Your Numbers” campaign
  - Hydration challenges
  - Wellness champion at each worksite
  - Onsite and company intranet wellness information board and daily Healthy Connections emails


In the year since launching Healthy Connections, HEI has seen significant improvement in employee health engagement.

- **Increase in health engagement**
  - 95% employees take health assessment
  - 88% completed biometric screening
  - 85% referred to health and wellness program as a result of health assessment/biometric screening
  - 92% participated in eight-week Walking Challenge – 1,940 walkers for a total of 211,824 miles
  - 32% higher engagement in Cancer Support program vs. norm
  - 68% higher engagement in Maternity Education program vs. norm

- **Reduction in health risks**
  - 37% of individuals in high/medium risk target group moved to low/medium health risk status

- **Reduction in health costs**
  - > $500,000 in estimated medical cost savings in year one

Looking ahead

HEI has expanded the program to give all associates access to EAP and tobacco, weight and stress lifestyle programs. And to ensure health stays a top priority, CEO Mendell asked every associate to make a “Commitment to Action” to lead to a healthier and happier lifestyle. Not surprisingly, so far 1,700 associates have stepped up to the challenge.

Associate Gerry M. said he is committed to quitting smoking because his children asked him to: “Pa, can you stop smoking please? It’s a new year.’ So I said, ‘Okay, let’s give it another try.’”

Associate Vickie M. decided to take control of her own health decisions in order to fight diabetes: “I just came to the realization that, Vickie, you know, you need to take control of your life, and you’re the only one that can do it, and you have to do it for yourself.”

1. Target group: High/medium risk status as determined by health assessment.
2. Catastrophic claims were excluded from medical cost savings calculation.