



TRI FIT CLIENT PROFILE

Robert Smuk

President and CEO, Unisen Inc.

Wellness has not always been top of mind for Robert Smuk, President and CEO of Unisen Inc. In his twenties, Robert didn't think twice about working fourteen-hour days, seven days a week as he was advancing his career. As Robert puts it, "I have a strong mind and I would drag my body through the day". One day, however, in his mid twenties he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and despite his reluctance to accept the news, it changed his life.

Initially, he was selfconscious about being diabetic and for the first few years, with the exception of his daily routine of insulin injections and more regular meals he ignored his health. "It was easy to come up with excuses for why I was not exercising," confessed Smuk. "Don't like it, it will add time to an already full day, I might embarrass myself in the gym," were just a few of the excuses.

One day, however, his doctor's warning sank in. If he didn't

change his lifestyle, at some point it was going to take its toll. Robert decided it was time to take action and bought an elliptical crosstrainer for home. He started with 30 minutes of cardio, 3 times a week. When their new "Moving in Unisen" fitness centre opened last fall, he added weights and rowing to his program." He is working with Tri Fit wellness consultant, Tracy Tofflemire, to set specific goals, one of which is to improve his golf drive.

Robert admits he has a love/hate relationship with fitness. "I hate going to the gym but I love the feeling I have when I'm done," says Robert, "and I have seen many benefits." He proudly reports that he has seen a marked improvement in the consistency of his blood glucose levels. He also finds he has more energy on the weekends and has recently taken up tennis.

"I didn't appreciate how much I would value our new wellness

"The expertise of the professional Tri Fit staff has influenced our eating habits, work habits and daily routines. "



Robert Smuk, President Unisen Inc.

centre," reports Smuk. "I can squeeze in my workout first thing in the morning and be at my desk, showered and changed by 8:30." Several of the senior management team have also embraced the new facility bringing the membership to over 195 Unisen employees.

"I see it as more than a place to workout," says Robert. "The

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Wellness For All Approach Gaining Momentum in Canada

Even though workplace wellness programs are just one component of what makes workplaces healthy and vibrant, these programs are gaining in popularity. More and more corporate leaders realize that when employees are supported in a healthy work environment they are happier, more productive, they stay longer and costs, which commonly occur when employees cannot balance their work and other priorities, are reduced.

In the past, leaders of workplace wellness have traditionally been larger organizations featuring on-site gyms. This is no longer the case. Tri Fit clients including STAPLES Business Depot, ICI Paints and OPSEU Pension Trust have embraced the health of their employees through non-facility based programs, and some include employees across Canada. Here are their stories.

ICI Paints

In the spring of 2002 ICI Paints Canada (representing 1400 people from their stores, offices, warehouses, supply chains and sales personnel) recognized that if they could enable their employees to focus on a healthier lifestyle, they could reduce absenteeism, improve work attitude and reduce the number of work-related illnesses. As a result, an action plan was developed to address the health & wellness of their employees. This initiative was named The ICI Healthy Lifestyle Program.

The first step in developing the program was distributing a company wide survey in August of 2002. Using the survey results Tri Fit began to create the program goals and a program plan focusing on the top three employee concerns which were weight management and healthy eating, overall fitness and managing stress.

With the support of the ICI Healthy Lifestyle advisory committee and a part-time Tri Fit wellness consultant a number of successful initiatives have been

launched. The Healthy Lifestyle Hotline was set up so that employees across the country had easy access to information on a variety of health topics. In the first year hundreds of employees accessed the hotline for information on everything from weight loss to exercise for diabetics. Another successful initiative was the Healthy Lifestyle Passport whereby employees kept track of activities they did at home, at work and at play. Each activity was given a point value. By accumulating 100 points per month employees were eligible to win small awards and be entered for larger prizes at year-end.

OPSEU Pension Trust

OPSEU's wellness program has been thriving for almost a decade! When OPTrust was experiencing dramatic change in the mid 1990's, a wellness program was one initiative they believed would help them through it. One of their challenges was how best to integrate long-time government employees with new employees. Wellness programs were designed

to increase morale and employee interaction while decreasing the stress associated with multiple priorities and challenging deadlines. Since then OPTrust has not looked back.

A Tri Fit wellness consultant is on-site one day per week coordinating health fairs, lunch and learns, walking groups, stretch breaks, wellness roves and various other events. In addition, employees have access to on-site massage therapy, Pilates and Tai Chi classes. For the 125 employees at OPSEU Pension Trust, the Tri Fit consultant is their source for wellness information.

"A set of workplace health programs is likely to have only limited impact unless the organization has supportive policies, an enabling culture, and the initiatives are nurtured by organizational leaders as part of their strategic plan."

Virginia Galt
Reporter Globe & Mail
November 2002

STAPLES Business Depot

Now in its fourth year, STAPLES Business Depot's wellness program grows stronger every year. With the dedication of many associates and Tri Fit professional support they have been able to implement a wide scope of programs.

Fitness and active living programs include walking breaks, yoga, Pilates, cardio/ pump classes, Tri Fit @ HOME circuit training program, community running/biking events, fitness assessments and individual fitness programs. Tri Fit provides ongoing professional training for their employee volunteer fitness instructors and stretch break leaders.

Wellness programs include on-site massage therapy, roving wellness clinics, lunch'n learn seminars, The *Wacky Olympics*, and Tri Fit's *Health Check* fair to mention a few.

Program leadership includes a Tri Fit Wellness Coordinator on-site one day a week, an employee wellness advisory committee, and a group of dedicated employee volunteer fitness leaders who teach group classes in their conference rooms.

Over the last year the program is branching out to include

associates working at their 225 stores across Canada. The Wellness @ Work intranet site hosts a wide variety of fitness and wellness resources and an "ask Andrea column" where employees can have their personal fitness and wellness questions answered.

STAPLES is in the process of building a new head office and plans to include an on-site fitness facility. "We have been measuring the success of the wellness program and have seen a steady increase in participation year over year," says David Burt, Legal Counsel. "We know how much more is possible with an on-site gym and look forward to providing this amenity in our new headquarters."

Conclusion

Even though their motivations for initiating a workplace program are different, ICI Paints, OPTrust and STAPLES Business Depot have several things in common. They each believe in the importance of "human capital." And they share a common belief that healthy employees are happier, absent less and more productive.

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expertise of the professional Tri Fit staff has influenced our eating habits, work habits and daily routines. We also see that the wellness centre is helping us build a sense of community within Unisen ." Smuk is hoping to instill a culture at Unisen where employees feel comfortable scheduling a break during the day to go for a run or clear their mind. "We have already seen the energy spreading from those who are using the gym and more are getting involved everyday." Robert reports.

Robert, recently married, is glad to be able to keep up with his high-energy wife. "I think we are not just married to one another but to a lifestyle of good health."

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined Workplace Wellness as "A level of physical, psychological and social well-being in which employees and the organization each realize their aspirations, satisfy their needs and successfully cope with their environments."

The most exciting breakthrough of the 21st century will occur not because of technology, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.

John Nesbitt
Megatrends 2000



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