

In today's competitive work environment, employers are looking for strategies to attract top talent, engage employees and foster a work environment where employees feel recognized for who they are as well as for what they do. Top employer awards have been a means for many organizations to review their people practices and put in place innovative and employee-centric policies, programs, and services.

Many award winners have embraced workplace wellness as part of their winning strategies, recognizing that creating a healthy workplace is a win/win for employees and employers alike.

The workplace is an ideal environment to inform, involve, and inspire employees to lead a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that 70 per cent of illnesses are lifestyle related. Supporting employees to be physically active, eat well, manage their weight,

ment surveys show that wellness programs are at the top of the list of benefits employees are looking for from their employer. Wellness programs are highly valued by all generations in the workplace and send a clear message to employees that the company cares about their well-being.

Profiled below are three 'top employers' who have invested in workplace wellness and moved beyond the traditional HRA, biometric screening, and health fair. These organizations, while vastly different in size and industry, have several things in common. They have all approached wellness with a long-term view, developed a customized program that reflects their brand and corporate culture, and established metrics from which to measure success. While these programs are at different stages of development, each organization can confidently say that workplace wellness reaps rewards.



## Workplace Wellness Reaps Rewards



### HEALTHCARE

By: Sue Pridham

and prevent injury will meet the employee's wellness needs and interests and reduce the incidence of Canada's most prevalent disease states.

The World Health Organization claims that "80 per cent of premature heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, and 40 per cent of cancer can be prevented through healthy diet, regular physical activity, and avoidance of tobacco products.

#### Fun Factor

While much of the research on the ROI of workplace wellness programs has been focused on reducing healthcare costs, progressive employers also see the correlation between healthy employees and employee engagement. They recognize that a strategically planned and implemented wellness program builds relationships, provides a fun factor, breaks down silos, and promotes health, energy, and performance.

Employee engage-



LV Lomas Ltd., headquartered in Brampton, ON, is one of the largest chemical distributors in North America and the leading specialty chemical distributor in Canada. It was recognized for the third consecutive year as one of Canada's 100 Best Workplaces 2011 from the Great Place to Work Institute Canada. The confidential employee survey, or 'Trust Index,' produced high ratings in the institute's five pillars of best workplaces – credibility,

respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie.

With the help of Tri Fit, consultants in workplace fitness and wellness, Lomas developed a wellness plan to reflect the needs of its 230 diverse office, manufacturing, and sales staff located in Brampton, ON; Delta, BC; and Dorval, QC.

Wellness consultants were brought on board at all three locations in June 2010 to be 'the face of wellness' and to support employees. Their high touch/high tech programs were designed to achieve their mission and goals.

Its mission statement was to encourage and support the health and well-being of all employees through communication, education, needs driven health promotion activities,



and fun. To do so, it set a number of goals:

- ◆ To provide resources and activities to heighten awareness around fitness, work life balance, general health, and well-being
- ◆ To support healthy eating and weight management goals
- ◆ To create a work environment that enhances safe working practices and minimizes injury

Into its second year, the wellness program has become a vital part of its workplace culture. Employees of this family-owned business participate in a wide offering of programs including a work stretch break program, a healthy recipe club, quarterly e-campaigns, and challenges on nutrition, fitness, and weight loss.

Lomas is delighted with the enthusiasm and participation in the program to date. Sheila Kendall, its human resources manager, says it “believes strongly that a healthy and engaged staff contributes to an improved corporate culture. In turn, a strong people-oriented corporate culture satisfies not only our employees, but also our principals, customers, and shareholders.”

Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. has been named one of Canada’s Top 100 Employers for six consecutive years. The annual competition recognizes companies who offer their employees the best places to work and lead their industries with best practices in attracting and retaining employees.

Enbridge is Canada’s largest natural gas distribution company and provides distribution services in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and New York State. Approximately 1,500 employees are headquartered in North York, ON, with several hundred additional employees located in the greater Toronto area and throughout Eastern Ontario including Barrie, Thorold, Oshawa, and Ottawa.

### Commitment to Health

This company’s commitment to health goes back 23 years, starting as an integrated disability management program called ‘HealthWise.’ Over the years, the direction of the program has evolved with the focus now on illness and injury prevention, and ensuring that resources and energy are spent helping people stay healthy and safe.

Its health and fitness model is a collaborative effort between the health centre and the on-site fitness and health consultant. Volunteer fitness instructors and occupational health nurses support the day-to-day operations including overseeing a 4,000 square foot fitness centre at its head office.

Currently, there are smaller fitness facilities in the Thorold and Ottawa offices and all sites have access to the programs offered by the fitness consultant, excluding on-site fitness classes. Employees who work in locations without an on-site fitness facility

are eligible for an annual fitness subsidy up to a total of \$350 as part of the benefits program. A new fitness facility will be included in the state-of-the-art technology and operations centre currently under construction in Markham.

With an average employee aged 45 and 39 per cent of its employees female, its health and fitness programs are designed to reflect the needs and interests of these groups. Group exercise classes, department stretch breaks, roving department wellness displays, weight loss challenges, walking and running programs, desk stretches, and e-campaigns are a few of the more popular programs.

Enbridge has also had a positive response from combining fitness with its CSR programs. In 2011, it was the lead sponsor for the ‘Ride to Conquer Cancer’ bike ride from Toronto to Niagara Falls. For six months leading up to the event, 40 employees trained at the fitness centre to participate in the 200 kilometre ride with all 71 members of the Enbridge team completing it.

“There is a lot of energy and spirit created through team events such as the ‘Ride for Heart,’ the ‘Bay Street Rat Race,’ the ‘Enbridge CN Stair Climb for United Way,’ and dragon boat racing. We also like to cel-

brate diversity in our workplace with pot luck lunches featuring healthy international cuisine,” says Bill Ross, former vice-president, finance and information technology, and an avid cyclist and fitness enthusiast.

Enbridge has had some positive indicators that its programs are achieving results.

Forty per cent of the North York office are members of the fitness centre and up to 200 employees participate in the annual health fair, wellness campaigns, and challenges. In 2007, it experienced a 23 per cent reduction in its long-term disability (LTD) claims resulting in a savings of \$466,000. Plus, it has not had a LTD premium increase for the past three years.

Christie Digital Systems Canada Inc., of Kitchener, ON, has received numerous top employer awards over the years including Canada’s Best Employers for New Canadians in 2011.

Christie, a global visual technologies company, offers diverse solutions for business, entertainment, and industry. With expertise in film projection since 1929 and professional projection systems since 1979, it has established a reputation as the world’s single source manufacturer of a variety of display technologies and solutions for cinema, large audience environments, control rooms, business presentations, training

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### DANNY MARTIN



Business Development Manager  
National Accounts  
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Jean-François Pelletier, Regional Vice-President, Business Development, National Accounts, Group Retirement Savings, Desjardins Financial Security, is pleased to announce the appointment of Danny Martin to the position of Business Development Manager, National Accounts, Group Retirement Savings, Desjardins Financial Security.

Danny will be responsible for business development with the consulting firms in Montreal and Ottawa regions, and will contribute to the sales objectives of the accelerated growth plan of the Group Retirement Savings Division.

Danny holds a Bachelor’s degree in Actuarial Science from University of Laval. In addition, he is a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries (FCIA) and a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries (FSA). He has over 10 years of experience in the industry.

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facilities, 3D and virtual reality, simulation, education, media and government. As a market leader, Christie has installed more than 100,000 projection solutions worldwide.

### Made A Pitch

In 1999, its human resources department made a pitch to the executive management team for an on-site fitness centre and wellness program at its Canadian Engineering and Manufacturing facility in Kitchener. The justification for a comprehensive program was based on common sense assumptions that it would:

- ◆ Be a selling perk to attract young engineers
- ◆ Help launch the new Christie brand – ‘Christie Cares about You’
- ◆ Simply made good sense that promoting and ‘living’ wellness would benefit all employees.

In 2000, the wellness program was launched with the opening of a 400 square foot fitness room.

Popular programs facilitated by an on-site wellness consultant included regular exercise classes that are held in an empty office space, wellness clinics, health fairs, wellness challenges, and daily stretch breaks.

Ten years later, the program has accomplished its goals. Kimberley Hogan, vice-president of human resources, says the program is highly valued. Christie truly believes that the program enhances both its internal and external brand as an innovator and helps with recruitment and retention. The employee turnover rate for the salaried organization is less than three per cent a year. Annual benefit renewal costs are far below industry standards. The average annual benefit renewal from 2001 to 2010 was 1.8 per cent. The savings on annual benefit renewals more than covers the cost to run the fitness and wellness program.

Medtronic of Canada, which placed 18<sup>th</sup> in the ‘under 1,000 employees’ category as one of ‘Canada’s 100 Best Workplaces 2011,’ sells, services, and distributes medical devices used in cardiovascular medicine, diabetes, spinal and neurosurgery,

and ear, nose and throat surgery. Employing more than 425 Canadians, it is headquartered in Brampton, ON; and has regional offices in Vancouver, BC; and Montreal, QC.

In keeping with its corporate brand of medical products, workplace wellness has been a part of its employment brand for several years. Over the last four years, Andre Guerin, director of human resources, has had an opportunity to reshape the fitness program into a more comprehensive wellness focus. With the help of Lenaee Dupuis, the wellness program champion, Medtronic has introduced a variety of initiatives to appeal to its diverse work force.

In addition to its two on-site fitness centres which support two-thirds of its workforce, a fitness subsidy program is available for employees working in other locations across Canada. It is also spreads the wellness message across Canada with creative web based campaigns and challenges focused on fitness and nutrition.

### Core Beliefs

Guerin believes that its wellness program is anchored in one of its core beliefs – ‘people are the key to our business success.’ While it hasn’t been focused on tracking return on investment, he believes that it makes sense on so many fronts. “A corporate commitment to health and wellness is a natural extension of our core business and is aligned with our values,” he says. “In a tight labour market, it also helps to attract and retain employees, enhances job satisfaction, and helps us to be an employer of choice.

Developing a healthy workplace is a sound investment. It makes sense that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Investment upfront in the prevention of disease will cost far less than treating illness down the road. ■

*Sue Pridham is president of Tri Fit Inc. (sue@trifit.com).*

