



Platinum AWARDS

Best Employers for Healthy Lifestyles

2009



National
Business
Group on
Health

INSTITUTE ON
The Costs
AND **Health**
Effects
OF **Obesity**



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FPL Group

FPL GROUP®

TYPE OF COMPANY:

Provider of
electricity-related service

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

15,300

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS:

27 states and Canada

“Back in Action” at FPL Group

FPL Group is one of the nation’s largest providers of electricity-related services. As the parent company to Florida Power & Light Company and NextEra Energy Resources, the organization is keenly focused on keeping its 15,300 employees healthy and happy. As part of this goal, FPL is concentrating on reducing the number of strains and sprains affecting its workers, particularly back, shoulder and knee injuries.

“We have a large group of workers who climb poles and wind turbines, ride trucks, dig ditches, and pull line; that’s wear and tear on the body,” said Andrew Scibelli, manager of Employee Health and Well-Being for FPL Group. “We’ve been doing things with mus-

culoskeletal injuries, particularly back injury and prevention, since the early to mid-nineties. We focus on these areas to help lower the risk of injury and to improve the health of the individual.”

This focus is understandable; there’s a lot at stake. The company has a presence in 27 states and Canada and last year reported more than \$16 billion in revenue.

To specifically address the concerns of strains and sprains in the workplace and at home, FPL has developed an innovative program called *The Back in Action Healthy Back Challenge*, designed specifically to educate office and field workers on the importance of remaining in good musculoskeletal health, while simultaneously avoiding common strain and sprain injuries.

Back in Action

All of FPL's employees, spouses, dependents (ages 16-23 years old) and contractors were eligible to participate in the program. Each week participants were sent three to four exercises to teach them proper back and stretching exercises. These simple to follow exercises were tailored for all employees, regardless of fitness level or current back health or injury.

From the start, the program was a hit, as 420 employees from nine different business units registered and received the exercise materials.

gave the participants a home study program," said Deborah Poumakis, physical therapist for FPL-WELL. "We sent out education manuals to replace the presentations that we were doing, and then we gave them weekly exercises."

The exercises included strengthening, endurance training, and flexibility. "Along with that, we gave them body mechanics training to reinforce the exercises," said Poumakis.

Participants also received a 12-page educational manual on injury prevention and body mechanics. "The manual was adapted from a manual that I had

this approach to be effective and cost-efficient.

"I think it's a great way to reach your population, especially if it's spread over many states, or even throughout one state," said Poumakis. "People are so busy with their work and home life, it's hard for them to participate in a structured program that has a schedule. This is something that's flexible that workers can do on their own time when they are ready."

Communication and Oversight

Communicating wellness programs throughout an organization can sometimes be costly. FPL was able to keep its costs way down by relying heavily on technology as its main driver. The program was advertised through corporate-wide e-mails and targeted emails to its Wellness Coordinators in various service centers throughout the organization. "We would remind them of the program and instruct them on how they should communicate it to their people in their specific environment," said Poumakis. "We also created posters and sent them to all the service centers, corporate offices, and customer care offices."

Communication was also done through safety meetings and the company's Intranet site. "We are fortunate that we have a number of different vehicles for communication. When at all possible, we try to take advantage of all of those because different people

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MANAGER OF EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Program materials were developed from an existing *Healthy Back* program that had been provided to FPL's corporate offices. In the initial program, workshops were conducted in order to educate participants in body mechanics and how to prevent injuries. Participants did exercises twice a week for four weeks.

"That was very well accepted in the corporate setting, so we took what we were doing in the corporate offices and

from an ergonomics class that I received certification from," said Poumakis. "I took their manual and changed and added to it for this specific program."

The manual has now been uploaded to the company's Intranet site for anyone to download. "Whenever we produce any of these programs and services, if we feel it's appropriate, we make them available for the entire population," said Scibelli. FPL finds

FPL Group

FPL-WELL

- Fitness Center
- Health Promotion
- Nutrition Services
- Health centers
- Employee Assistance Program

respond to different communications,” said Scibelli. “They may ignore something like an e-mail, but they may pay attention to a safety meeting.”

The Back in Action Healthy Back Challenge was directed and overseen by the FPL-WELL Health Promotion and the Physical Therapy departments. The FPL-WELL department is comprised of five subdivisions, which include fitness center operations, health promotion, nutrition services, health centers, and the employee assistance program.

“They all fall under the FPL-WELL umbrella and that’s by design. It’s a comprehensive, integrated approach to total health and well-being,” said Scibelli. “We believe that when you treat an individual, you have to treat the whole person.”

Taking Measure

The Challenge was a big success for the company. Of the 420 registered employees, 56 percent were male and 44 percent were female. Prior to the program, 42 percent of participants

reported participating in cardiovascular sessions lasting at least 30 minutes. At the completion of the program, that figure rose to 48 percent.

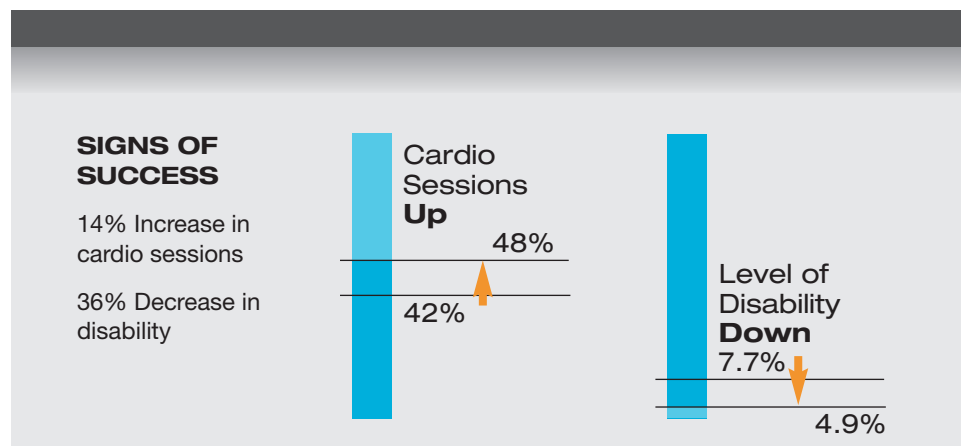
To measure the significance of back pain, FPL used the Oswestry Disability Index to evaluate each participant’s functional disability level. Participants answered questions about their pain. Answers were scored, and a “level of disability” was calculated. The average level of disability decreased from 7.7 percent pre-program to 4.9 percent post program.

“You always worry when it’s a home study course,” said Poumakis. “You

and the Wii Fit. Poumakis said having a raffle for the Wii and the Wii Fit helped drive participation. “We had the raffle for anyone that started and finished the program,” said Poumakis. “Those were two big draws.”

Scibelli credits employee trust and confidence as yet another driver of participation. “It’s perceived as a very positive program, with the intent that the company really does care about the health of its employees,” he said.

Scibelli believes that continually analyzing and evaluating the Challenge contributes to its success and will aid in the development of other programs.



worry about how much of the program employees are going to retain and how well are they going to do. This showed us that the program was effective, and that was very encouraging.”

The company spent \$750 to cover the cost of marketing materials and the expense of two grand prizes: the Wii

“We want to learn from our success and take a look at where we feel the gaps were,” he said. “We want to enhance the program and offer it to other areas that we feel could benefit. We also want to start looking at where injuries are prevalent and develop programs for those areas.”

Persistent, But Flexible

FPL Group has had the kind of success it enjoys with programs like its *Back in Action Challenge* because the company strives for excellence, while remaining open and experimental when seeking results. Scibelli urges others thinking of developing such programs to also remain patient and flexible in their approach.

“You introduce a program, and if it doesn’t work, it doesn’t mean that the program was bad,” he said. “It means that you’ve got to take another crack at it, find out why it didn’t work, rein-

troduce it in a different way, and look for the champions for support. If you believe the program is of value to the organization, keep at it until you are successful.”

Scibelli stresses the impact that small changes can have over time.

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“Sometimes it takes very small steps in order to really change the course of the ship,” he said. “Even though they’re small changes with small benefits, all of it added together can play a tremendous role in really moving health in the direction that we need it to go. So look for the opportunities.” [BE](#)

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National Business Group on Health

50 F Street N.W., Suite 600 • Washington D.C. 20001

Phone 202.628.9320 • Fax 202.628.9244 • www.businessgrouphealth.org

For more information, contact healthyweight@businessgrouphealth.org

Cynthia Kincaid, Publications Management
Groff Creative, Inc., Design