



Platinum AWARDS

Best Employers for Healthy Lifestyles

2008



National
Business
Group on
Health

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



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Union Pacific Corporation



BUILDING AMERICA®

TYPE OF COMPANY:
Railroad

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:
50,000

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS:
23 across the U.S.

Staying on a Healthy Track

Union Pacific Corporation is one of America's leading transportation companies and principle operator of Union Pacific Railroad, the largest railroad in North America. The company's vast network covers 23 states across two-thirds of the United States and employs 50,000 people.

In 1987, Union Pacific embarked on a health promotion program for its employees and their families. The goal was to help influence company culture towards healthy lifestyle behaviors and to minimize health risks. The program, appropriately named, HealthTrack, was specifically aimed at improving safety, reducing healthcare claims related to lifestyle, and increasing presenteeism and productivity for the company.

It was an ambitious challenge. Many of Union Pacific's employees, 95 percent of whom are male with an average age of 46 to 47 years old, are highly mobile and traveling on trains across the country. Other significant groups work building track and repairing cars and locomotives

Union Pacific started modestly with its health program by opening an onsite fitness facility at its Omaha headquarters. "The company also put exercise equipment in box cars and ran the cars around the system for our employees that travel and repair the track," said Jackie Austad, general director, health promotion at Union Pacific.

By 1989, the company had contracted with exercise facilities at the top 15 train crew locations, and today, Union Pacific now supports more than 575 facilities and 35,000 users. "We try to

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get facilities that are convenient to employees, either where they work or where they live, so it will make it easier for them to exercise,” said Austad. “It’s no cost to the employee. They just show their company ID badge with the sticker that shows they are a member.”

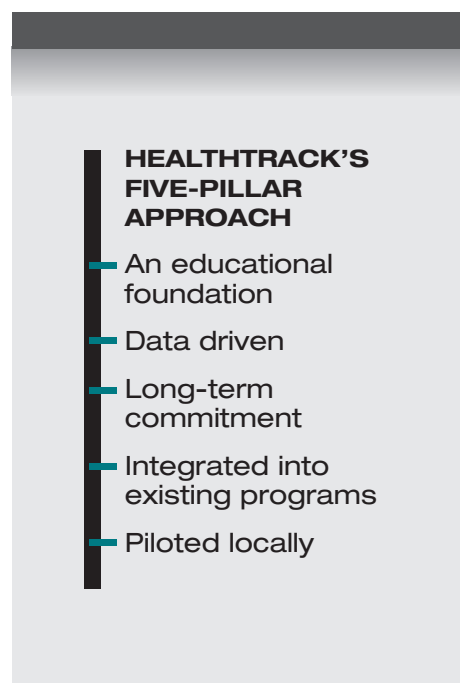
Program Features

HealthTrack has been designed around a five-pillar approach: an educational foundation, programs that are data driven and based on scientific findings, and a long-term commitment from employees and their families. “Results are not immediate a lot of times, so we tell people they have to have patience and stick with it,” said Austad. The program also tries to integrate itself into existing structures, programs, and processes. And finally, new programs within HealthTrack are piloted on a small, local scale before launching system-wide.

Some of the primary components of the HealthTrack program include a risk-identification and risk-reduction program, a tobacco cessation program, a Know Your Numbers educational program, and an alcohol awareness program. Union Pacific also partners with outside organizations and participates in research grants to better enhance HealthTrack’s success. Some of these organizations include WELCOA, Harris Health Trends, Bayer/Abbott, Pfizer, National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute, and Health Media. “We partner with universities and other research groups to test interventions

and see if they work on our population,” said Austad. “If they do, we implement.”

“We had a lot of success with people reducing their risk for blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking, and weight,” said Austad. “That blossomed into the HealthTrack program that we know today.” HealthTrack was officially



launched with the piloting of a program focused specifically on the high-risk cardiovascular population.

A cornerstone of the program is the health risk assessment (HRA), which the company offers in conjunction with cholesterol and glucose screenings at their health fairs. “Once employees receive their biometric results, we give them a wellness assessment to complete,” said Austad. The process is effective. Last year, about 20% of

employees completed a health risk assessment.

One of the foundational reasons for the HRA completion success, a notoriously difficult thing to achieve, is Union Pacific’s commitment to a “zone of confidentiality.” “In order to have an effective wellness program, you have to have a degree of trust,” said Chandra Henley, assistant vice president of health and medical services. “It is our intent to demonstrate that our only goal is to help employees learn ways to improve their health.”

To track employee progress, Union Pacific has created a Health Index Scorecard designed to quantify different measures and participation outcomes. “We provide many different health and medical services. Its important for us to track their effectiveness, just like other business processes,” said Austad. “So we enhanced the measures, simplified the reporting, and made the reports more like other business reports that are used at the Company.”

Occupational Health Nurse Support

The use of occupational health nurses has been critical to HealthTrack’s success. Their central role includes supporting the improvement of employee health through wellness and education, preventing injuries, and responding to injury and illness.

“We’ve had occupational health nurses for several years in our mechanical

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shops for the employees that repair and service locomotives and freight cars,” said Austad. “These nurses develop strong relationships with our employees, and they’ve become a trusted healthcare resource. We think they have a great opportunity to affect people’s behavior and get them into the programs that are going to improve health.”

In addition to using a variety of communication vehicles, Union Pacific also expects to improve health communication throughout the organization with the more deliberate use of its occupational nurses. “We are putting more nurses in the field, which will allow us to deliver the health message face to face,” said Henley. “We also try to put health on a practical level, so that our employees understand, without being overwhelmed. Having the nurses in the field gives employees a resource to ask questions on a very practical basis.”

The nurses are employees of the railroad, as opposed to being contracted. When hired, they are expressly trained in a weeklong program that exposes them to the fundamental elements of the company, from safety and regulatory guidelines to learning about the various aspects of the railroad culture. “We make sure the nurses have the tools to be successful out in the field,” said Deb Gengler, director of clinical services. “They usually make the transition from a nursing environment to a railroad environment within six

months. We are a large company with lots of learning opportunities from the nurse’s perspective, but they do truly love the ability to help employees in this environment.”

Return on Investment

The HealthTrack program has proven very successful. The company has devoted more than \$3 million annually to its support. Since 1992, HealthTrack has been a four-time winner of the C. Everett Coop Award, received the Well Workplace Platinum Level

we decrease health risks, those benefits are going to improve, so that’s where we’re focusing.”

Senior Management Support

This kind of success wouldn’t be possible without the support of Union Pacific’s senior management, which sees two benefits in sustaining and encouraging employee health and wellness. “There is a personal benefit, and there’s a corporate impact,” said Henley. “While we understand the corporate impact, we try to push the

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—Jackie Austad, general director,
health promotion at Union Pacific

Award, and won the Corporate Health Achievement Award, the Innovation in Prevention Award, and the Presidents Award for Healthy Weight and Lifestyle.

Austad said Union Pacific has demonstrated and quantified the link between healthcare costs and health risks, which has underscored the importance of the program. “We’ve also demonstrated a link between health risks and safety, which is our biggest driver,” she said. “We want our employees to work safely, and as

personal benefit to our employees. We want the program to be so embedded in the culture that it’s not a stand-alone program or concept.”

She added, “It’s clear that there is a link between wellness, productivity and safety, and it is because of that link that we want to ensure we are doing the best we can for our most valuable resource. Senior management fully embraces and supports our wellness concept. It’s part of a business strategy, and it makes a lot of business sense.

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of health and medical services

In the future, Union Pacific is looking to advance HealthTrack, and indeed its entire culture of health, to the next level. “We are trying to challenge ourselves to better integrate some of the physical and psychological aspects of health promotion,” said Henley. “We want to evolve to a point where

employees are actively discussing health concepts and supporting each other in trying to become healthier.”

It’s a track that the company hopes to continue following well into the future. [BE](#)

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