

HEALTHIEST EMPLOYERS: 5-99 EMPLOYEES

Employees go for gold at G&B's olympics



Grand & Benedicts, a Portland-based specialist that provides store fixtures and retail displays, has a simple belief: "healthier

employees are usually happier employees."

That's the word from Maggie Dakin, the 98-person company's human resources administrator.

"Promoting a healthy lifestyle has been an integral part of our company since our inception," she said.

As the winning healthiest employer among companies with fewer than 100 employees, we asked Dakin a bit about the company's health and wellness initiatives.

What are the highlights of your health initiatives? We encourage employees to use their lunch breaks to re-energize with a midday workout. A yoga studio with a certified yoga instructor, a workout room with weights and cardio machines, and a steam room to rejuvenate make it easy for employees to stay fit and healthy. We also have kayaks and bikes that employees can check out at lunch. To promote a healthy lifestyle, we arranged three company sponsored wellness competitions in 2013: an annual weight-loss challenge, the G+B



Maggie Dakin

olympics fitness challenge, and the G+B All Stars wellness challenge. Prizes ranged from cash, gift cards and massages to earning a full day of personal time off. The fitness challenge was designed for those who wanted to

take their fitness to the next level. The wellness challenge incorporated a combination of cardio workouts, yoga and meditation, sleep improvement and cutting out certain foods.

How do you get employees to participate? Wellness and fitness is nothing new to G+B. We have a long history of training for and running the Hood to Coast relay. We did it for 25 straight years. This helped foster a culture where employees were driven to succeed both professionally and physically. Even though we no longer run Hood to Coast as a company, this practice set the stage for the culture we have today. Most recently we have utilized

internal resources such as email and our intranet to communicate upcoming events and important details. We've always had high participation in our annual biometric screenings. This might be something we've taken for granted as we've never had to incentivize anyone to participate in this program. Maybe, when employees know their employer cares about their health, they start caring too?

What are the biggest challenges in implementing these programs?

Finding something that interests a wide spectrum of employees. For the fitness challenge, we try to design activities that will continue to challenge those who may already be somewhat fit, while at the same time not intimidating new participants. For example, employees who may not need to lose weight can feel left out in our annual weight loss challenge. Therefore, we started redesigning our wellness challenges and last year we added two challenges that had nothing to do with weight loss. Coming up with rules that are fair to everyone is probably the biggest challenge.

What is the most unusual or entertaining health initiative you've implemented? G+B olympics – a fitness challenge that encouraged participants to focus on measurable athletic activities. Progress was tracked over eight weeks and prizes were awarded for the top team score, most improved male and female participants, and highest scoring male and female participants. Examples of the challenges included how many push-ups can you do in one minute and how fast can you run/walk one mile.

What's your most effective tool for improving employees' health? We provide state-of-the-art workout facilities that include treadmills, elliptical machines, a rowing machine and a variety of free weights as well as a yoga studio room. In addition to the workout facilities, we have a steam room and men's and women's locker rooms with showers. These facilities make it easy for employees to put fitness in their daily routine.

What would you like to see in the program that you don't already have? An on-site personal trainer and a massage therapist would be great things to add.

– Sean Meyers, contributing writer

