

National Wellness Survey shows Canadian organizations investing in worksite wellness

Despite economic downturn, survey confirms employee health a priority

- October 5 to November 1, 2009 is Healthy Workplace Month in Canada -

TORONTO (September 30, 2009) – The 2009 National Wellness Survey conducted by Buffett & Company Worksite Wellness Inc. reveals that Canadian organizations understand wellness initiatives are a good business decision and are making their employee's health a priority.

Employees are an organization's most valuable asset, and their health and well-being is particularly important during a slowdown in the economy when work and home stress often increase. Ninety one per cent of organizations surveyed are offering at least one wellness initiative. This represents a 47 per cent increase in the number of organizations implementing wellness initiatives since the inaugural survey was conducted in 1997. A full analysis of the status of worksite wellness and health promotion is found in the 2009 National Wellness Survey, which is sponsored by Sun Life Financial and Pfizer Inc.

"Wellness programs are even more important during difficult economic times like the one Canada is currently experiencing," says Ed Buffett, President & CEO of Buffett & Company. "Research indicates that even employees who keep their jobs are under increased stress, which has a significant impact on their health and the health of the organization."

Although an increasing number of Canadian organizations are offering wellness initiatives, it is not all good news. The majority of organizations are not implementing wellness initiatives that target the greatest health risks of their employee population. While any wellness initiative offering is a good start, only organizations that are strategic about their offerings will experience the common benefits of worksite wellness programming — an increase in employee health and morale and a decrease in absenteeism and presenteeism.

"Wellness initiatives are challenging and complex to manage, so those that are not properly managed will likely not generate their anticipated benefits," says Dr. Catherine Connelly, Associate Professor, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University.

"Results of the survey are encouraging, but frankly it is still only a minority of organizations that are offering robust wellness programming," adds Buffett. "It is clear that a lack of budgetary resources is still the number one barrier for implementing wellness initiatives."

On the positive side, a significant number of organizations are now offering wellness programs based on employee-focused objectives. The top two motivators for offering wellness programs among responding organizations were improving employee morale (75 per cent), and enhancing organizational culture (70 per cent). The increase in employee driven motivators suggests an enhanced recognition of the role that organizational culture and

employee value has on the success of a business. Organizations that are running significant, strategic wellness programs are experiencing improved employee morale, positive feedback from participants and reductions in absenteeism. The problem is that few organizations are dedicating the financial resources needed to create a comprehensive wellness program.

About Buffett & Company's National Wellness Survey Report 2009:

The 2009 survey report, sponsored by Pfizer Inc. and Sun Life Financial, is an analysis of the status of worksite wellness and health promotion in Canada. The survey has been conducted every three years since 1997. In 2009, approximately 4,738 surveys were forwarded to various organizations. Complete responses were received from 634 organizations, for a statistically significant response rate of 13.4 per cent.

The survey report is being released in conjunction with Canada's Healthy Workplace month (October 5 to November 1, 2009) which is a celebration of workplace health in Canadian organizations.

About Buffett & Company Worksite Wellness Inc.

Buffett & Company Worksite Wellness Inc. is a leading Canadian consulting firm that specializes in worksite wellness and health promotion. Located in Whitby, Ontario, Buffett & Company has a network of professional associates throughout the country. Clients include major private sector corporations, large, medium, and small-sized public sector employers, unions and not-for-profits. Buffett & Company is the only organization in the worksite wellness industry to win the National Quality Institute's Award of Excellence - the Healthy Workplace Trophy.

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