

Aug 1, 2014, 5:00am CDT

Healthiest Employers: Adams and Reese LLP



David Bowsher is the main partner for the Birmingham office of Adams and Reese LLP.

Staff Birmingham Business Journal

How long has your company had a wellness program? Adams and Reese has focused on improving the wellness of its employees through installing an annual firm-wide weight loss program, beginning in 2008, and most recently named “Start A Healthy Routine in 2014.”

Why did you start a wellness program? Our Birmingham office manager, Ramona Klinner, got the idea for the weight loss program from our health insurance provider, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama. Ramona brought the idea to our human resources department, and we implemented the program.

What was the hardest part about starting your wellness program? Getting employees to buy into the program and participate. The program was needed because we pride ourselves on being one of the Best Places to Work, and in gratitude for their hard work for us, we wanted to provide employees with wellness initiatives.

How would you describe your company’s philosophy on wellness in 10 words or less? Happy and healthy employees make productive employees.

How did you overcome it? In 2008, we sent an email blast from the HR department explaining our first weight loss program and all its details. This was followed by the creation of an internal website where employees could view weight loss tips, lesson plans, before/after pics.

What lesson have you learned about wellness programs from your company’s experience? Always listen to employees and gather advice from them on what the wellness program should include for them to do well. We have a partnership with the YMCA where they waive the enrollment fee for employees, and the firm also hosts health care clinics.

How have your employees responded to the program? The program has built more camaraderie in the office as attorneys and staff make up the four-person, weight loss teams, so they are continually pushing each other to lose weight and do well in the program.

What are some of the basic features of your company's program? The challenge consists of a 10-week, weight-loss program where employees form teams of four individuals. Weigh-ins are held each week. Prizes range from \$500 per team member to \$100 per team member.

What is a feature that has worked particularly well for your business? The program includes an incentive of a one-night hotel stay in any of our preferred hotels in our markets, and to be eligible for that prize, individuals must complete the 10-week contest, lose 10 pounds and achieve the most weight loss in the office.

What has been the most popular feature among employees? Our employees really value the cash incentives from the program. The Birmingham "Munchers Crunchers," made up of Torie Muncher, David Bowsher, Lynn Wood and Linda Larsen, won the \$500 per team member grand prize.

Are there any future features you would like to add to your plan? We are always looking at unique features to add to our program. One feature that has been discussed is giving every participant a pedometer and tracking their steps and walking activity on a web site, so they can see their daily activity output.

What impact has your wellness program had on your company (reduced costs, higher morale, etc.)? The weight loss program always increases morale around the office as employees look forward to weigh-in days to see what progress they have made.

What advice do you wish someone had given you about wellness programs before you launched it? How to keep employees more engaged in continuing their weight loss efforts and keeping off the weight after the program has concluded.

What advice would you give a company that wants to start a program? Always find a way to engage your employees to finding a more healthy lifestyle that works for them. We had weekly weight loss session tips in each of our offices, which included guest speakers from local wellness clinics and gyms to talk about health care

Has the Affordable Care Act impacted your company's wellness program in any way? The Affordable Care Act has not affected the program in any way. Adams and Reese is very committed to providing an outlet for employees to be healthy.

- David Bowsher, partner in charge, Adams and Reese Birmingham office