PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL HEALTH FAIR

A health fair is a great way for you to offer your employees information and activities to educate them and offer suggestions for healthier living through a variety of health topics.

Health fairs can also offer valuable health screenings to detect health issues early, before they become serious. Careful planning can make this daunting task become manageable.

How to begin

Proper planning is the most important element to ensure success! Optimally, planning for a health fair should begin six (6) months to a year prior to the target date. Develop a planning committee with 3-5 members who will engage vendors, manage the budget, rentals, publicity/communications, food needs and evaluations.

Choose a location for the fair that is convenient for your employees and vendors. Make sure there is adequate and comfortable space to allow for set-up of any equipment being used during the fair. Consider that electricity may be needed by some of your vendors. Determine the goals and objectives you have for your fair, making your goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound). Example – 75% of employees will attend the fair and obtain at least one (1) health screening.

As part of your planning set a timeline of events or make a project plan. For example, you create a month-by-month checklist that would look something like this:

- 6 months prior to fair – Select theme, date and time, reserve location, prepare budget and obtain approval, set goals for fair.
- 5 months prior to fair – Brainstorm vendors, activities, demonstration and screenings.
- 4 months prior to fair – Reach out to vendors, determine methods of promotion for fair, develop marketing materials, and determine food needs for fair.
• 3 months prior to fair – Determine volunteer needs. Order and reserve all rental equipment, receive written confirmation from vendors with space and electrical needs.
• 2 months prior to fair – Follow-up with all vendors not confirmed and coordinate volunteers.
• 4-6 weeks prior – Begin promotion campaign to employees.
• 2 weeks ahead – Confirm rentals, order catering, work with site management for parking needs and obtain visitor passes for vendors.

**Set a budget**

Once you have your date and goals set, you can begin to develop your budget. Here are some major items to include in your budget:

- Publicity and promotion costs
- Rental of tables, chairs, AV and other equipment
- Refreshments or lunches for participants, volunteers and vendors
- Screenings and other vendor costs

**Create a theme**

When considering a theme, keep in mind your goals and your overall company philosophy. Align with national observances whenever possible (for example, if your event falls in February, your theme can reflect heart awareness during “National Heart Month”). Sample themes:

- “Good Health Makes Sense” – Usually done by a financial institution – can use cents as tokens for attending each booth. Collect so many tokens to purchase door prize ticket!
- “Healthy Treasure Hunt” – Find a treasure at each booth. Turn in your “loot” for a door prize ticket.
- “Get on the right track” – Collect train stickers at each booth to cover the vendor’s square on your card. Collect X number for a chance at door prizes.

**Select vendors**

Choose vendors who align with your theme and can offer your employees the greatest benefits. Some ideas include:

- American Diabetes Association
- American Lung Association
- American Red Cross
- Athletic shoe fitter
- Area fitness centers
- Chiropractor/spine specialist
- County health department
• Ergonomics expert
• Health insurance plan
• Local dentist
• Local dental school
• Local grocery store
• Local fire, police, hospital, home health agency
• Local pharmacy/pharmacist
• Local weight management program representative
• Physical therapist

**Consider screenings**
Screenings build awareness of health risks and provide information on how individuals can make changes in their lifestyles to enhance their health. Most screenings take several minutes, so allow extra time for participants to attend these booths or allow participants to pre-register for a specific time for screenings. Ensure confidentiality at all screening table. Suggestions for screenings include:

• Blood pressure
• Body composition (body fat)
• Bone density (heel scan)
• Cholesterol
• Derma Scan skin analysis
• Glucose
• Hearing
• Height and weight (BMI)
• Visual acuity/glaucoma

**Demonstrations/activities**
Add an element of fun and interest to your health fair by offering demonstrations and activities. Some ideas include:

• Acupuncture
• Band exercises
• Chair massage
• CPR/first aid
• Exercise equipment/techniques
• Flu vaccines
• Healthy cooking
• Proper lifting techniques
• Tai-Chi
• Yoga
• Zumba
Incentives/door prizes
Incentives and door prizes are a great way to encourage participation. Ask vendors who are participating in the fair if they can donate a door prize to the event. To encourage participation and attendance at each booth, provide each participant with a card or “passport” to be punched or stickered at each booth. Provide a map of the entire fair with vendors clearly labeled so, if time is limited, participants can readily choose the vendors that most interest them and obtain desired screenings. After the participant has visited a predetermined number of booths and his or her card is validated, he or she is eligible for the door prize drawings. Display the door prizes on the registration table to build excitement as participants register to encourage them to complete their card and return it for the drawings.

Promote the event
Think about how messages are normally communicated in your organization and start with the method that typically works well. Promote the event at least four weeks in advance and use as many avenues as possible. Here are some promotion ideas:

- Posters
- Newsletter articles
- Banners
- Flyers
- Intranet posting
- Plasma screen message
- Company/staff meeting announcement
- Table tents
- Emails

Additional suggestions
- Allow plenty of time for set-up. The day before is best if time allows and you have access to the tables and chairs
- Have volunteers on hand to escort vendors and assist with carrying their supplies
- Provide name tags for all vendors and volunteers
- Keep an extra supply of tape, scissors, pens and markers handy
- Provide a map of the fair for all attendees to locate information table, specific vendors, screenings and other services
- Keep extension cords available
Evaluate your health fair
- Develop an evaluation form for attendees to complete to obtain feedback about the health fair
- Determine if your goals were achieved
- Identify strengths and weaknesses for future considerations

Thank your vendors
Mail written thank you letters to all vendors for participating in your fair and include an evaluation form with a self-addressed stamped envelope. It is important to obtain their feedback on how you can make your event better in the future. You want to ensure these professionals continue to work with you, and being grateful for their services as well as listening to their feedback shows you care.