

# The Top 10 Reasons To Collect Data

1	Data collection provides a snapshot of the overall health and well-being of your workforce at any given point in time.
2	Data collection ensures a longitudinal account of the overall health status of your workforce.
3	Data collection ensures that senior level executives are kept in the loop as to what's happening in the arena of employee health and well-being.
4	Data collection ensures that the health management process is kept transparent.
5	Data collection provides accountability.
6	Data collection informs your workforce of the overall health and well-being of the company as a whole.
7	Data collection is an excellent recruitment vehicle for new employees.
8	Data collection allows you to benchmark against others.
9	Data collection allows you to definitively measure change.
10	Data collection allows you to demonstrate value to shareholders.

**Reason #1** Data collection provides a snapshot of the overall health and well-being of your workforce at any given point in time.

The first reason why data collection is an essential part of building a results-oriented wellness program is that this data provides you with a much-needed snapshot of the overall health and well-being of your workforce. Without this data readily available, worksite health promotion practitioners spend a lot of time guessing and speculating as to what the real health and productivity issues are within their working populations. By having this data at your fingertips, you'll have the ability to refer back to it on a daily basis if necessary. By diligently and carefully collecting health and productivity data on your workforce, you'll also have the ability to answer any questions that might come from senior level executives. Having this data at your disposal is worth its weight in gold when it comes to this particular issue alone.

**Reason #2** Data collection ensures a longitudinal account of the overall health status of your workforce

By faithfully collecting data year-in and year-out, you will develop a rich data repository that accurately reflects the overall health and well-being of your working population over time. This data is essential in monitoring and detecting any changes in your population so that you can effectively respond to the health needs of your people. Longitudinal data is also essential when it comes to long-term strategic planning. Remember, the nation's best worksite wellness programs are linked to the company's overall strategic planning process. If you want to be taken seriously by the powers that be, it's important to have your act together. Having this kind of data at your disposal makes a lot of sense when you really think about it. In fact, we're sure that your company has longitudinal data regarding financial and production outcomes—so wouldn't it make sense for you to have the same kind of data as well? If you can bring this type of longitudinal data to the table, you're much more likely to be taken seriously in the organizational planning process.

**Reason #3** Data collection ensures that senior level executives are kept in the loop as to what's happening in the arena of employee health and well-being.

The third reason why data collection is important is that it ensures that your senior level executives are kept apprised of what's going on in the wellness arena and how it's impacting employee health status. Plain and simple, if you want to engage your company's senior level leadership, you've got to keep them informed in meaningful ways. Providing them with objective data is a great way to do this. Just as an aside, it's also a great way to protect the stability and image of your initiative. For example, many executives within an organization have no idea what's going on in the wellness arena—and they use this ignorance as an excuse for not getting involved. But when an event occurs (think increase in healthcare premiums) these same executives demand answers. And this reactive scenario can put you on the defensive, and your program at risk. By having objective data—and regularly communicating it to senior level executives—you're much more likely to get the engagement and respect you deserve.

**Reason #4** Data collection ensures that the health management process is kept transparent.

It's been said that information is power. This is certainly true when it comes to gathering and maintaining health and productivity data within your organization. Make no mistake about it, the health and productivity data that you are collecting has enormous value to your company. To ensure that the data set remains useful for years to come, it should be easily accessible to a variety of different constituents within your organization. By establishing this kind of transparent data repository, the organization can be assured that the data that has already been collected will be available and useful not only now but in the future as well. The last thing that you want to see happen is that the data is housed and managed by a single individual. You'll want to avoid this scenario due to the simple fact that when that individual takes another position, retires, or wins the lottery, the data set magically disappears with them—and then you get to start all over. Proper data collection protocols can help you avoid this nightmare scenario

**Reason #5** Data collection provides accountability.

Another reason why we believe data collection is important is that it embraces the concept of accountability. Like it or not, many wellness programs have developed the reputation of not being hardcore, mainstream business strategies. While not true, it's hard to refute this kind of perception if you're not gathering and monitoring the data related to the overall health and wellbeing of your company's workforce. Furthermore, by collecting data, practitioners voluntarily step up to the responsibility of being held accountable for maintaining or improving the numbers associated with the health and productivity management initiative. There's no question that this accountability can create some tension and stress for those who are managing worksite wellness programs. But our experience has shown that it's the burden of accountability that has brought out the best in these same professionals.

**Reason #6** Data collection informs your workforce of the overall health and wellbeing of the company as a whole.

One commonly overlooked benefit of data collection is the illumination that it brings to the workforce as a whole. To be sure, enlightened worksite wellness professionals use data to educate and inform rank and file employees as to the health and productivity issues that are facing the company as a whole. This is a very, very powerful tactic. In fact, it's when employees truly understand what they need to do individually as well as collectively, that things begin to

change. It goes without saying that it's pretty difficult to stand up in front of your employees and to suggest health behavior change without having any data to back it up. On the other hand, we've seen profound moments of widespread support occur when wellness practitioners advocate change and their suggestions are supported by behavioral data.

**Reason #7** Data collection is an excellent recruitment vehicle for new employees

The seventh reason why health and productivity data collection is important deals with the fact that this data can be leveraged in the recruitment of new employees. Survey after survey reveals the fact that being healthy is a primary motivation of U.S. workers. If you have data at your disposal which indicates that your company is dedicated and successful in helping employees to adopt healthier behaviors, potential employees may see this as a tipping point of sorts. We've heard from more than one employer of the value that their worksite wellness program has brought to the company's recruiting process. By having concrete data which can be fashioned into the employment appeal, a company can go a long way toward establishing an objective case as to why your organization is a better fit than someone else's.

**Reason #8** Data collection allows you to benchmark against others.

Over the years, we've been impressed by the fact that America's healthiest companies are constantly benchmarking their performance against their competitors. And, if they're not benchmarking against their competitors, they are comparing themselves to information contained in national databases. In so doing, companies can take great satisfaction knowing when they are performing ahead of national trends. This comparison process also provides important motivation to bring about change if their numbers are not what they should be. To capitalize on the opportunity to effectively benchmark, it is essential that you are routinely and carefully collecting health and productivity data within your organization.

**Reason #9** Data collection allows you to definitively measure change

We are of the opinion that you can't change what you can't measure. Thus, if you are truly interested in improving the health and wellbeing of your working population, it's essential that you collect data. There are numerous companies in the United States that have had wellness programs for more than two decades now. There are also numerous companies in the United States among this group who have sincere regrets that they did not gather data from the very beginning of their initiatives. The good news is that many of these companies have implemented comprehensive data collection systems—albeit they learned the hard way. Perhaps even more fortuitously, many companies who were late entrants into the corporate wellness arena learned important lessons from these kinds of mistakes. That being said, it is the data that allows you to definitively measure both short-term and longterm changes. And isn't this the true measure of a company's commitment to health enhancement?

**Reason #10** Data collection allows you to demonstrate value to shareholders.

Over the last 10 years, the valuation process of companies has been broadened to reflect the value of a healthy workforce. Indeed, more and more investors are looking at companies more favorably when they have healthy and productive employees. But because the valuation process involves the measurement of earning potential, this analysis requires concrete data. For the companies who have gathered this kind of data, they are able to effectively articulate the value that healthy and productive employees have demonstrated to bottom-line outcomes.

Although not mainstream by any stretch of the imagination, employee health and productivity is rapidly factoring in to the overall value of an organization. By collecting data now, you will be able to embrace these new opportunities in the years ahead. In this article, we've discussed 10 important reasons why data collection is essential in building a results-oriented, worksite wellness program. Given the high priority that health and well-being has become in business and industry, it's essential that you are routinely and carefully collecting data as an integral part of your worksite wellness program. In so doing, we have no doubt that you will demonstrate your program to be an essential component of your company's long-term, overall business strategy.