



Yesterday at 10:11 AM

## 📌 Developing A Comprehensive Wellness Program

By POPSAdmin (edited)

Julie Paris | May 2020

A wellness program should be something that employees want to be a part of. It shouldn't feel like a requirement; it should be fun and approachable. The program should have a wide reach, touching everyone no matter their definition of wellness or where they are on their path to improving or maintaining their health. Here are the key steps Akamai took when developing and maintaining a wellness program.

To get started, we knew to be successful and get employee buy-in we needed to take employee feedback into consideration. To be sure we would deliver a wellness program that employees want to use, we started with surveying our employees. We asked questions to find out what employees want in a wellness program such as:

- What area of wellness they personally would like to focus on (e.g., fitness, healthy eating, weight loss, stress management, etc.)
- What would motivate them to participate (e.g., ease of use, flexibility, employer incentives, etc.)
- Why they wouldn't participate in an employer wellness program (e.g., lack of time, lack of motivation, prefer to manage wellness outside of work, etc.)
- How they want programming delivered to them (e.g., programming available onsite or virtually, accessible one-on-one or in a group setting, through a mobile app, etc.)
- How often they want programming available (e.g., once a month, weekly, etc.)
- In what manner they want to hear from wellness (e.g., intranet, personal email, work email, mail to home, in-person events, etc.)

While conducting the wellness survey, we were also working with our internal marketing team to create a look and feel for the wellness program and a logo:

### akamai wellness

EMBRACE TODAY FOR  
HEALTHIER TOMORROWS

We created a **mission statement**:

*The mission of Wellness at Akamai is to empower employees to take action to improve their health. We aim to foster a community where wellness is an integrated part of daily life so that employees can be more productive, feel more fulfilled, and experience health care cost savings.*

*Wellness is a day-by-day transformation of finding the best version of ourselves. Everyone's vision of wellness is unique and personal. It's all about finding the right combination of fitness, nutrition, emotional well-being, physical health and over-all balance. Together we will strive to create a culture of health where all employees will have the tools they need to improve their lives and where wellness becomes a part of who we are as a company.*

And, once we had the survey results we created 5 pillars of wellness from what employees told us they wanted to work on.

Our **Five Pillars of Wellness** and key words to help define them are:

1. Active - movement, strength, and physical fitness
2. Nourished - nutrition, educations, and weight management
3. Calm - stress management, sleep, and mindfulness
4. Balanced - resilience, work/life integration, and productivity
5. Healthy - prevention, care management, and awareness

When we were ready to announce the program to employees we were able to introduce them to the elements described above and pointed them to an intranet page housing any wellness resources they already had access to through the vendor partners (ex. EAP, medical carrier, dental carrier). Once all of the offerings were in one place, it showcased how much was already available! In the communication, we told them that they can expect to hear from wellness once a month through email, and we followed through with that commitment for more than five years now!

Initial programming was rolled out and enhanced over the years. Examples include an incentives program for tracking steps, sleep, and food, a fitness device subsidy, a wellness allowance, a bike commuter reimbursement, bike share subsidies, and healthy living seminars. Throughout the year, experts in different fields present to the employees. A lot of the relationships with these experts started with an internet search and a good, old-fashioned phone call. Or, reaching out to friends and asking, "Do you know someone that knows about this topic?" The people that we continue to use are the ones that take time to understand our audience, are willing to customize their content to suit our needs, and while delivering their seminars they promote our program to employees. It's a true partnership!

Over the years, we have surveyed employees two more times on wellness to make sure the program was delivering upon its mission and to find out if employees needed different things to support their wellbeing. An impact that I'm most proud of is that employees feel cared for by Akamai. Employees want to be cared for by their company so thinking through that lens has been helpful to me as I plan for future enhancements to the program. I also learned that common obstacles being faced are lack of time, lack of motivation, and lack of energy. Knowing this helps to stay focused on offering things that don't take up a lot of time, and offering them in a variety of ways whether that be a steps challenge that can be done anywhere or a seminar recording that can be watched on-demand whenever the viewer has time. Our communication campaigns changed as a result of the second survey. Results showed that people managers could be a channel to promote the program. We started giving managers a heads up when new, big things were being launched (ex. Steps challenges and certain seminars). We give them information early and with a unique twist ("Invite your team!" "Connect with your team in a new way!" "Managers can enroll a day early!"), and in turn they're able to better support their team's wellbeing.

The above illustrates best practices that have helped build success in this program. Another practice is to look at a new program or resource from every angle possible and think about all of the questions an employee can ask you so that you can have the answers ready (ex. What is this vendor doing with my data? Will I have access to this if I leave the company? Why isn't this an eligible expense?). I've found that building an internal program guide with every piece of information you find to be helpful. And, another piece of advice is to send a heads up email whenever you have a vendor emailing for the very first time or for the first time in a while (ex. flu shot clinic season is here). This will make people feel looped-in and help avoid them thinking an email is spam.

In closing, two quick lessons learned.

- First, to work with your vendors to be very clear on what you are paying for from them and if possible, adapt your agreement to state these things.
- Second, document all of your decisions so you can answer employee questions honestly and consistently, and empower someone else to do the same if you ever transition employee questions to another person.

With the current state of the world and many people (at least from my circle of friends and network of professionals) working from home, I see wellness evolving to become better suited for virtual offerings. If that happens, I hope wellness programs don't lose their personal touch and ability to bring people together.

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## Outline for Creating a Wellness Program.

### Building the Foundation

- Survey
- Branding or a "look and feel", mission statement, pillars, email template
- Regular communications
- Intranet page
- Regular programming (ex. Fitness tracker subsidy, incentives, challenges, wellness allowance)
- Enhanced programming

### Impact

- Employees feel cared for by the company, they are empowered to focus on their own wellbeing

### Best Practices

- Consistent, clean communications
- Build a network of professionals that can deliver lessons and seminars, will collaborate with you, will help you promote your program
- Buddy up with Employee Resource Groups, company event planners, Benefits, Real Estate, Facilities, Food Services, new hire orientation coordinators
- Plan programming carefully, consider what employees want and what they will ask about (ex. privacy policies, what is being done with my data, why isn't this eligible)
- Meet with every vendor you have and learn about their free offerings - you'll have a lot of tools and resources out of the gate (ex. EAP webinars, email newsletters, assessments, calculators, articles)
- Send a "heads up" before a vendor sends an email

### Lessons Learned

- Know every corner of each vendor's service, employees will dig in and find things to ask about
- When someone offers you a discount or something free, ask who else has access to this deal so you don't promote something that a stranger off the street can get
- Document decisions, it's helpful when employees ask why things are the way they are
- When building a contract with a vendor be very clear on what your expectations are, what you are paying for

## ABOUT JULIE PARIS



Julie is the Wellness Program Manager at Akamai Technologies, Inc. and a POPS A-Board Member. She has successfully developed the wellness program and engaged her colleagues in programs that align with the 5 Pillar of Akamai Wellness - active, nourished, calm, balanced, and healthy. Her passion for health and wellness started with a part-time career as a group fitness instructor, and she continues to do that today, as well.

Have questions for Julie? You can find her in the Member Directory, or click [@Julie Paris](#) to send her a note/connect!

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Thanks [@Julie Paris](#) - This is really in depth and thoughtful. Thanks for the awesome insights!



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