**Social Media – Keep the Conversation Going**

Logging into Facebook can finally be seen as productive!

Chances are high that a large number of the people you work with have a Facebook page, Twitter handle, Instagram account or all three. As the younger generation enters the workforce and the older generations become more tech savvy, employees are spending more and more time on their mobile devices and social media websites.

You can use this to your advantage by keeping conversations about wellness going past the office walls. The social nature of these sites and apps can be utilized to help people become more engaged in their wellness programs, and more successful as they try to improve their health. In the same way that individuals often use the ‘buddy system’ when they begin a diet or exercise program, these products can create a form social accountability that may help people stay on track and meet their health goals.

Here are some ideas on how to get started using social media:

**Facebook:**

\*Create a fan page – This is a page that you can create to build a relationship with the members of your wellness program. You set up the page to your tastes, send out requests for participants to ‘like’ the page, and viola! You have a forum for communication, picture sharing, video sharing and much more! This is an easy first step into using social media. The downside of using this is that anyone can ‘like’ the page and, in turn, comment on what is posted.

\*Create a group – Creating a group is a great way to communicate with wellness program participants. In creating a group you have options: make it open – anyone can see the group, who it in it and what is posted; make it closed – anyone can see the group and who’s in it but only members can see posts; make it secret – only members can see the group, who is in it and what is posted. These options ensure your privacy. You can add members to the group at any time and take them out as needed. There is more that you can do with groups such as add events and upload files, so this is a great means of distributing information.

**Twitter:**

\*Create a handle – Twitter can be very overwhelming for first time users. The language is unique and takes getting used to. However, it is an excellent way to send out information, pictures, and internet links in a short, concise format. When you create an account (or ‘handle’) you can set it up as public – anyone can follow you and see your tweets or private – your tweets are hidden to everyone that doesn’t follow you and you must confirm every follower request. The downside is you are limited to 140 characters in each tweet and it is not a good forum for discussion.

**Instagram:**

\*Create an account – Instagram is a means to communicate through pictures, so this is a great way to enhance your wellness message with a visual impact. You can post a message that will appear below the picture and you are also given the option to share the image on Facebook and Twitter at the same time. When you create an account you can set it up as public – anyone can follow you and see your pictures or private – your pictures are hidden to everyone that doesn’t follow you and you must confirm every follower request. Your followers will be able to ‘like’ and comment on your photos, so there can be some dialog.

Other ideas that can be considered for implementation are online wellness journals, discussion groups and progress reports that wellness participants can choose to share with friends, family, co-workers or other individuals with the same fitness goals.

It is important to keep in mind is that success isn’t about using one communication vehicle over another. Successfully promoting and implementing a wellness program is about using many communication methods to ensure the health message gets out. Use communication tools that are already being utilized by your employees and, in today’s age, that means using social media to your advantage.