

# Workplace Wellness:

HOW STAFFERS CAN ACHIEVE & SUSTAIN DIET GOALS ... STARTING NOW

By: Merilee Kern, MBA

**AS CORPORATE WELLNESS PURVEYORS STRATEGIZE THEIR APPROACH, THERE ARE A FEW SIMPLE BUT KEY CONSIDERATIONS THAT CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN EMPLOYEE SUCCESSFULLY — AND EVEN PROFITABLY — REALIZING A WEIGHT-LOSS ENDEAVOR VERSUS A WELL-INTENTIONED EFFORT THAT FALLS FAR SHORT.**

In seeking advice relating to waistline-friendly workplace wellness, I connected with diet and fitness industry insider Jimmy Fleming, co-founder of HealthyWage—the industry-leading provider of corporate and team-based weight loss challenges and financially-induced diet contests for individuals. For human resource (HR) professionals, business owners and others whose bottom lines depend on a healthy, present and productive staff pool, he offered insights on critical elements needed for the best chance of success with a weight-loss initiative.

**Here's what Fleming says staffers can do to diet more effectively:**

**1 Map out specific goals & time frames.** You are far more likely to achieve your diet goal if you spend a few minutes thinking it through. Sit down at your desk and dedicate even just 10 minutes of your life to strategizing your goal. Put pen to paper, or, better yet, send an email to a friend or family mem-

ber and make a list of the things you're going to do to change your weight. Simply stating "I'm going to lose weight" is not nearly specific enough, but it makes a good headline at the top. Write down a date when you will achieve your first goal. This date should be in the near future — one month is a good bet.

Now, make a specific, realistic goal. Most experts agree that you're most likely to succeed if you don't starve yourself, and plan on losing one to two pounds per week. In fact, setting a modest goal — say, one pound per week — can spare you a lot of hunger and stress. You might even forget you're on a diet! Suppose you choose one and a half pounds per week and a one-month goal date: your goal will be about six pounds. A piece of cake (so to speak)! Put your goal and goal date on your calendar (e.g., "Weigh 150 pounds" as an entry for Jan. 30).

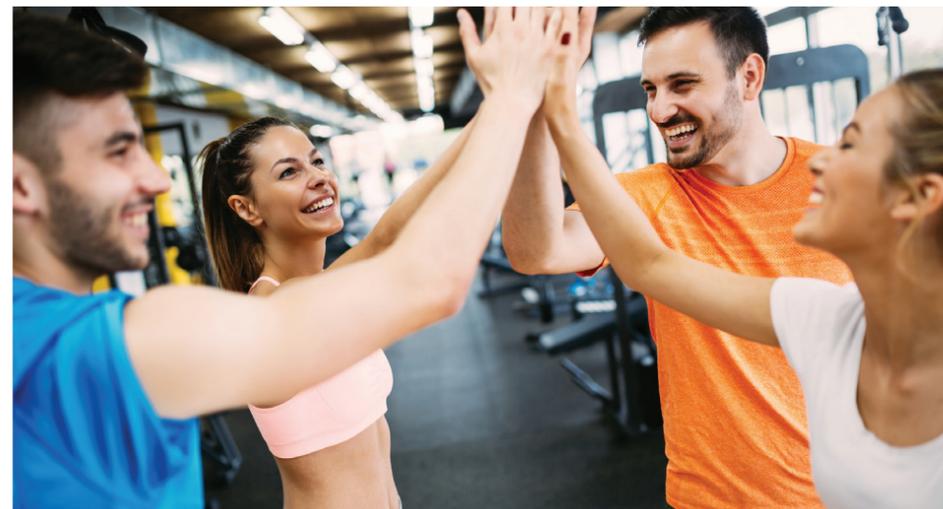
Go back to your piece of paper or email. Under your goal and goal date, write down the word "food." Ask yourself: What exactly is your eating plan? Are you going to follow a particular

diet? If so, when are you going to start? Your answer should be "right now." Don't be afraid. This is going to be great! If your diet requires that you purchase something or register on a certain website, go do that right now! What about exercise? What specific days and times will you commit to exercising? Who will you exercise with? If possible, call a friend now and set something up.

Review your plan frequently as you work your way toward your goal. When your goal date comes, call a friend to either brag about your achievement or confess that you didn't achieve it and tell them what's going to be different for the next goal date. Now, sit down again (pen to paper or fingers to keyboard) and set a new goal date and goal. Keep going!

**2 Set up financial incentives.** After you've written out your specific goals and dates, your best bet is to build a little structure into them. Enter: prizes and rewards.

A significant amount of academic research shows that you are much more likely to achieve your goal if you include a double financial incentive — i.e., money to lose if you fail and money to win if you succeed! The reason money works better than the natural motivators of vanity and health is that money can be tied to specific, measurable goals and deadlines. In other words, financial incentives help prevent procrastination by establishing a firm



start date and help prevent quitting by establishing a firm goal date. Financial incentives also make weight loss a lot more fun and exciting by transforming the process into a game.

There are highly effective, proven tools and resources available online for setting up financial incentives. For example, HealthyWage allows participants to make various kinds of personal weight loss "bets" and win payouts up to \$10,000. The double financial incentive is an incredible motivator and source of structure that most winners say is indispensable.

**3 Do one thing at a time.** Trying to stick to more than one goal creates a willpower diffusion that is almost always a recipe for failure. Your weight loss

goal requires time, planning and lots of action items. The winding road from plump to sexy is made of many cobblestones that you have to lay down one at a time with lots of small, frequent decisions (e.g., "This morning, I am going to skip that second donut."). With all the good judgment and willpower those little decisions require, you simply won't have the time and energy for your other goals, too. You're booked solid! If you think your weight loss goal isn't that big of a deal, you might be off track.

**4 Tell everyone.** Or, at least tell a few friends or family members about your endeavor. If you're not willing to tell someone about your diet goal, you might not be committed enough to succeed.

group of friends or family members, you are even more likely to accomplish your goals. You get all the benefits of accountability plus the comfort and fun of knowing there's someone waiting for you to exercise, compare food and restaurant experiences, and share the ups and downs of dieting. According to the American Psychiatric Association, "Enlisting family and friends in the effort may help." One study shows that participants who do a weight loss program with friends are more than twice as likely to keep their weight off than those that try to do it on their own.

## Does Money Motivate Weight-Loss?

Weight loss doesn't have to be a difficult or costly endeavor. It can actually be quite profitable. HealthyWage.com has found a way to help dieters overcome their short-term financial woes and spur weight loss from the start by applying "double-incentivization" methodology.

Through its website, HealthyWage.com shares an array of inspirational success stories of both women and men who gained financially for their pound-shedding achievements using the company's unique gamification approach — many of which have lost over 100 pounds with this "carrot and stick" methodology.

It's no surprise such money-driven competitions have surged in popularity, given that multiple highly credible studies have underscored the value of employing financial incentives and peer support to positively influence weight loss. HealthyWage.com's own diet-for-dollars program allows participants to make a wager upfront ranging anywhere from \$20 a month to as much as \$500. Participants then commit to a specific amount of weight loss in a specific time frame, for which they'll receive a cash prize payout if they achieve their goal in the allotted time. Company reps cite that the average participant wagers \$60 per month for nine months and roughly triples their investment if they are successful at achieving their goal. The financial upside potential is impressive.

So if you're looking for a fun and competitive diet program that proffers cash incentives, social and expert-based support, online tools and resources, goal-setting and tracking technologies and other helpful support mechanisms to better assure your pound shedding success (and monetary earnings related thereto), HealthyWage.com just may be for you. After all, the company was founded in response to academic research proving that even small cash rewards triple the effectiveness of weight-loss programs; that people are more effective at losing weight when their own money is at risk; and that social dynamics play a large role in the spread of obesity, and will likely play a large role in reversing obesity.

Getting paid for shedding pounds and getting healthy certainly makes dollars and sense to me.

GETTING PAID FOR SHEDDING POUNDS AND GETTING HEALTHY CERTAINLY MAKES DOLLARS AND SENSE TO ME



As a branding pundit, wellness industry veteran, consumer health advocate and influential media voice, Merilee Kern spotlights noteworthy marketplace innovations, change makers, movers and shakers. Also a two-time fitness champion, her groundbreaking, award-winning "Kids Making Healthy Choices" Smartphone APP for children, parents/caregivers and educators is based on her award-winning, illustrated fictional children's book, "Making Healthy Choices — A Story to Inspire Fit, Weight-Wise Kids." Merilee may be reached online at [www.LuxeListReviews.com](http://www.LuxeListReviews.com). Follow her on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/LuxeListEditor](http://www.twitter.com/LuxeListEditor) and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TheLuxeList](http://www.facebook.com/TheLuxeList).