



### **Wellness "Commencement Address"**

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*Could your wellness committee or your senior leaders use some spark? Enough already about health care cost containment and ROI, inspire them with some words with more pizzazz! Feel free to borrow any ideas from this short "kick-off" talk I gave to the Well Cities Oshkosh team.*

*With school graduation season around the corner, consider this a "commencement address" for your company's wellness leaders. Caps and gowns, I leave to you.*



Raise your hand if your company expects more work now, with fewer employees, than 10 years ago.

If so, do you agree this makes every one of these hard-working employees more indispensable and less replaceable than 10 years ago? Each person's contribution has never mattered more!

That reality also makes corporate wellness matter more now than ever. Wellness helps employees arrive at work "alive, awake, alert and enthusiastic!" You need that daily from everybody. You have no spare, extra, or marginal employees anymore, if you ever did. I dare say no one is a slacker anymore, if anybody ever was, because no one's left to take up the slack.

But, I want you to now raise your hand if you've ever experienced a wellness program which, despite high quality and wise design, failed to reach enough people in the organization. Did participation rates remain too low or did family members seem uninterested, or perhaps participation happened but without real engagement?

Do you agree we all have come today in response to the challenge of widening our wellness reach to engage more people, in meaningful ways? Then look around and you'll see the solution you sought. Well Cities Oshkosh positions us all to achieve collectively what we can't individually. Together we will attain wider reach, and better engagement, to improve the health of the Oshkosh community. That way we will help well employees stay well and help ill employees stay employed.

Do you agree we're wiser to ask 100 people to each do just one thing differently, than to expect one person to change 100 things? Help 100 people change one unhealthy behavior, rather than change 100 behaviors in one person. And, all of us can improve at least one thing! Consider how that's true of corporations, too. We have at least 100 corporate locations represented here. As we work together, each can perform better in at least one thing, and realize one achievable goal, one at a time.

Do you agree that we can help more people with programs just an inch deep as long as they also stretch a mile wide, rather than a mile deep and an inch wide? Help people with continuous light touches 52 weeks a year by letting them work in a culture of health and wellness, and you have a healthier company, and an initiative that sustains itself. It becomes part of what it means to work here. This approach may touch any one associate only lightly, but it touches all of them, often.

I want you to clearly understand what I mean by a culture of health and wellness. Looking at something you already achieved, namely a culture of safety, helps you understand this best. That culture took years to achieve, but now it

touches each employee at your workplace, all the time. Does anyone here work in manufacturing? Please help me here. If I entered your shop floor today dressed just as I am now, how far would I get? Within a minute, wouldn't any one of your employees stop me to say, "You have to wear ear plugs, and safety shoes, and eye protection, and tuck in your tie!" That culture of safety sustains and enforces itself. So how about if I walked in with a lighted cigarette, or if I smoked at your doorway, or in your parking lot? In a culture of health and wellness, employees let others know, "Hey, we don't do that here" just like you already trained them to do with safety protection.

If all organizations do this, we create a community of self-sustaining health and wellness, and an ongoing culture of vitality in Oshkosh. This town is about 20 miles wide. If we reach out and join hands we can cover that mileage at least an inch deep with a culture of wellness.

Then consider the uniqueness of each individual, and of each corporation. Then imagine how we won't cover this town by whitewashing with a broad brush. Instead our corporate partnership we will create a glorious mosaic illustrating how health, wellness and vitality matter in our unique organizations. Oshkosh as a Well City becomes a Wellspring of individual and corporate vitality.