

How Corporate Fitness Programs Are Shifting in a Work-from-Home World

By Ann Wyatt, VP, Program Management & Engagement, HealthFitness Apr 22, 2020

For many U.S. employees, “working from home” is the new normal—at least for now. They are working in a whole new way while maintaining productivity and even taking on new roles depending on their industry and the needs of their organization.



Source: LightField Studios / Shutterstock

This is often happening with kids at home and the pressure to help with distance learning. It’s a lot for employees to handle. And, it’s going to take a toll on their mental and physical well-being, which is why corporate fitness programs need to adapt—and fast.

Now more than ever, well-being programs must meet employees where they are (at home) and provide support unique to this unprecedented situation we’re faced with because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many employers are quickly recognizing this and are finding ways to help employees participate digitally—and creatively feel connected to their company, though they might not be physically present.

Real-Life Examples

For example, Ken Sturm, program manager at GE Power in Greenville, South Carolina, is using Facebook Live to share daily live workouts, twice daily energy breaks, and weekly “Ask The Trainer” Q&A sessions for GE Power’s 1,200 employees.

“We are also posting our Workout of the Day video on the Facebook page. Everything we do on Facebook Live is also concurrently streamed live via Skype,” said Sturm. “All of our content is also being recorded and put on our YouTube channel and our website. We are trying to remove as many barriers as possible.”

According to Sturm, there’s been a “tremendous turnout” on both Skype and Facebook Live, and the page has seen a steady increase in traffic. To accomplish all of this, Sturm has created a “paparazzi” setup.

“We have been using one cell phone to do Facebook Live, another for Skype, our digital Camcorder to record everything, and a GoPro for any time we need to move the camera around,” said Sturm. “It is quite the sight to behold. We are having a blast doing it though it is exhausting creating so much content.”

Sharon Daley, Program Manager at SAP America in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, and her colleagues decided to use Microsoft Teams rather than e-mail to communicate with employees during the pandemic. She created the “Work from Home Warriors” team, and within 48 hours, 204 members signed up to join, and 25% of them had already taken a live fitness class.

Daley streams the classes using her camera phone so employees can see her. And if employees put the app on their devices, she can watch them and help with their form for yoga, circuit training, or stretches. She teaches two classes a day and a stretch break. Daley plans to add a step class, as well.

“It’s so nice to be able to see their faces,” Daley said. “They are so happy to be moving and seeing each other.”

Finally, at Eaton Corp. in Moon Township, Pennsylvania, program manager Stephanie Seth Loy says she’s doing everything over Webex for employees.

“I put together a virtual group class schedule that was communicated to employees via a weekly newsletter. All of the classes are on a public Outlook calendar so any employee can see the class and immediately access the Webex information,” said Seth Loy. “I wanted to make it as easy as possible for employees to join in, knowing 99 percent of us are working from home with our Outlook emails readily available.”

Seth Loy’s classes include a mid-morning stretch break, bodyweight toning, cardio classes during the lunch hour, a mid-afternoon guided meditation, and an after-work boot camp or yoga flow. She is also starting “Wellbeing Wednesdays” via Webex, in which she and Eaton’s health promotion specialist take 15 to 30 minutes to talk with employees and exchange tips and ideas.

“The participation has been tremendous so far and after one week of remote classes, I’m averaging double the amount of participants per class as I usually do when in the office,” she said.

So much has changed as many employees adapt to their new “workplace” now. And, as they adapt, progressive companies, like the ones listed above, are adapting right along with them to develop new well-being programming that reaches employees where they are—at home.

With programming options that are convenient and flexible, these companies are finding new ways to connect with their employees and support their physical and mental well-being.

Hearing familiar voices and seeing their colleagues’ smiling faces has provided a simple yet effective way to provide a much-needed lift for our participants’ spirits, in addition to providing a great workout. The best result we’ve had is helping provide a sense of normalcy to participants during a time that’s anything but.