

in the know

spring into action

With winter giving way to spring, it's a good time to perform a checkup on wellness initiatives. Research from the staffing firm Accountemps found that 56% of Canadian professionals said winter negatively impacted their mood at work.

"To maintain productivity, managers must be cognizant of internal and external factors that may affect employee morale and performance," Canadian President of Accountemps David King said in a press release.

Employers shouldn't assume that workers will simply shake the winter doldrums with the change in season—Data from the International Foundation of Employee

Benefit Plans report *Workplace Wellness Trends: 2017 Survey Results* showed that wellness and mental health are year-round concerns. In fact, 20% of responding organizations listed depression/mental illness as a top condition impacting plan health costs.

Foundation research also showed that most employers are taking action. More than nine in ten responding organizations offer at least one wellness initiative, and 56% of organizations are planning to increase their emphasis on wellness communication.

Accountemps offered five tips to employees for beating the winter blahs and boosting productivity and morale, and initiatives cited in the Foundation report provide additional ideas for employer support.

1. **Stay active.** Many employers offer walking/fitness challenges (51.3%), health coaching (42.6%), standing/walking workstations for workers (42.3%) and on-site fitness equipment/centres (36.0%). Further, 36.8% said they encourage exercise/activity breaks during work time.
2. **Nourish yourself.** What's good for the body is good for the mind, and a number of responding organizations offer healthy food choices in cafeteria or vending machines (44.0%) and nutrition counselling (33.0%).

3. **Make time for small talk.** Charity drives (59.1%), on-site celebrations like department parties (57.5%), community volunteer projects (53.0%) and staff outings (47.5%) were reported among the top social events, allowing employees a chance to form stronger relationships.
4. **Set career goals.** Employers can help workers with their career objectives through manager training (44.3%); leadership opportunities via teams, committees and/or councils (33.0%); and internal job transfers that fit worker interests (31.5%).
5. **Pursue professional development.** Tuition reimbursement (65.7%) and staff notification of internal job openings (62.6%) topped the list of professional growth opportunities. Also, more than half of responding organizations subsidize professional development (51.5%) and continuing education for professional designations (50.6%).

The warmth and hope of the new season make it an opportune time to spring into action. And with increased awareness and healthy opportunities, employers and employees may both come out in better shape. In *Workplace Wellness Trends*, responding organizations that track return on investment (ROI) reported that the average ROI per dollar spent on wellness initiatives was \$2.28.

