



Southern Cross Health Society

WORK LIFE BALANCE AWARD

HIGHLY COMMENDED



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THE STORY

Launched as a basic staff-health programme focused on initiatives such as smoking cessation and weight loss, Southern Cross Health Society's Switch2well has evolved into something far more comprehensive.

Today, it is a sophisticated, digitised programme which enables employees to track their wellbeing in real-time and be rewarded for their participation and good health.

The leading health insurance organisation, which employs more than 800 staff, gave Switch2well its first major overhaul in 2013, relaunching it as a fully holistic wellbeing programme.

It decided to align the programme with the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

"We realised we needed to expand beyond the basics and develop a well-rounded tool to promote overall health and wellness to our employees," says Southern Cross Chief People and Strategy Officer Vicki Caisley.

These days, it offers a wide range of opportunities and options for employees to get involved in healthier lifestyle choices, from mental wellbeing and financial literacy seminars to sustainability and community-support activities, all during work hours. In 2015, the programme was further extended through a partnership with Fitbit to provide fitness devices to employees. The trackers enable them to connect with their movement,

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sleep, and heart rate data, as well as rewarding them via a point system for reaching 10,000 steps a day.

Staff can also earn Switch2well points by commuting sustainably to work, showing a commitment to exercise with a wellbeing membership or participation in a sports team, and attending various wellness seminars. Points equate to rewards, such as a “wellness day” and other benefits.

Switch2well provides an opportunity to give back to the community with a volunteer day, and offers assistance such as nutrition consultations, access to a healthy food guide and a meditation app.

“Switch2well was developed for us, by us, and has evolved over time to suit our needs,” says Southern Cross Diversity and Inclusion Forum chair Sufyan Afiz. “Southern Cross is continuing to evolve Switch2well to ensure it remains current and relevant, and to empower people to live their healthiest lives.”

The organisation’s leaders and managers are proud to be active participants in Switch2well, joining team challenges and sharing their wellbeing journeys through internal communication channels.

“This support comes right from the top,” says Sufyan, “with dedicated resource to implement our wellbeing programme, through a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partner and specialist support employees.”



Overall accountability sits with the Chief People & Strategy Officer, who is part of the executive team and reports directly to CEO Nick Astwick.

As part of Switch2well, Southern Cross has worked with expert partners to measure wellbeing while maintaining employee privacy.

Data from Switch2well partner Massey University shows the programme has led to increased engagement and employee retention.

It also shows a positive correlation between health and reduced absenteeism. On average, employees actively engaged with Switch2well use two fewer sick days each year. Among recent developments, in late 2019 Southern Cross partnered with Edison NZ limited to give employees the opportunity to take a DNA test to measure wellness indicators. The results help create a personalised report detailing what exercise, nutrition, sleep and other such activities will be specifically beneficial to the individual.

“We believe we are the only organisation in New Zealand taking health data and turning it into personalised health and wellbeing experiences in this way,” says Vicki.

Southern Cross holds Switch2well workshops with employees each year to understand what is working well and what could be improved upon.

As an example of the positive feedback received, one participant described the programme’s impact on them personally: “I’m a naturally lazy person but Switch2well has been instrumental in getting me up and walking every day to get my 10,000 steps. It’s also helped give me peace of mind about my finances and provided me with endless food for thought in the various seminars we’ve had. It’s helped me grow my compassion and empathy. It’s one of the reasons I love working at Southern Cross.”

THE CHALLENGE

Southern Cross had a basic employee health programme but needed to ensure it evolved into a fully holistic wellbeing initiative.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Overhauled the original Switch2well programme to align with the WHO definition of health to promote overall health and wellness.
- Used technology in the form of fitness devices to expand on the scheme.
- Offered a points and rewards programme to help build engagement.
- Had buy-in from the top of the organisation.



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- More than 90 per cent of staff actively participate in Switch2well.
- Eighty-two per cent of employees say participating has had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.
- The programme has led to increased engagement and employee retention.
- The benefit of that to Southern Cross is an estimated \$1600-\$3,000 per employee each year.

KEY LEARNING

Workplace health and wellbeing programmes are most effective when they evolve over time to fulfil updated objectives and allow an organisation's people to flourish in all areas of their lives.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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