



7 Questions to Ask your **Wellness Platform Vendor** in 2021

Forward-thinking companies of all sizes are implementing workplace wellness programs to control health costs, increase employee engagement, and improve well-being .

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, in 2019, over 84% of U.S. companies with 200 or more employees offer corporate wellness programs as a part of their benefits packages. While many of these efforts were strategically designed to help, many programs missed the mark and fell short of offering real value to companies. To combat this shortfall, Human Resources professionals and business leaders are looking for proven technology to boost engagement and deliver results.

Employee wellness technology has evolved tremendously over the last few years and now can better help companies track the metrics that matter most – population health, employee engagement. Wellness portals not only help businesses but can also provide a lot of value to employees if they offer a personalized experience to guide them on their well-being journey while helping them to track their health. By creating a custom-tailored approach, businesses now can reap the benefits of their workplace wellness programs such as combat rising healthcare costs, improving corporate culture, and reducing absenteeism. This allows wellness to be done with and for employees, instead of at them as programs in the past were known for.

There are so many wellness platform vendors with lots of cool features, however there are a variety of factors to consider when choosing a wellness portal vendor that best suits the needs of your company and its employees. To help narrow your search and find the right wellness technology provider for your company, here are seven important questions to consider:





1 IS THE VENDOR FORWARD-THINKING AND DO THEY HAVE A TEAM OF EXPERTS WHO UNDERSTAND WELLNESS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TRENDS?

While anyone can design a wellness portal, you'll most likely have a better experience working with a vendor whose portal was designed by people who understand health and wellbeing and not only coding software. There are complex aspects of health insurance and employee engagement that can better be understood and explained by people who know the industry and can better articulate the value to you. You will want to know your wellness partner is keeping up with the latest trends and the portal reflects upon that. Find out if the offering supports wearable device integrations, real-time aggregate reporting, health assessments, communications, and secure messaging. You may not want to go too into the weeds with these questions, but it's a good practice to learn about what they are envisioning for the future to make that the platform provider is forward thinking. On another note, keeping the portal fresh with improvements and updates will boost the usage and engagement levels.



2 DOES THE PROGRAM AND PORTAL INCLUDE SECURE TARGETED MESSAGING AS WELL AS COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS?

The big reason why these programs typically have low engagement levels is because once implemented, companies expect them to run on their own. While most of the program can be implemented, if the HR or program admin are not communications experts who have free time on their hands to design or curate wellness content, the employees will never be engaged. You should opt for a portal that allows you to message your staff with any company updates or announcements pertaining to the wellness program. A good portal allows you to segment who will receive the messages. For example, maybe you want to send a reminder only to the employees who have not yet uploaded their biometric screenings. As a bonus, a vendor who provides content material for you to share through the portal and your other communication channels will have the best levels of engagement. Your employees will know about the program and be excited and you will have more time on your hands to focus on your other duties.

3 WHAT ARE THE PLATFORM'S INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES?

As technology becomes more and more complex, having everything housed on one platform may be the best way to go. The ability to integrate wellness services with some of the systems you currently have in place will ensure your program is running smoothly. Find out if they can implement single sign on (SSO), web services or other software integrations. If you can make a list of data sets that are most useful to your company, it will help remove some of the kinks in the onboarding process. Learn if you need access to connect to your insurance provider's claims data or biometric screenings reports. You should not expect your platform provider to offer every integration you can think of, however knowing this info ahead of time will also avoid hidden fees or ruin expectations.

4 ARE REPORTS AVAILABLE ON-DEMAND?

Tracking your program performance is important, because if you aren't tracking, how will you know if you're getting what you signed up for? Many vendors do not provide enough transparency when it comes to reporting and have you going through hoops to view the data you need to share with your team or your insurance provider. Make sure the portal you choose allows you to export reports on-demand. Besides tracking ROI another benefit of getting frequent reports are because it allows you to customize the program based on what the company's health risks may be. For example, if you look at a report in February and notice after the biometric screenings, there's a high percentage of employees who may be diabetic or prediabetic, now you can work on newsletters, videos, and other content around diabetes awareness immediately. If you did not have access to those reports, you would not find out until months later – when it's too late. The reports also can show you insight on how the platform is being used, what features might be most popular, and get some employee feedback which ultimately will help to improve your program over time.





5 IS THE SOLUTION SCALABLE AND FLEXIBLE?

A well-thought-out wellness program usually has a multi-year strategy. You will want to avoid outgrowing your platform by choosing a vendor that allows you to gradually roll out features and can evolve with your company as needs change or arise. If you are launching a wellness program for the first time, you'll want to use a platform that helps you survey your employees easily. Also, you'll want to include some components that help to create a baseline of your population such as a health risk assessment and biometric screening. This will also be used to track improvements over time and is even more valuable when you can track a cohort of employees over the years. It will also be important if your health insurance carrier reimburses you for positive results. However, the biometric screenings alone are not enough to transform your company's culture and improve health, you might want to add incentives, challenges, and virtual classes. With the pandemic causing most businesses to remain virtual, these social components will keep employees connected. As you are shopping for your wellness partner ask what would happen if your company grows or how easy it is to add new components to the program.

6 CAN THE PORTAL SUPPORT CUSTOM CHALLENGES AND GAMIFICATION TO OFFER REWARDS?

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7 HOW DOES THE PORTAL PROTECT PHI AND IS IT HIPAA COMPLIANT?

This may be the most important question on this list because you are storing protected health information of your employees. Complying with health privacy laws only ensure your wellness partner can be trusted, but also it can give you some peace of mind. You'll want to make sure the vendor is following best practices and HIPAA protocol to safeguard your data and they also have proper procedures in place in the event of a data breach. Find out where the data is being stored, is it in a physical location or is it in the cloud. Once you learn about the HIPAA policies, learn about their security policies. You'll want to know if they have rules around creating passwords, how data is being encrypted, and who may have access to it. Also make sure all reports contain aggregate data and they are de-identified in accordance with HIPAA regulations.



CONCLUSION

The employee wellness and human resources technology space is full of vendors who offer a wide range of services. For you to make the right decision that will support your business' goals, its important to go through this checklist and have a discussion with your potential vendor to find out how they address these questions. There are many more questions to ask, but these will help to make the process of selecting a wellness portal provider much easier so that you get back to your other tasks. [Contact one of our specialists](#) to help you craft a corporate wellness plan for 2021 that helps to build healthy habits and create a mindful culture.