

# The Road to Wellness

## Firm practices for a healthier staff



One of the keys to long-term retention is discovering and deploying new ways to demonstrate to employees how much they're valued, and how much the firm cares about them.

As part of its annual Best Firms to Work For ranking, now in its tenth year, Accounting Today gathers data on a wide range of firm policies and practices – and one of the most common approaches they're taking to keeping staff around longer is by focusing on employee wellness, offering them perks and services and programs that keep them healthy, productive and happy in their work. (In some cases, it can also help with a firm's health insurance costs and help fight off the tax season 15lbs.)

Here, culled from a decade of research with Accounting Today's Best Firms to Work For, are 10 ways top firms look after the employees' well-being.

- ✓ **FITBITS.** The vast majority of Best Firms to Work For offer or heavily subsidize Fitbits, either for all staff or just for those who participate in walking programs. Special challenges where employees urge each other in friendly competition are also popular.
- ✓ **MAKING IT FUN.** Beyond Fitbits, many firms host broad-based "Wellness Challenges" that encourage all employees to join in with activities that promote weight loss and physical activity, with prizes, celebratory events, and more friendly competition as incentives.
- ✓ **GYM MEMBERSHIPS – OR GYMS.** Free or subsidized gym membership are common, and many firms go one step further with on-site workout facilities. Others host weekly yoga classes, or arrange running or walking groups where staff can exercise together, and a few even subsidize the cost of at-home exercise equipment.
- ✓ **HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES.** Free food is a staple of accounting firm perks, especially during tax season, but the Best Firms make a point of offering healthy options like fresh fruit and nuts, and cutting back on the usual sugary and salty snacks.
- ✓ **WEIGHT MANAGEMENT.** Whether it's hosting internal "Biggest Loser" challenges, subsidizing programs like Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig, or bringing in a dietician for in-person advice, the Best Firms are serious about watching employees' waistlines.
- ✓ **MINI-CHECKUPS.** While no firm is offering a full medical check-up in their offices, many arrange on-site fitness assessments and health screenings, covering everything from bloodwork to blood pressure. Some even offer ultrasounds for detecting more serious issues.
- ✓ **INFORMATION.** More and more of the Best Firms are bringing nutrition, fitness and other wellness experts and health professionals into the office for lectures and demonstrations.
- ✓ **GETTING HANDS-ON.** Getting a massage at your desk is a regular tax season perk at many of the Best Firms; some extend that throughout the year, and a few even bring in chiropractors and other health professionals to help employees work out the kinks.
- ✓ **FLU SHOTS.** Just about the only wellness benefit more common than Fitbits at the Best Firms are flu shots.
- ✓ **REMEMBER, NOT ALL HEALTH IS PHYSICAL.** The Best Firms take a comprehensive approach to wellness, offering programs for handling stress, providing support for mental health issues, and even bringing in experts to advise employees on their financial well-being.