

burnalong



7 SECRETS TO LAUNCHING A SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE WELLNESS CHALLENGE



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Have you tried to run a corporate wellness challenge and, well, it didn't go as planned? You aren't alone.

Challenges are attractive for employers for a good reason. Wellness challenges are a tide that lifts all boats. Or, to put it another way, they are win-win situations for everyone involved.

Wellness challenges are a great way to increase enrollments in your corporate wellness program, improve engagement, and help employees connect around healthy competition.

Especially with dispersed and hybrid teams, wellness challenges can be a way to unify teams or departments around a common goal. They can also help your company stand out as one that prioritizes employee health which can be vital to attracting or retaining top talent.

There are a wide variety of challenges you can implement that support sleep, physical activity, mental health, nutrition, gratitude, relationships, financial literacy, and lifestyles. Really, there are almost endless options.

But in order to reap the benefits of wellness challenges, it does require planning and best practices (**hint: the simpler the better**). We've put together seven proven strategies to make your wellness challenge successful. Let's dive in!

MAKE YOUR WELLNESS CHALLENGE INCLUSIVE

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PRO-TIP: By creating inclusive challenges, you invite your entire population to engage with your challenge. This improves overall engagement metrics and improves morale.

26 percent of adults in the United States have some type of disability and require varying levels of adaptive support or programming. Additionally, an estimated **31 percent of people who are disabled**, aged 16–64, were employed in 2021.

While your specific population might vary, it is imperative that you offer wellness challenges that promote inclusivity and belonging. This is vital to promote healthy cultures that promote equitable access to health tools and encourage connection amongst colleagues.

You can still choose a challenge that focuses on a singular, more inclusive theme, but be mindful that everyone can participate.

We've found that healthy habit themes such as water intake or meditation can still be inclusive but focused. All it takes is a little creativity!

This eases us into our next strategy for success since even the most inclusive challenge might not fit every department.

A few tips to make your challenge inclusive:

- Choose goals that do not rely on a specific ability (i.e. steps challenges)
- Highlight activities that range in duration so all levels can participate
- Track activity and progress in a single tool vs. separating each activity
- Encourage multiple types of activities that qualify for engagement
- Celebrate all participation across your population throughout the challenge

KNOW YOUR POPULATION

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PRO-TIP: Challenges are not one-size-fits-all. Include your employees in the planning process! Try polling your employees to learn what they are interested in and need.

Imagine this: You've launched a steps challenge and most departments are engaged, posting updates, and participating in some healthy competition amongst themselves.

But you notice that the manufacturing teams haven't posted a single update. You know that they also have access to the same trails around the office and that their managers have expressed a desire to improve the health of their teams.

Why aren't they engaging in your wellness challenge?



This happened to us with a large corporation when they launched a company-wide wellness challenge one summer. We did a little digging to find out why.

As many manufacturing teams are on their feet all day, a walking challenge was the last thing they wanted to do. It wasn't that they didn't want to engage, nor that they lacked the time, it was the activity itself that didn't resonate with the department.

Instead of a walking challenge, our client shifted to focus on a water intake challenge, then a mindfulness challenge, then a stretch challenge.

We learned the value of knowing your population and customizing challenges to fit specific departments when needed. When needed, segment your population so that the challenge is relevant, adapted to their needs/schedules, and shakes up their regular routine.



OFFER INCENTIVES

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PRO-TIP: If you offer employees a menu of their prizes to choose from, you can make sure that each person receives recognition in a way that will be most impactful for them.

Yes, better health, less cluttered minds, increased water intake, and weight loss are all great motivators on their own. However, if it was just as simple as that, then **80% of all New Year's resolutions wouldn't fail.**

Sometimes, you need to provide a little extra incentive to get folks to engage and stick with your challenge.

Focus on what will provide value and don't be afraid to customize incentives for each department.

Here are some successful incentives we've seen our clients offer:



Extra PTO or wellness days off to winners



Annual subscriptions or memberships



Company or Burnalong swag



Fitness equipment



Gift cards for an employee-chosen company



Discounts to participating companies

In some cases, and to encourage broader participation, have tiered incentives so that more people can win throughout the challenge. You can also have multiple rewards for metrics such as most completed minutes, furthest distance, most regular log-ins or participation, completion of a singular program, or most engaged team.

Many companies keep folks motivated by offering smaller incentives along the way. This can build awareness about the challenge as the winners chat about it with their colleagues which leads us to our next point about communications.



PROVIDE CLEAR AND REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS

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PRO-TIP: Start announcements about 60 days out and use every single channel you have available to you. This ensures that every employee has a chance to learn about the challenge and join.

Relying on a single announcement or communication channel will limit the success of your challenge.

People might be out of the office and miss your email, it might come when they are swamped and unable to register, or they might not understand the ask at first. To make sure your teams know about the challenge and how they can participate, we have a few tips to make your communications more effective.

PRE- CHALLENGE

- Create flyers that introduce the high-level details
- Deliver in-app notifications to generate awareness



- Announce in team or company-wide meetings
- Provide drafts for leadership teams to send out with personal notes

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- Distribute resources for internal champions to share with colleagues
- Post on the intranet, ERG groups, or chat channels with stats or reasons for why they should join

DURING THE CHALLENGE

- Send custom emails to acknowledge progress or participation
- Schedule reminders to keep the challenge top-of-mind
- Feature participants making progress in internal communications

- Offer weekly raffles for smaller prizes throughout the challenge
- Send out short videos from team leads with encouragement
- Host live or virtual events that count towards individual progress

POST-CHALLENGE

- Summarize the challenge to create a sense of “FOMO”
- Highlight winners and collect testimonials (you can use those for pre-challenge communications for the next challenge)

- Announce completion and results in team meetings, emails, and chat channels
- Create flyers and post them in high-traffic areas or platforms

LEAN INTO INTERNAL CHAMPIONS

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PRO-TIP: Wellness champions can help run mini-challenges throughout the larger challenge to keep everyone motivated. For instance, a champion could offer a gift card for the person who takes a class in the most creative space one week.

Chances are, you already have some wellness champions in your workforce. You might call them something else but these are your employees who can get their colleagues excited about engaging with company-sponsored activities.

They are natural leaders, even if their title isn't managerial (yet). They have the uncanny ability to engage employees who might be hesitant or need a little personal encouragement. They create energy and are key motivators in any group project.

The point is to empower internal influencers to help you raise awareness, keep folks motivated, and celebrate wins along the way.

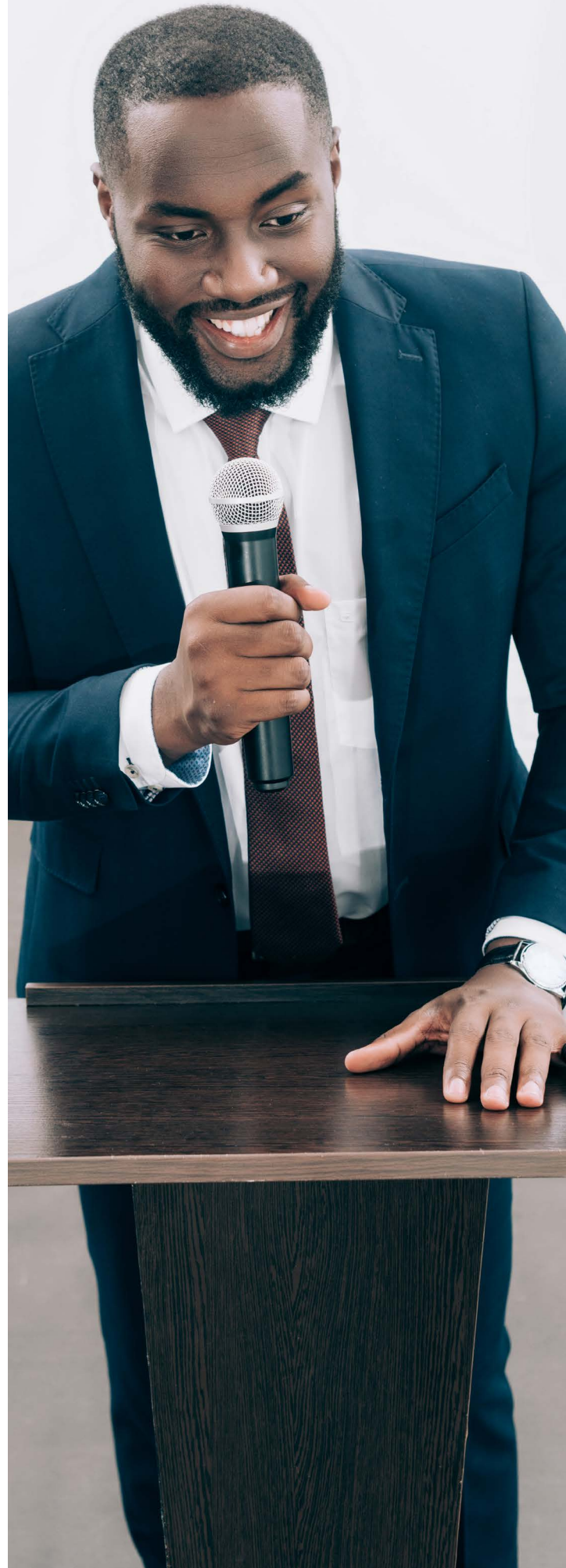
We've put together some suggestions on how to build out a full wellness champion network if you want to learn more.

Your champions should help create community and motivation. Here are a few ways we've seen this goal successfully realized:

- **Create online communities on existing platforms for mutual sharing of wins and ideas**
- **Offer spaces for participants to share stories and questions for peer-responses**
- **Establish individual goals and collective team/company goals to really amp up the competition**
- **Start meetings with quick classes that can count towards individual progress**
- **Offer unique incentives to champions to get more colleagues signed up or engaged**
- **Draft emails or flyers for champions to send out with their own flair**

Creating a sense of community and a constant state of excitement means your challenge will succeed. Plus, you are developing internal leaders who will feel a sense of pride and responsibility to make sure the challenge is a success.

Make sure that your asks of any internal champions are realistic and that the challenge is not asking too much of any of your employees. Which, you guessed it, takes us to our next strategy for success.



BE SMART ABOUT THE DURATION

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PRO-TIP: If you are going to do a longer challenge, make sure to focus on behavioral change or habit building. Otherwise, your employees might lose focus if they aren't constantly building towards a larger goal.

While it might be tempting to do a one-week challenge to keep things simple or perhaps to plan a quarter-long challenge, we've found the sweet spot to be 4 weeks. You can of course reduce or extend but a month-long challenge offers a few benefits.

When it is any shorter, some employees might not have enough time to sign up and engage before it is over. If they miss the initial kick-off, they won't have enough time to compete. Small misses like that can discourage someone from future participation.

Four weeks also encourages long-term engagement as employees can start to settle into healthy habits for the month, while they compete, that they can carry into future months.



The ideal challenge length is four weeks.

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If you are looking to support healthy employee habits, we've got a study with expert advice tailored for your teams [here](#).

If your challenge goals are realistic, it means employees can fit the challenge into their day-to-day schedules rather than substituting other activities to compete. This means that you are nurturing long-term engagement as opposed to short, unsustainable spurts of activity.

If you do prefer to do a longer challenge, we recommend focusing on behavioral change or specific wellness habits. It can take **18 to 254 days** to establish a new habit so longer challenges are better suited to support long-term change.

Whatever you do, make sure you break down the requirements to be reasonable and sustainable for the entire challenge. For example, you can lead by saying the challenge is to complete 400 minutes of wellbeing classes in 4 weeks. But make sure you break that down to show that is 100 minutes/week or just 20/minutes each weekday.

This leads to our next point about the importance of having clear objectives for your wellness challenge that benefits all employees.



HAVE A GOAL OR PURPOSE FOR THE CHALLENGE

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PRO-TIP: If your company has a specific mission or motto, try to build the goal to support that mission so it feels organic to your company. It builds loyalty and morale when a challenge is connected to business goals!

Some people love competition for the sake of competing. Others, especially at-risk populations or self-identified “beginners” will need a solid reason to join.

We recommend that you offer more than incentives to get folks motivated and focus on what benefits your employees or your community.

While engagement metrics are powerful, not all departments will see the value or feel motivated to compete if there isn't a direct benefit to them. Bottom line: make sure your reason for launching a challenge includes benefits to your employees and everyone involved.

Some suggested goals that we've found to be successful in motivating engagement and providing value to employees include:



Donations to a philanthropic cause based on engagement metrics (i.e. minutes completed)



Creation of new habit that improves their quality of life or personal relationships



Engagement goals that feed into team goals or KPIs



Inclusion of families and friend networks in the challenge



Collective company goals such as total weight loss or fewer sick days

READY TO START?

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To summarize, here are our seven secrets to launching a successful corporate wellness challenge:

- 1. Make your challenge inclusive -**
Think of themes or activities that invite your entire population to participate.
- 2. Know your population -**
You might need to segment a challenge or have unique goals for specific departments.
- 3. Offer incentives -**
Whether monetary, time off, or equipment, get your teams excited to compete for some compelling prizes.
- 4. Provide clear and regular communication -**
Start talking about the challenge early and on every single channel you can to raise awareness.
- 5. Lean into internal champions -**
Empower wellness champions to get teams excited, stay engaged, and feel like their progress is celebrated.
- 6. Be smart about the duration -**
Aim for a challenge that isn't so short folks miss out but not so long that they lose interest.
- 7. Have a goal or purpose for the challenge -**
Being healthy for your own sake is great but try to connect the challenge to something bigger and more meaningful.



We hope these strategies have given you ideas and a solid foundation to build from for future challenges. For some of you, you might be realizing that you need a little more support to do these well.

A common concern we hear from HR leaders is that they often struggle to find the time to plan and execute wellness challenges that truly motivate their employees and get engagement. You have a lot going on, we understand!

At Burnalong, we can help offload some of your work by planning and executing wellness challenges for you.

In fact, we have monthly themed challenges where we provide the marketing materials, host the challenge, and deliver the analytics from our platform to determine your winners. Since the monthly challenges focus on individual participation, we also host company-wide challenges such as March Mania or the Nation's Fittest and Healthiest Company challenge each year too.

We also have a seasoned Customer Success team who can help curate ideas that will resonate with your workforce. Our goal is to make sure that you and your teams are supported and successful since we are on a mission to help make employees well.

How can we support you? Are you ready to offer your first wellness challenge and see a shift in your company's culture?

We're here to help.

Why Burnalong?

People who feel good, do better work. You know that. But what does it mean to feel good? And how can you facilitate that as a company? Chances are you've tried a lot of things to answer those questions. You may even have robust layers of programs in place today. But they're probably not working quite as well as you'd hoped, right? Don't feel bad.

Almost all wellness programs fail. It's not from a lack of effort, or caring, or passion. The reason most wellness initiatives fizzle is simply that it's HARD. It's hard to build a robust wellness program with choice and diversity. It's hard to get the word out to everyone consistently. And even if you build and broadcast what you have, it's even harder to get those most in need to participate. Oh, and reporting your results? Forget about it. Data is hard to come by if it exists at all.

So what can you do about it? Over the last five years Burnalong has replaced or supplemented hundreds of existing wellness programs at companies across the world. In nearly every deployment we've increased engagement over 5x anything that existed before. Five times more people, doing five times more activity is a powerful energy catalyst.

How do we do it?

There's a lot of reasons why we get people engaged. It's partly due to the thousands of classes across dozens of categories (including programming for chronic conditions), not to mention the hundreds of world-class instructors. It's also because of the sneaky smart but easy-to-use technology. The dedicated human who works with your team to launch, market, and customize your programming also helps.

Ultimately, Burnalong is about substance over style, longevity over splash, support over six-packs. We think about wellness as a community effort (which is why family access is always free). If you explore deeper you'll see how we've layered our people, tools, content, and entire approach into creating a place where people can thrive together. **If you want to learn more and explore whether we're a good fit for your people, reach out today.**

[TELL ME MORE](#)

