Employee health & wellness programs are popular these days—that’s no secret. But all too often wellness programs are reactionary. The employer sees out-of-control claims and, understandably, jumps at the opportunity to interrupt the cycle of rising costs.

But corporate health & wellness doesn’t just happen with a snap of the fingers. Perhaps it’s time to shake things up a bit and look at the healthcare cost-containment continuum from a different perspective. Let’s evaluate the situation by taking a human, holistic approach to what’s happening in the lives of employees.

Here are several ideas:

1. Physical work environment
Humans aren’t cattle. The space your employees work in everyday should be welcoming, encourage creativity and give the right amount of collaborative space and private space. If your employees are cooped up in tiny cubicles for over eight hours each day, their health and mental wellbeing will suffer. Try stepping back and looking at your office space to determine what changes you can make to create a more welcoming workspace. You might even consider hiring a Feng Shui expert to “harmonize” the environment. Sound too touchy-feely and hocus-pocus? Well, consider that Feng Shui, the Chinese philosophical system of harmonizing people with their environment, has been around for 3,500 years.

2. Physical health investment
Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Our first wealth is our health.” When we’re healthy, a positive ripple effect courses through everything we do. Full-time employees spend the majority of their time in the workplace, so it’s the employer’s responsibility to accept accountability for making employee health a priority. One way to do this is through a wellness initiative that focuses on employee empowerment, rather than one that is merely a reaction to high claims and industry pressure. This program should include educational resources that encourage employees and their families to lead healthier lives...to encourage them to invest in their personal health. Again, deal with the cause, not the effect. When you empower employees, the results will take care of themselves.

3. Mental health investment
Employers must recognize and be sensitive to the psychological and mental demands of employees,
both in and out of the workplace. A healthy mind keeps us active, but many health and wellness initiatives don’t include mental health resources for their employees and families. Moreover, the companies that do include these resources don’t encourage using them enough. Consider making proactive mental/spiritual health a part of your monthly employee communication campaigns.

4. Employee relationships
When you gather creative, driven people, there will be conflict. However, some conflicts go deeper, affecting relationships that employees have built over time. Oftentimes employers react only after it’s too late. Instead, employers need to identify and implement creative ways to insure healthy, open relationships in and out of the workplace.

5. Employee recognition
Part of being human is being unique. Some of us are more confident and self-reliant than others, and that’s OK. Our unique skillsets and personalities are what got us hired in the first place. But to nurture our unique employees, develop ways to build upon skill sets and honor the basic human need to feel good. Part of this is through recognition—feeling that the work each of us does is appreciated and rewarded. For example, in a team setting, invite employees to bring one idea on how they would improve their jobs, their team or department, or even how they would improve the customer experience to a meeting. Then, reward the idea or behavior once it’s been adopted. Your very human employees, teams, departments, company and community will all benefit.

6. Personal economic health
Personal financial health, or financial fitness, is all about availing the resources to employees that educate, guide, inform and advise them on how to have a healthy understanding about money, financial planning, and state of the art savings vehicles. Financial fitness is no longer about merely offering a 401(k) plan with a match. While this is a valuable tool, it only touches the surface of understanding our financial health and eliminating any fear around the subject. Employees often report in surveys that they crave financial education. When employers focus on their employees’ financial health, they’ll see more relaxed and confident employees.

Developing a well-thought-out holistic employee development program can have an immediate significant impact on every employee. This proactive approach isn’t costly, and the results will show: happier employees, less absenteeism, higher productivity, on-the-job creative thinking and yes, growth and profitability.

The reason is simple: because you’re doing the right thing by investing in your employees. The results will take care of themselves with the right leadership.

For more information, please call 1.877.426.7779