

2.2 Nutrition Success Stories



Fruit and Vegetable Honor System

the people

Maine Machine Products Co. (MMP Co.) is located in the Oxford Hills town of South Paris and employs roughly 115 associates. The company works to manufacture precision machine components for various industries including telecommunications, defense, and computer equipment. Approximately half of the employees are machine operators and support staff, while office staff and management make up the remaining half. MMP Co. formed a wellness committee in 2001, specifically to create a healthier work environment for employees. The Health and Wellness Committee is made up of employees from a variety of positions within the company, including management, machine operators, and office staff.

the need

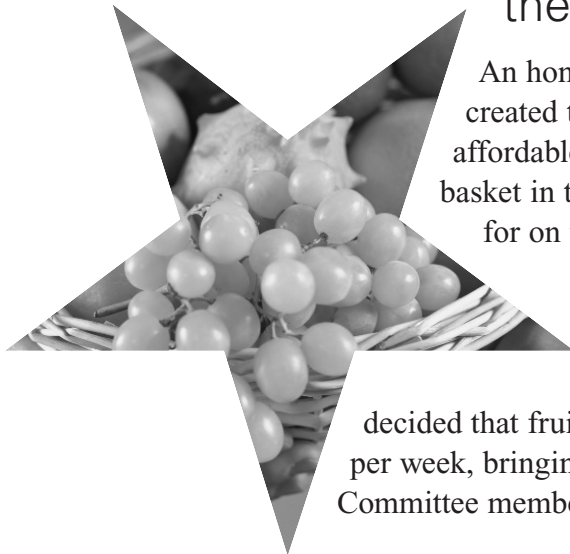
Most people do not get enough fruits and vegetables in their diets and miss out on many of the nutrients necessary for optimal health. MMP Co. wanted to support employees to make better choices that will improve their health and happiness by offering healthy items as an alternative to more popular snacks like candy bars and chips.

the idea

An honor system fruit and vegetable program was created to make healthy foods convenient and affordable. Fruits and vegetables are placed in a basket in the break room at \$.25 per item and paid for on the honor system.

the idea at work

The Health and Wellness Committee decided that fruits and vegetables would be purchased once per week, bringing them in at the beginning of the first shift. Committee members pick up selections at the store on the way



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Fruit and Vegetable (continued)

to work. Shoppers purchase a variety of fruits and vegetables, including apples, oranges, bananas, baby carrots, and celery sticks. The Committee set up a table for the honor system in the training center/cafeteria, with a basket and a money tin. Those Committee members who sign up to shop for a particular day purchase the items and are then reimbursed by the company. Volunteers monitor supplies to determine when they will need to shop again. With the increasing demand for fruits and vegetables, Committee members have had to make about three trips to the grocery store per week, depending on the daily demand.

the results

The results of this initiative have been staggering. Due to the high demand, the choices were expanded from one to five days per week in just a few months. On any given day, between 40 and 45 employees visit the fruit table. The initial investment in the program was \$3.00 to cover the cost of the initial shopping trip, but since that time the program has been self-sustaining. The average cost to employees is about \$.50 per item. Bananas are the most cost-effective item at around \$.15 each, while selling for \$.25 each. This allows for more expensive fruits, like pears, peaches, and apples, to be sold for \$.50 each while still covering costs. Granola bars and similar items have been purchased at BJ's Wholesale Warehouse and sold on a limited basis, also for \$.50. Vegetables were more difficult to offer in a convenient form and were not as popular, so it was decided to stick with fruits. Since starting up in September of 2002, the honor system has gone very well, even showing a small profit.



There have been other exciting results as well. An employee health survey was conducted in the beginning of 2002 and again one year later. Below are some key findings:

- ★ In one area of the survey, employees rated the company's efforts to provide healthy foods. At baseline, 21.6% of survey responders either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that MMP Co. provides opportunities to eat fruits and vegetables as compared to 82.4% of employees one year later, a 300% increase.
- ★ The percentage of employees reporting that they consume five or more fruits and vegetables on four or more days per week increased from 28.5% to 43.1% after one year.

This has been music to the ears of Jeff Sutton, MMP Co.'s President. "We had hoped the Health and Wellness Committee's activities would help employees eat better and improve their overall habits, and we also hope that translates into higher productivity and less sick time," says Sutton, who adds, "What we were surprised with is the affect of programs like this on employee morale and company image among employees."

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