

Executive Summary

“The world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking at which we created them.”

—Albert Einstein

Sense of Urgency

This book was written with the sense of urgency and passion I feel on behalf of the people, the business community, our country, and the world. Although I have had this concern for many years, it clearly escalated during the financial meltdown beginning in the fall of 2008. Crises create opportunities, and the current economic crisis demands that companies change the way they do business. In doing so, businesses must realize even more the value of a healthy and productive workforce.

In this book, I often quote Einstein about his notion that the same level of thinking that got us into this situation will not be the level of thinking that will get us out of it. It is clear that after all of these years of the same medical approaches to managing health, more doctors, nurses, hospitals, procedures, and devices will not solve the problems. I respectfully disagree with those in the medical profession and some of the health economists and politicians who argue that prevention and healthy lifestyles will not lower the total costs of sickness or lead to a better way of life for individuals and businesses. The data and information presented in this book will support the argument that improved health status will not only reduce healthcare costs for companies but also increase performance and productivity in the workplace. Even the worst case scenario would be better than the results of the past several decades!

Einstein’s message captures the urgency and passion that drives me to write this book. Even after 30 years of research, more than 160 publications, and 400 presentations from the Health Management Research Center, we do not claim to have the total solution for enhancing and maintaining the vitality of the workforce. We continue to design and test our strategies in order to make an airtight business case. However, we feel it is imperative to share our evidence-based recommendations at this time. The survival of many American businesses in the global marketplace depends upon shifting medicine’s singular focus of managing sickness to a much more encompassing view of managing health. This is the total value of health and the value of total health management.

No company will be successful in a globally competitive world with anything but healthy and productive people. No individual will achieve his or her fullest potential without believing that staying healthy is just as important as treating sickness.

Lifestyle changes alone will not solve all the problems with healthcare in our companies. But lifestyle changes can significantly lower the demand for medical care, which is where health management comes into the picture. Healthy and productive individuals make positive contributions to companies and society that may far outweigh the savings in disease care. This is one of the lessons I have learned from my work: We need to move from the current “wait-for-sickness” level of thinking to a higher level of thinking by adding a “promotion-of-wellness” component to our overall health management system. We need individuals and companies to share our vision. The U.S. economy can’t sustain ever increasing healthcare costs and lower productivity. We have to pursue an alternative.

The cost of waiting for people to get sick far exceeds the cost of helping healthy people stay healthy.

It’s Time for a Change

This book is written with leadership in mind. The sickness-related costs are rising faster than new products or services can be sold, or increased efficiencies can be developed, or costs can be shifted to employees, or people can be let go, or businesses can find an off-shore solution. The time is ripe to solve this problem; something has to be done now!

“If we keep doing what we’re doing, we’re going to keep getting what we’re getting.”

—Stephen R. Covey, author

American business leaders are out of patience with healthcare costs that continue to increase at an astonishing rate with little or no increase in quality. We can and we must change.

- Employers must create environments that encourage their employees to stay well in addition to taking care of them when they are sick.
- Individuals have to take on self-leadership for their own health and seek products and services that will help them maintain it.
- Local, state, and national governments must embrace and act upon the fact that healthy and productive people create a community more economically viable, with a higher quality of life.

Integrating workplace and workforce strategies for health into the corporate culture is a critical part of the solution.

With a combined effort we can create cultures within companies and communities that support healthy and productive individuals.

It is *past* the time when companies:

- Wait for individuals to get sick
- Pay only for sickness

Now *is* the time for companies to:

- Pay attention to their healthy champions
- Invest in wellness in addition to paying for sickness
- Realize the total value of health to the organization
- Encourage the total engagement of the entire workforce

Now *is* the time for health plans to:

- Roll an equal investment in wellness into their sickness plans

Now *is* the time for individuals to:

- Value and take self-leadership of their personal health
- Take action to get better, and the first step is “just don’t get worse”

Now *is* the time to get to:

- High levels of energy and vitality
 - Cost trends no more than the rate of inflation
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A New Way to Do Healthcare

This book is about a **new model for healthcare** in America. It redefines healthcare as a combination of illness *and wellness* strategies. It is designed to help employers enable employees to become self-leaders in maintaining their energy, vitality, and overall performance.

We must drastically change our singular focus on sickness and sickness prevention to embrace an equal focus on wellness and wellness promotion.

What sets my strategy apart from existing viewpoints is emphasized in the major themes of this book: “help the healthy people stay healthy,” “don’t get worse,” and “create a culture of health.” These mantras are meant to create individual winners while promoting the health and economic success of the entire population within the company. To bring this about, we need to create a workplace environment that rewards both individuals and organizations. Key stakeholders cannot wait years to realize a return; they need to realize a level of success quickly and at every level.

My goal is to convince decision makers that helping the healthy people stay healthy is far more rewarding economically, culturally, and personally than simply continuing to feed a self-serving medical care system that waits for people to get sick and then profits from that sickness. The current healthcare system is ineffective and economically dysfunctional.

The current challenge is great, and so is the opportunity for each of us to become self-leaders and stewards of our own health. Embracing this challenge will mean less pain and suffering in ourselves and in our families as well as zero growth in healthcare and disability expenditures.

Treat the sick, but also help the healthy people stay healthy.

It is time to redefine health. It is time for companies to engage their leaders and employees to recognize the real value of health. All of us must adopt a “we can do this” attitude.

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasions. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.”

—Abraham Lincoln

How the Book is Organized

This book is organized into three primary sections: The Mission, The Business Case, and The Solution. Companies that embrace these concepts will be further rewarded by zero cost trends, increased productivity, advantages in recruitment, and retention of their workforce.

The Mission: Regaining Vitality for Corporate America and for Americans

As Albert Einstein suggests, it is time for a new way of thinking about healthcare and to change the organizational and individual conversations around health. This section previews the essential elements of a new health management system for Americans and concludes with the key concepts that set this book apart. My objective is to set readers on the path to developing a strategy to lower healthcare costs by focusing on the culture of the organization, the health status of the employees, and the message: “Don’t get worse.”

The Business Case: Health Management as a Serious Business Strategy

The second section highlights our work in developing the business case for integrating an effective wellness component into the traditional employer health benefit model. It critically examines the current “waiting for sickness” strategy embraced by most organizations and proposes a new population-based mode that positions wellness first. The information presented within this section demonstrates the corporate and individual wellness and sickness strategies that have proven to be the most effective in controlling costs and improving overall health.

The Solution: Integrating Health Status into the Company Culture

We build upon five fundamental pillars of an evidence-based strategy designed to integrate health status into the culture of the workplace. The objective is to facilitate high-level health status for all employees, therefore economically benefiting both individuals and their companies. This section does not aim to provide a tool kit of resources, but to share the process. For each pillar I outline four research-based levels of organizational engagement to use in selecting investment strategies and measuring results.

Word of Caution

Poor health is a serious individual, business, and economic threat to our way of life. This serious threat cannot be tolerated and thus we need to act now. Therefore, it requires a serious business and economic strategy to reverse past and current ways of thinking and use of resources. The comments and suggestions in this book may be irritating to some readers. I present them as a challenge to find a new level of thinking to address the threats imposed by a healthcare system that promotes a culture of sickness rather than a culture of health. With this book, I am raising the bar for success and issuing a challenge to those willing to become a champion company.

Some readers may find parts of this book redundant. However, I know that not everyone will read it from front cover to back cover. For those who do, I believe that repetition ensures that if you don't get the message at first glance, you might by the second or third time you see it. This is a workable and critical business strategy.

The Journey and Destination

From when we began the journey:

Finding early adopting companies and collecting the available **data**

Analyzing data and creating **information**

Synthesizing the information and creating **knowledge**

Summarizing knowledge and creating a **solution**

To where we can imagine:

A new way to do health management in America;

Health as a serious business and economic strategy

—Dee W. Edington

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