Hawaii companies must be more invested in employees’ wellness

From the looming impact of health-care reform and ever-increasing medical premiums to lost employee productivity and higher turnover rates in an improving economy, Hawaii business owners and managers have never had more reason to reconsider the impact of health and wellness of their workers.

And, it appears that many Hawaii companies are doing something about it. Pacific Business News hosted its second-annual Healthiest Employers awards program earlier this week, during which we highlighted the successes of 25 local businesses in three different categories, based on company size. The Healthiest Employers special section is included elsewhere in this issue, and here we are take-aways after synthesizing all the responses:

- Full support of top management is crucial to make these programs work.
- Employee involvement in determining what to emphasize is equally important.
- Financial resources from the company will be required.

The good news — as the snippets from our Healthiest Employers awards finalists suggest as well as the full-length stories on our winning companies lay out in greater detail — is that there are things that most Hawaii business can do to help their employees live a healthier lifestyle. Two companies don’t have to do everything to get something started.

To give you a picture of how these programs can operate, we’ll summarize what the winners did this year.

Castle Medical Center has an onsite fitness regimen, nutrition counseling classes and a cafeteria called The Bistro that serves only vegetarian offerings.

Castle, winner in the largest-company category, also has formed what it calls a living-well advisory team that addresses, among other things, wellness issues, and it plans to expand on that by rolling out a health-screening program called “Living Well.”

There are lots of indicators of success in such a broad-based effort, but the detail that most resonated with us was the story of Ruby Hayasaka, manager of The Bistro and the hospital’s director of nutritional services. She has lost more than 130 pounds over the past five years. That’s living healthy.

Bowers + Kubota Consulting in Waipahu was the winner for medium-sized businesses. It tries to create enthusiasm for fitness initiatives by awarding points to those who do things such as exercise, drink lots of water, get preventative health screenings and partake of a healthy diet. The top point getter each quarter earns $125. The company also reimburses up to a certain amount for gym memberships or fitness equipment.

Bowers + Kubota’s initiative got started in 2009 thanks to the work of a three-person committee that has since been expanded to five people.

For those of you who may be thinking that corporate wellness programs are things only larger companies have the resources to do, consider the case of Hawaii Human Resources.

This small business in downtown Honolulu offers reimbursements for gym memberships, fitness classes and personal trainers, in addition to serving free (and usually) healthy lunches and snacks at work. The company also gives away weekly massages, and has a “well”-day policy that employees can use for anything from taking a vacation to participating in an athletic competition to, heaven forbid, being sick.

We hope you are more than inspired by what local companies are doing in the realm of health and wellness. We hope you are determined to motivate your employees to take steps to improve their health and, in the process, do the same for the stability of your company’s most important asset.

“A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you’re talking real money.”

UH’s Innovation Initiative is talking real money

That famous quote, attributed to the late U.S. Sen. Everett Dirksen, may well be an urban legend. The Dirksen Congressional Center says there’s no record of the Republican senator from Illinois ever saying that phrase to express his disdain for federal spending.

But it’s a good one. And, despite the implied sarcasm, a billion dollars is still real money if it’s in the right place for the right reasons.

Peter Quigley knows this. As executive director of the University of Hawaii Innovation Initiative, he has his sights set on one billion dollars. That’s the amount of money he wants UH to attract in federal research grants within the next eight to 10 years.

UH already is about halfway to that goal. During a two-year period — fiscal years 2010 and 2011 — 80 UH researchers, known as principal investigators, each received awards of at least $1 million for an approximate total of $456 million. Eleven researchers have received awards of $1 million or more.

In a 2009 report, UH ranked 51st out of 689 public and private universities in research expenditures. That sounds of 689 public and private universities

PUBLISHER
Bob Charlet
315-8303 | bcharlet@bizjournals.com

NEWS
EDITOR: Kevin Bumgarner 955-8302 | kbumgarner@bizjournals.com
MANAGING EDITOR: James R. George 315-8031 | jgeorge@bizjournals.com
MANAGING EDITOR OF D 数ICAL CONTENT: Janis L. Magin 955-8301 | pmagin@bizjournals.com

REPORTERS
Mark Abramson, Sports Manager. Sports Mktg. 955-8301 | mabramson@bizjournals.com
Duane Shimogawa – Energy, Real Estate. 315-8301 | dshimogawa@bizjournals.com
Stephanie Silverstein – Tourism. 315-8301 | ssilverstein@bizjournals.com
Jenna Blakey – General Assignment 315-8036 | jblakey@bizjournals.com

PUBLIC RECORDS REPORTER: Roger Vlastar 955-8034 | rvlastar@bizjournals.com
RESEARCHER: Lucy Talapupu 955-8037 | ltalapupu@bizjournals.com
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER: Tina Yoon 955-8054 | tyoon@bizjournals.com

News Fax: 808-955-8031

ADVERTISING
MANAGING EDITOR: Michelle Stella 955-8033 | mstella@bizjournals.com
ADVERTISING CONSULTANT: Tiffany Sargent 955-8037 | tsargent@bizjournals.com
CLASSIFIED/SPECIAL PROJECTS: Kurt Johnson 955-8030 | kjohnson@bizjournals.com
SALES ADMINISTRATOR: Jehon Diseong 955-8030 | jdisong@bizjournals.com

Advertising Fax: 808-955-8031

EVENTS
DIRECTOR OF EVENTS: Reasman J. Costales 955-8034 | rcostales@bizjournals.com
Events Fax: 808-955-8078

CREATIVE SERVICES
CREATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR: Rubin H. Dolladole 955-8035 | rdolladole@bizjournals.com
SENIOR DESIGNER: Elliott Dinger 955-8036 | edinger@bizjournals.com
GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Catherine Au Hoy 955-8035 | cau_hoy@bizjournals.com

Creative Services Fax: 808-955-8071

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT
AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: Joan Standberg 955-8023 | jstandberg@bizjournals.com

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES: Jasmine Mancao 955-8023 | jmancao@bizjournals.com
Stacie Pahia 955-8026 | pahia@bizjournals.com
Sherri Kamaka 955-8038 | skamaka@bizjournals.com

Audience Development Fax: 808-955-8078

ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE MANAGER/ACCOUNTANT: John Motley 955-8025 | jmotley@bizjournals.com

ADMINISTRATION ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES: Bob Charlet 955-8023 | bcharlet@bizjournals.com

Administration Fax: 808-955-8076

REPRINTS
For reprints, plaques or use of PBN’s material on other Web sites
Spark Reproductions, 955-5325, ext. 307
www.bizjournals.com/sanpug/reprints.html
PBN Pacific Business News is a publication of Honolulu Business News Inc., 1200 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 400, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Pacific Business News is a publication of Honolulu Business News Inc., 1200 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 400, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Copyright © 2013 Pacific Business News. Reproduction in whole or part of editorial or graphic material without permission is prohibited without written permission from Circulations.