

Health Promotion Practitioner

Practical solutions for health enhancement programming

Can You Charge Participants for Online Services?

Yes. Though not long ago, the answer was no. But now that retailers and service providers have come to their senses and started charging for valuable tools as well as proprietary information, consumers are becoming accustomed to paying for things online.

It's a Good Thing

Longtime readers of the Practitioner know we're big believers in participants sharing the cost of services, for 2 reasons:

- It deepens commitment. When people have a financial stake in something, they're automatically more likely to follow through.
- It conveys a sense of value. If what you offer is free, it sends a message that maybe it's not worth much — which is the most dangerous risk factor for the health of your wellness program.

Providing services online — and doing it well — isn't inexpensive. The best online HRA tools, as an example, can cost more to get in place than paper. But one of the greatest benefits is instant feedback — taking advantage of the teachable moment and giving people something they can do right now to begin improving health.

Something I Can DO

Another big benefit of online health promotion services — and something people will pay for — is the ability to

do something. So much of health promotion over the years has focused on the don'ts — don't eat too much fat (or saturated fat or trans-fat), don't eat too many carbs, etc.

But the Web's interactive capability lets people log healthy habits like physical activity and produce consumption, then get an instant virtual pat on the back, with an engaging, interactive screen display. The success of sites like *ediets.com* attests to the fact people will pay for quality online programming.

The Online Experience

Putting static health information online — no matter how well researched, prepared, or presented — will never be something you can charge for; people won't pay for what they can get for free elsewhere. Your services must offer an experience consumers can't find anywhere else. Unique behavior change tools, tailored content, and motivating tracking/logging tools are examples of things people can experience online, not just view.

Pay-as-You-Go vs. Subscription Model

More online services are turning to a subscription model, in part because of the 2 reasons mentioned on page 1 (commitment and perceived value). To get consumers to take the first step, we're seeing inexpensive trial offers: "Try it for 1 month for \$1."

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At the end of the trial period, once they've demonstrated their value, the service provider can get a 6-month or 1-year commitment.

Are You Ready?

"Don't try this at home." Most wellness programs don't have the internal resources to develop interactive, advanced online products. That means turning to services like these that provide a platform for content, assessment tools, incentive programs, and tailored messaging:

- Healthmedia (www.healthmedia.com)
- Wellmed's Health Hub (www.wellmed.com)
- HealthAtoZ (www.healthatoz.com).

Investigate all your options, then get feedback from participants on what they would be willing to pay for; as with any service, you need to concentrate on participant priorities. 🇺🇸



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