

# Health Promotion Practitioner

Practical solutions for health enhancement programming

## Running Your Wellness Program Like a Political Campaign

Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, the soon-to-conclude Presidential campaign holds several ideas for strengthening your wellness program:

• *Change for the good.* When times aren't as good as they have been, the "change" message resonates with just about everyone. Take a cue from both the Obama and McCain campaigns by highlighting the need for personal and organizational health change.

• *Keep it positive.* Negativity may be rampant in some political campaigns, but your message should always be about the possibilities — what improved health can do for all of us, not the perils of poor health.

• *Get the easy votes.* Health promoters sometimes obsess over reaching the hard to reach... to the detriment of reaching the easy to reach. Establish a strong base by designing and marketing your services first to those most likely to participate — keeping healthy people healthy. Once you've got a firm base you can go after the undecideds. And don't waste time on the hard opposition (those who think your programs are a waste of resources).

• *Set an election day.* Every health promotion strategic goal should have its own election day — the day you determine whether you won or lost; some will be annual, while others will be longer term. Just as in

politics, there's much to learn from winning or losing, reaching the goal or falling short. Set aside time soon after your election day to capture lessons as you move on to the next campaign.

• *Grease the skids.* The easiest way to engender support is to thank people for participating. Just as savvy politicians follow up with phone calls and handwritten notes thanking campaign workers, health promoters need to set aside time for reaching out personally to participants.

• *Get your message out.* Successful politicians aren't shy about repeating their message, over and over. Health promoters have a tendency to believe that sharing their vision once or twice means the population they serve actually knows it. That's not true. Decide your main message — healthcare cost savings, productivity enhancement, valued benefit — then repeat it often, backed with supporting data from opinion surveys and program evaluations.


• *Behave like the challenger.* Although there's no apparent "opponent," don't be lulled into believing you're an incumbent for life, no matter how successful you are today. The next CEO, new competition, or rise in oil prices could be a threat to your program. Continue to build the business case for health promotion with successful services so you can weather any change in your organization's political mood.

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•*Shake hands and kiss babies.* There's an unfortunate side effect of enhanced electronic communication: many health promoters are less visible than 15 years ago. People may know your name, but haven't met you or had a conversation. When it comes time for a vote of confidence — like supporting the wellness program when benefits are being cut back — it's a lot easier to vote against the function without a face.

•*Prepare for the debate.* Share regular or annual presentations/reports on your program's success — and

prepare, just like the candidates. Do your homework, have the facts and figures at your fingertips, anticipate the inevitable naysayer (the person in the audience who's just looking for a chink in your armor), and practice. You want to be as confident in your delivery as you are in your record of achievement.

For more on this topic read our white paper: *Keeping Healthy People Healthy—The Business Case* at [www.hesonline.com/KHPH](http://www.hesonline.com/KHPH). 



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