Healthy Food Options at the Workplace
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Agenda

- Review of the Literature – What works?
  Jessica Grossmeier, StayWell Health Management
  - Pricing strategies
  - Promotional strategies
  - Accessibility strategies
  - Policy strategies

- Employer Case Example – University of MN
  Murray Harber, U Plan Wellness Program

- Vendor Perspective - Facilitating Employer Options
  Bill Budzyn, ARAMARK Refreshment Services
Why the Worksite?

- 70% of U.S. population (18-65 yrs) is employed
- Full-time employees typically eat at least one meal or snack at work
- Worksite interventions can provide consistent reinforcement for healthy behaviors
- Employers are empowered to modify environment and social norms
- Worksites provide access to populations that may be hard to reach and support through other public health vehicles
- Employers have an economic interest in the health and productivity of their employees

Approaches to Environmental Change

- **Pricing Strategies**
  - Decrease price of desirable food choices
  - Increase price of less desirable food choices

- **Promotional/Communication Strategies**
  - Identify low fat, high fiber foods with logo or icon
  - Motivational signs encouraging healthy snack selection
  - Provide nutritional information (fat, calories, sugar, sodium)

- **Availability and Variety of Healthy Options**
  - Increase number of different offerings
  - Increase visual appeal of healthy options

- **Policy Support**
  - Provide guidelines for healthy catering
  - Develop a voluntary healthy options policy
  - Require vendors to provide smaller servings, healthier options
Pricing Strategies – Decreased Price

Low-Fat Snacks Sold for 50% Discount

Baseline | Intervention | Post-Intervention
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74% | 54% | 77%
26% | 46% | 23%

Source: French, Jeffery, Story, et al. (1997)

Pricing Strategies – Decreased Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price of Low-Fat Snacks</th>
<th>Percent of snacks sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-25%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-50%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: French, Jeffery, Story, et al. (2001)
Promotional Strategies

- Study conducted in employee cafeteria
- Tested modified hot entrees for impact on sales, flavor, and acceptability
- Phases:
  - Regular hot entrees were served as normal
  - Modified hot entrees (lower fat and sodium) were served without any marketing
  - Modified entrees were served and nutritional analysis information provided
- No significant differences observed in sales volume across phases
- Modified (healthier) entrees were deemed more acceptable in terms of flavor, texture, and freshness when customers knew the entrees were also healthier
- Promotional strategies considered important for customer perceptions and acceptability of healthier options. Seems taste tradeoff is more acceptable for healthier food item.

Source: Perlmutter, Canter & Gregoire. (1997)

Promotional Strategies

- Studies compared no signs; labeling of healthy choices; motivational signs encouraging healthy selections
- Promotional strategies may have an independent impact on sales of healthy snack items, but are most effective in combination with other strategies
  - Combining point-of-sale information along with increased availability of healthy choices maintained overall sales volume.
  - Social marketing approaches can be used to make health education messages more engaging and effective.
  - Accompany promotional messages with more attractive healthy options (fresh fruits, cut up)
  - Promotional messages are more effective when they promote behavior at the point where they occur (point-of-sale messaging) and promote small, easily achieved behaviors (substituting lower fat item for a higher fat item)
Availability Strategies

Both intervention groups increased the number of low-fat snacks in vending machines.


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Availability Strategies

- University cafeteria study*
  - Fruit and salad choices were increased 30% and prices were reduced 50%
  - Fruit and salad purchases increased 300%
  - Study subsidized difference between usual price and reduced price
  - Challenge: provide way to offset reduced cost with subsidy or retailer incentives

- Recommendations for Success (Sorensen et al, 1990)
  - Meet with food service manager and the regional director of the food service management company
  - Use a phased approach to change in cafeteria settings
  - Work with food service to identify desirable options and label healthy options
  - Conduct nutrient analysis of commonly served foods and provide information
  - Consider a pilot period to evaluate changes and adjust as you go along
  - Assess impact of new offerings on sales volume and financial impact

*Source: Jeffery, French, Raether, & Baxter (1994)
Policy Strategies

- Largely untested in the empirical literature
- Public support does exist for policy approaches

Examples of policy strategies
- Guidelines for healthy company-sponsored meals and snacks
- Guidelines regarding food brought in by employees
- Discourage provision of food at mid-morning and mid-afternoon meetings
- Healthy vending machine options – work with contracted vendors
- Healthy cafeteria options – accessibility, pricing, point-of-service information
- Negotiate coupons, subsidies, discounts for healthy food options at onsite cafeterias or with nearby businesses

Policy Strategies - Resources

- California Dept. of Health – 5 a Day Program
  - Free worksite health promotion programs (requires onsite coordination)
  - Links to coalition research reports including recommendations for worksites
  - www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/worksite/

- Cater to Health
  - Sample healthy food policy
  - Links to numerous other sources
  - www.catertohealth.org

- University of MN – School of Public Health
  - Guidelines for healthy vending and catering
  - Center for research related to environmental strategies
Conclusions

- Cultural approaches are necessary to support individual behavior change
- Reducing prices for healthier options is an effective way to promote the purchase of healthier options
- Simply increasing the availability of attractive, healthy options can effectively increase selection of healthy options
- Point-of-service communications can be effective – comprehensive social marketing approaches tend to be more effective than simple labeling strategies
- Combination approaches are most effective
- Policy approaches are promising but remain untested

References Cited

Additional References

- Beresford et al. (2001). Seattle 5 a Day Worksite Program to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption. Preventive Medicine, 32: 230-238.

Questions

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