



# L.L.BEAN, Inc.

Founded in 1912 by Leon Leonwood Bean, L.L.Bean is a major retailer of clothing, shoes, and outdoor equipment. The company's headquarters are in Freeport, Maine. This small-town location has imprinted a family-business culture into the company. The company also has four manufacturing/distribution locations and three call center locations in Maine. Additionally, there are about 30 retail locations throughout the north-eastern United States. L.L.Bean has 5,000 year-round employees, and up to 10,000 during peak season.

- Annual biometric screenings
- Health coaching and health education programs
- Weight watchers program
- Smoking cessation programs
- Intensive diabetes prevention program
- Employee Assistance Program

#### Environmental supports:

- Tobacco-free campus since 2005
- Healthy food is promoted through red-yellow-green food labeling in cafeteria, differential pricing for healthy vs. unhealthy items, healthy food at company events, and a requirement that 40% of vending machine items must be healthy.

#### Incentive design:

- Health insurance premiums are generally split 70/30 (employee/employer), but for Healthy Lifestyles program participants, the split is 50/50. "Participation" requirements include completing HRA, screening, and at least one health coaching session.



*"A business is in a unique and responsible position to effectively enhance the well-being of its employees."*  
~ Leon Gorman, 1982

#### PROGRAM GOALS & HISTORY

Since 1982, L.L.Bean has built a comprehensive health promotion program that today reaches more than 5,000 employees, family members, and retirees. The Healthy Bean program was built on the principle that healthy people lead fuller, more active, more satisfying, and more productive lives, and that they are more able to attend to their personal safety on the job.

#### PROGRAM DESIGN

##### Programs/Activities:

- 12 on-site fitness centers
- Fitness classes (e.g. Zumba, Pilates, yoga)
- Employee outdoors club

#### LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Health and wellness has been a part of the core values at L.L.Bean for decades, although they were only written into the company mission in the last decade, as L.L.Bean sought to transmit these values and culture to a growing number of locations. According to former president, Leon Gorman, "A business is in a unique and responsible position to effectively enhance the well-being of its employees." The company demonstrates this commitment to employee wellbeing in many ways— for example, it still has a very generous traditional pension program. Through good times and bad, L.L.Bean has also maintained a strong investment in health promotion because "it makes sense" and "it's the right thing to do." Because L.L.Bean is a company that focuses on outdoor products, its leadership feels that it

should send a message to its workers that it values good health, with a particular emphasis on physical activity.

### **CULTURE OF HEALTH**

With well-articulated goals, excellent communications, visible day-to-day management support, and a comprehensive set of resources to help employees improve their health, L.L.Bean's program promotes a strong culture of health among its employees. This culture of health is further reinforced through traditions and routines like regular employee-led "stretch breaks" on the floor of the distribution centers and an annual Christmas Eve hike along the Maine coast.

### **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Workplaces exert a significant level of influence on individuals' health choices, and L.L.Bean has worked hard to make that influence a net positive. Employees at L.L.Bean are provided with the necessary tools, resources, and support for healthy lifestyle choices. Moreover, there is very clear and consistent messaging in their environment and from all levels of leadership encouraging them to be healthy. Employees are very engaged in the program; in 2013, the most recent year for which evaluation data is available, 93% of employees electing medical coverage participated in the program, and of those 98% met all program requirements.



### **MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION**

L.L.Bean does an excellent job at measurement, evaluation, and learning. Aside from providing a strong business case for the health promotion program, biometric, safety and benefits spending data are used to track improvement, need, and to understand how to best direct limited resources. For example, by tracking smoking rates over time, L.L.Bean has been able to see significant improvements and attribute those improvements to specific policies—most notably, big declines in years following the elimination of smoking rooms (1993) and institution of a tobacco-free campus (2005). In 2013, the

organization's smoking rate was 6%, significantly lower than the 19% average in Maine.



### **LESSONS LEARNED / CHALLENGES**

Like most strong health promotion programs, L.L.Bean's wellness program developed incrementally over several years with occasional setbacks and lessons learned. A major challenge has been transmitting the culture of health to retail locations out of state. Additionally, the company has learned that in most cases it is better to add healthy options and to make them more appealing, than to remove unhealthy options. For instance, there was significant pushback from employees when the company removed deep-fryers in the cafeteria but everyone welcomed the new \$3 300-calorie lunches.

### **STRENGTHS/KEY SUCCESS FACTORS**

The strength of L.L.Bean's Healthy Bean program lies in several factors— importantly, its strong leadership commitment, a good communications strategy that is tailored to its employee population, and rigorous measurement and evaluation to guide program planning. The company has maintained trust by very carefully navigating the fine line between nudging employees toward healthy choices and respecting their freedom.



### **LINKS**

<http://thehealthproject.com/winning-programs/winners-listed-alphabetically/>