



BLUE ZONES PROJECT®

HOW BLUE ZONES MADE A POPCORN COMPANY HEALTHIER

In one year, an increase of 55% was noted in employees with an ideal HDL cholesterol score and an increase of 14.5% in those with an ideal LDL cholesterol score.

THE CHALLENGE

The declining health of workers in the United States results in increased work absences, decreased productivity, and higher healthcare costs for individuals and employers.

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The Blue Zones Project provides an evidence-based blueprint for employers to improve their organization's work environment, increase productivity, help employees live their purpose, and elevate the long-term well-being of the entire workforce.

RESULTS

After completing the Blue Zones Project Worksite Pledge:

-  American Popcorn became a designated Blue Zones Project Worksite®
-  Employees with ideal HDL and LDL cholesterol scores improved by 55% and 14.5% respectively
-  Nicotine-free employees increased by 9.4%
-  Healthy vending machine options rose from 7.5 to 55.2%
-  The work environment is more health-conscious, exercise-friendly, and safer
-  A 5-year well-being plan has been implemented for continued success

"I'm very proud to be named a Blue Zones Worksite. The process allowed us to promote a healthier lifestyle and well-being among our employees."

- Garrett Smith, President

American Popcorn’s commitment to, and investment in, employee well-being is commendable and paying dividends across the board.

Blue Zones Project® is a comprehensive well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier across entire communities. Employers play a key role in supporting the health of the community. The Blue Zones Project Worksite Pledge offers a menu of evidence-based best practices proven to optimize the work environment, strengthen company culture, and remove obstacles to well-being.

American Popcorn Company is a family-owned business firmly rooted in Sioux City, Iowa, since 1914. They employ approximately 180 people full-time. The company vision aligns with key principles of Blue Zones Project, valuing family, respect, courtesy, community pride, and engagement. As part of the Worksite Pledge, 62% of employees completed the Blue Zones Personal Pledge.

Leadership has a profound influence on the well-being of others. For American Popcorn Company, strong support for Blue Zones Project began with owners and officers completing well-being education designed to train leaders on how to create a culture that supports the health and well-being of their people. Then, they formed an employee-led wellness committee to develop a plan to address challenges and health issues that were identified as important to employees. Together, they developed an action plan that addressed policies and benefits, the food environment, the physical environment, and the engagement of social networks.

Policies and benefits play a key role in supporting health and disease prevention. American Popcorn Company began providing free flu shots and annual biometric screenings for all employees. Biometric screenings provide employee metrics around blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, weight management, and cholesterol. Results are aggregated and communicated to all employees annually. In just one year, employees with ideal HDL and LDL cholesterol scores improved by 55% and 14.5% respectively. The company also began to offer employees tobacco cessation support in addition to their strong tobacco-free worksite policy.

Employees are required to go off-site to use tobacco products. As a result of these changes, the company saw a 9.4% decrease in nicotine usage in its first year.

Environment is another key driver for health decisions. Improvements in American Popcorn’s food environment earned the worksite a Silver Award of Distinction by the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey. Prior to becoming a Blue Zones Worksite, there were four vending machines, offering only 7.5% healthy options.

They added two drink machines with healthy options, removed two candy machines, and now offer 55.2% healthy options. They made adjustments to the physical environment to encourage activity and minimize physical stress and strain. The company added standing desks to encourage employees to stand during the day. They also incorporated ergonomic footrests, keyboard trays, and adjustable-height equipment to maximize employee comfort and improve musculoskeletal alignment. Sound-dampening material was added to cubicles and walls during an office remodel, and noise levels are monitored in production areas.

Movement is encouraged throughout the day. Each morning, employees come together for group stretching. Walking routes are posted in high-traffic areas that include distance, number of steps, and time it takes to walk the routes. Employees are actively encouraged to step away from their desks and walk with colleagues during breaks and over lunch – this provides employees with the opportunity to exercise, while developing positive social networks.



THE BOTTOM LINE:

Best practices from Blue Zones Project have helped boost employee engagement and make American Popcorn Company a healthier, happier place to work. We can help your company do the same.

