Give Productivity a Shot in the Arm:
How Influenza Immunization Can Enhance Your Bottom Line
Executive Summary

Influenza can seriously impact your workplace—adversely affecting the lives of employees and taking its toll on productivity.

Much is at stake. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that, each year in the United States, approximately 5 - 20% of the population gets influenza (commonly known as the flu) and 226,000 people are hospitalized with flu-related complications.¹,²

Depending on disease severity of the viruses circulating during flu season, the annual number of deaths can range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.³ In fact, because every case of the flu can lead to serious complications, CDC has expanded its recommendations for annual influenza vaccination to everyone in the U.S. six months of age and older.⁴

Prevention of the flu in the workplace is one example in which employers can take an active role in promoting the health of their workforce. Although 70% of the nation’s major employers hold annual influenza clinics, only about 15% of the population receive their flu immunization at non-traditional settings, such as the work place.⁵,⁶ That’s considerably lower than the 80% rate recommended for the general population by Healthy People 2020, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that identifies the most significant objectives to keep the nation healthy.⁷

The CDC estimates that influenza costs $6.2 billion in lost productivity, not to mention $10.4 billion in direct medical costs. Factoring in work absences and other variables, the total estimated economic burden is $87.1 billion.⁸

Among adults 18-64 years of age, influenza causes the following each year:
» 200 million days of diminished productivity;
» 100 million days of bed disability;
» 75 million days of work absences; and
» 22 million visits to healthcare providers.⁹

With so much evidence pointing to the value of influenza vaccination, why do participation rates in worksite programs continue to be so low? Many workers—some at the highest levels of management—are probably unaware of how important immunization can be to their health and the health of their business. Additionally, companies may not have the time or expertise to address how flu-related absenteeism and associated costs are affecting their business to show a return on investment (ROI) for immunization programs.

Employers must now step up their efforts to start an on-site flu immunization program or increase employee participation in an existing one. To provide employers with additional resources to accomplish this endeavor, Partnership for Prevention (Partnership) has developed this report, Give Productivity a Shot in the Arm: How Influenza Immunization Can Enhance Your Bottom Line. It presents the business case for worksite flu immunization programs; explains barriers to participation and effective approaches for overcoming those barriers; and lays out strategies and tools for establishing a program or strengthening an existing one. A tool kit including resources and handouts is also available at www.prevent.org/flu.

The CDC’s Task Force on Community Preventive Services calls for “interventions with on-site, reduced cost, and actively promoted influenza vaccinations, implemented alone or as part of a multi-component intervention, based on sufficient evidence of their effectiveness in increasing influenza vaccination coverage among workers in worksites.”¹⁰

Did you know?
Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older.⁴
Specifically, the report details the importance of engaging in long-range planning. This includes setting program goals, involving senior management, and developing a detailed communications strategy to educate employees about flu vaccination and dispel common myths.

In addition to long-range planning, evaluation is also crucial to establish or enhance a worksite flu program. Evaluation allows program managers to determine baseline utilization rates and set appropriate goals, as well as gauge the effectiveness and quality of the program.

One of the many benefits of a worksite flu program is overall cost savings, which can be shown through ROI calculation. Determining your ROI is a tailored process that takes into account the characteristics of your organization. Some objectives to measure include: rates of absenteeism, reduced productivity, direct health savings, and employee engagement. Determining your ROI can help create a sound business case for your worksite flu program.

Recent research and employers’ experience has led to the development of best practices for increasing participation in on-site flu immunization programs. These best practices emphasize the importance of convenience, education, communication, and providing incentives. Collaboration among departments and the involvement of senior management is vital to the success of the program. The case studies provided throughout this report illustrate how best practices are used in everyday settings.

Protecting the health and safety of employees, as well as safeguarding the company’s bottom line, are ample reasons to take advantage of the numerous resources provided in this report.

### What companies are doing to boost employee participation in flu vaccination programs

- Offering flu immunization on-site
- Providing incentives, such as gift cards or points for benefit dollars
- Educating employees on the importance of getting a flu shot
- Making the vaccine free of charge

* nations leading companies were surveyed
Despite the availability of flu vaccines, almost 60% of the population is not protected. The numbers paint a disturbing picture (see charts at right). Studies that break down the numbers by age reveal that only about 28% of adults 18-49 years of age receive a flu vaccination. A recent survey found that of 54 U.S. corporations, 96% of which employed more than 1,000 full-time workers, only eight (15%) reported on-site vaccination rates higher than 50%.

Even vaccine rates for children are low—only 24%. The more children get sick, the greater the likelihood that employees will miss work or unknowingly become a carrier of the virus, spreading it at the workplace.

Each infected employee may miss up to six days of work and need up to two weeks to make a full recovery. Overall, flu has been estimated to cause more than 75 million lost working days in the U.S. each year, contributing to $16.3 billion in lost earnings.

Additionally, if employees try to come to work when they have flu, their performance is seriously affected. Studies show that workers with flu demonstrate impaired performance of simple reaction-time tasks by 20%-40%, which can increase the probability of error or injury. The level of impairment is comparable to the 5%-10% decline in performance seen with alcohol consumption or working at night, when people are tired and not at their best.

Providing employees with an annual flu vaccination in the workplace during flu season is an effective way to combat these problems. On-site programs provide an important public service and generate savings of between $15 and $84 per vaccinated person, or $2.58 per dollar spent on vaccination, that’s a possible savings of up to $4,000 for every averted illness.

A vaccinated workforce is also healthier. They experience:
- 13%-44% fewer doctor visits;
- 18%-45% fewer lost work days; and
- 18%-28% fewer days with reduced productivity.

The movement toward better national influenza preparedness is clear. In February 2010, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which advises the CDC on vaccination issues, broadened its influenza immunization recommendation to include all people six months of age and older; the prior recommendation for adults had been only for those at high risk and those older than 50 years of age.

This significant change points to the need to remove barriers to receiving a flu immunization and sends a clear message of the importance of preventing flu across the entire population.

As an employer concerned about the health of your employees and your bottom line, this report is an invaluable resource. It will take you from initial planning to full implementation of an on-site flu immunization program.
For the past 23 years, American Express has offered its employees influenza vaccines, thereby establishing an infrastructure for a well-established program building up to a participation rate of close to 45%. With this solid foundation, the company’s 2009 marketing campaign, “Got Your Shot?,” was effective in reaching all staff members, including men and women of all ages and all ethnic groups, while also addressing key barriers to compliance, notes Anita Shaughnessy, Vice President, US Healthcare and Wellness.

“Our pitch, ‘Three Words, One Goal, Two Reasons,’ boiled down the message to get the shot if you want to stay healthy and protect yourself and others,” says Shaughnessy. “In our promotional brochure, we used real employees, who run the gamut from young women to older adults with families. The subliminal message was that everyone’s doing it, so you should, too.”

Both research and experience have shown that a strong communications strategy is key to a successful worksite flu vaccination program. At American Express, communication channels also include company-wide e-mails, posters at all locations, and television monitors displaying the message. At each site, volunteers—“the arms and legs on the ground,” according to Karen DiProfio, Director of Nursing—bring a passion for health and wellness, further motivating people to participate. “We continue to observe that people have misconceptions about the influenza vaccine,” says DiProfio. “Working with our on-site volunteers, we’re still reminding people that the vaccine doesn’t give them flu, needles only hurt for a minute, and young people can get flu, too, so it’s important they all get vaccinated.”

Flu Program Casts a Wide Net

With so many locations throughout the country, American Express has had to develop a variety of methods to reach its employees. In 2009, the company offered on-site flu vaccines at 31 locations, serving 12,000 employees. Seven of those locations have on-site medical clinics, and at those sites, the nurses didn’t just wait for employees to come by to get vaccinated. They took the vaccines to them. “We had a flu cart that we brought to the floors, and we set it up at a central location,” says DiProfio. “It was quick, easy, and convenient. And, not only did we give out the shots for free to employees and their families, we also paid employees for the time they were taking off to get vaccinated.”

For 2010-2011, the company has further increased its vaccine order in anticipation of increased utilization and a desire to improve on their annual influenza immunization efforts.

The way people work is also changing rapidly. More than ever before, employees are working from home, on the road, or on more flexible schedules. In these settings, the company depends on its volunteers and, increasingly, its online coupon options for flu vaccine that can be redeemed at participating local pharmacies. “We call our volunteers, remind them to talk to their staff, and give them a nudge not to let this go,” says Shaughnessy.

Building on the prevention model first established with flu program, American Express has developed a comprehensive wellness program. Key elements include tools and resources for managing one’s own health, online telephonic coaching, health assessments, and disease management programs. “It’s been a difficult year for many companies and the people that work for them,” Shaughnessy points out. “Influenza vaccination and wellness activities let employees know that their employers care about them. Employees are grateful while also reaping the benefits of being healthy and productive.”
Getting Started

Education is the best defense against indifference to a new flu vaccination program or lackluster participation in an existing one.

Many flu programs may be unsuccessful because employees don't fully understand the infectious and serious nature of influenza. Here are some of the top myths about flu and how program leaders can put them to rest.

**Myth #1:** Healthy people do not need to receive the flu vaccine.

**Fact:** Although rates of serious illness are highest among people 65 years of age and older, children under 2 years of age, and those with an underlying chronic medical condition, anyone among the general population can become ill with flu. Flu is usually spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing, touching contaminated surfaces such as desks, or direct hand contact. In most instances, a person is contagious about one day before and five days after the onset of symptoms. Healthy individuals who contract flu can easily pass the virus on to those whose health is compromised.

**Myth #2:** Flu shot can give people flu.

**Fact:** Because the flu shot is made from dead viruses, an individual cannot get the illness from the vaccination. Some people may experience minor side effects, such as a sore arm where the vaccine was given, a sore throat, or achiness. These side effects usually diminish within one or two days; they are not the result of the flu.

**Myth #3:** Seasonal flu is not perceived as “serious.”

**Fact:** Flu can be a debilitating and potentially fatal disease. Its symptoms can include high fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, and stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. In 2006, flu was the sixth leading cause of death among persons 65 years of age and older and, when combined with pneumonia, the eighth leading cause of death in the United States.

**Myth #4:** Needles can hurt, so it’s easier not to get the vaccine.

**Fact:** It is true that when receiving an immunization, most people feel a sharp prick, but the pain only lasts momentarily. The passing pain and discomfort are a small price to pay in order to stay healthy during flu season. Alternatively, people can opt to get the nasal flu spray. This vaccine is made from weakened live influenza viruses. Like the injection, this vaccine cannot cause flu illness. It is approved for healthy people 2-49 years of age; it is not approved for pregnant women.

**Myth #5:** It’s all right to go to work feeling sick with flu-like symptoms. It’s probably nothing anyway.

**Fact:** To help protect co-workers, it is important that people stay home if they don't feel well and are unsure if they are contagious. In situations where it is feasible, many companies offer telecommuting options that allow employees to continue to work at home while they are recovering from an illness.

**Myth #6:** There’s no reason to get a flu vaccine every year. One time should be enough.

**Fact:** It is essential to get immunized every year because flu strains change yearly, depending on what new viruses are circulating. A case in point: the 2010-2011 immunization protects against H1N1 virus, as well as the seasonal strains.

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**Flu Hygiene Tips**

Encourage your workforce to follow these guidelines:

1. Avoid unnecessary touching of your eyes, mouth, and nose—key entry points for the flu virus.
2. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.
3. If you don't have a tissue, use your upper sleeve to cough or sneeze into, not your hands. Be sure to throw used tissues into a trash can.
4. Wash your hands with soap and water often. It has been found that people who do so are less likely to introduce germs into their bodies.
5. Disinfect desks, tabletops, and bathrooms often during flu season to help prevent the spread of the virus.
6. Supplement hand washing with hand sanitizers, which are effective in killing germs on the hands.
Establishing or Enhancing an On-site Flu Immunization Program

This step-by-step process takes time and dedication—but the outcome will be well worth it to your organization.

The most successful flu immunization programs have strong leaders who do the following:

**Long-Range Planning**

1. **Determine the goals of your program.**
   Goals will vary from company to company, but it is essential to have something to work towards. For example, you may want to set a benchmark, such as “increasing participation rates to 80% within two years.” Another approach is to lay out goals over a five-year period. During this phase, you should begin thinking about the data you need to collect for your program. Comparing participation rates from year to year is one way to measure success. See the Evaluation section of this report for additional suggestions about how to measure the impact of your program.

2. **Decide who is in charge of flu immunization program.** You could place flu immunization under the umbrella of a larger health promotion effort. Or, you could set up a committee with representatives from multiple departments to take on this responsibility on a volunteer basis. If your company has numerous locations, these representatives may evolve into local advocates for the program that can work with you to ensure that the program proceeds smoothly. You may opt to find a partner, such as a vendor with expertise in wellness activities, to take charge of this activity.

3. **Involve senior managers early on.** They can be your strongest advocate for the program. Top executives can ensure that flu immunization program is budgeted each year. They also can serve as role models by offering to be the first in

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**One Company’s Keys to Success**

In 2002, sanofi pasteur, the leading manufacturer of flu vaccine, noted that participation in its on-site flu vaccine program was lagging. Only 34% of employees were taking advantage of the free vaccine. As a company dedicated to the provision of preventive health, it decided to renew its commitment to boosting employee influenza immunization rates.

Multiple departments within the company—medical affairs, marketing, communications, and public policy, to name a few—got to work and set out to build a program that would encourage employees to “roll up their sleeves” and get vaccinated. Their first step was to make sure that top management was onboard. In fact, company leaders were highly committed to making vaccinations widely available and accessible to employees, their families, and company contractors. With top management’s support, the company worked together to send a clear message about the benefits of vaccination, along with nuts and bolts information about where to go to get the vaccine and the times when it was being given.

Leaving nothing to chance, the company came up with innovative ways to offer the vaccine. There was an air of fun at the clinics, with families welcomed and prizes and treats such as ice cream distributed. For employees who missed those opportunities, another innovation was offered, which was fully supported by senior management. A mobile cart visited each building, providing vaccination to anyone who needed it. The goal of these strategies was to ensure that getting immunized was easy and convenient.

These efforts had an enormous impact. Participation rates soared from 34% in 2002 to 66% in 2003. Those rates continue to rise. During the 2009-2010 flu season, 88% of the company’s employees were immunized against flu. Sanofi Pasteur continues to work toward increasing its annual participation rate in its flu immunization program, to reach or exceed its 90% goal.
line to receive the vaccine or they can hold an informal gathering to educate employees about the initiative. Companies that have multiple locations may find that the manager at the site has considerable clout over his or her employees. In this situation, local managers need to have the necessary information to build support and encourage participation in the program.

4. Develop an effective communications strategy. Informing employees about the importance of being vaccinated against flu should begin well in advance of the actual clinic. The first part of the campaign should address and correct common misconceptions that often serve as barriers to participation. To reach employees throughout your company, take advantage of multiple platforms—electronic, print, face-to-face meetings such as “Lunch and Learns,” and interactive approaches such as webinars or closed-circuit television.

5. Discuss whether to offer incentives to encourage participation. If this is the first time you are offering a worksite flu immunization program, you may want to wait to see the level of participation before offering incentives. If you have been holding clinics for at least a couple of years, you may want to consider offering incentives to boost participation rates, such as reducing the cost of the health insurance premium or providing a gift certificate.

6. Be sure to order the vaccine well in advance of the clinic. For a clinic that will be held in October, the vaccine should be ordered no later than March. If you are new to flu clinics and are working with a health vendor, discuss the size of your workplace and projected participation, and then order accordingly. If you have offered flu clinics before, consider ordering about 5% more vaccine than you did the previous year.

7. Consider adding a Family Day to your flu immunization program. As a way to increase participation among employees and their families, include a Family Day as one of your scheduled clinics. Make the event fun and festive, with games, face painting, and treats for the kids along with vaccines for everyone. If possible, consider including other health screenings, such as weight and blood pressure, as a way to turn the event into a comprehensive Health Fair.

Getting Ready for Launch

Between two weeks and one month before the clinic, more immediate concerns need to be addressed. At this stage, you are focusing on where the clinic (or clinics) will take place, when they will take place, and who will be providing support to ensure the program’s success.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE CLINIC

✓ Change the focus of the communications campaign to include details about the event. Employees need to know when the clinic will be held, what types of vaccines are being offered, payment (if any) options, and where the clinics will take place. Some workplaces may place a schedule online so that employees can make an appointment that fits into their workday. Similar to what was done earlier in the campaign, multiple platforms can be used to send out these important messages. Using an online button or banner from the CDC (found at http://snipurl.com/cdc_help) is a simple but effective way to enhance your Web site during flu season. Reminder cards can also be sent out. American Express (see page 4) included a card as part of their informational brochure, which can be found at http://snipurl.com/flu_prevent.pdf. E-cards can be sent to employees and their family and friends to reinforce the importance of getting a flu vaccine. Sample e-cards can be found at http://snipurl.com/cdc_ecard.

✓ Line up volunteers to help with the clinic.

Volunteers can perform many tasks, including helping with setup, collecting consent forms, and answering questions. Designate a leader who can be responsible for all the volunteers and work with you in assigning tasks.

✓ Set aside time to train volunteers.

Training will vary from company to company. Some organizations may only need volunteers to have employees sign consent forms or direct traffic to and from the clinic site. For those activities, minimal training is required. But at other organizations, such as Baystate Health (see page 12), where nurses have broader responsibilities (ordering vaccine, for example), training may be more extensive. Given your organization, determine the amount and kind of training that is needed.
✓ Reserve a room (or rooms) for the clinic. If your company is small, you may only have to reserve one room, such as the conference room, for as many days as you choose to hold the clinic. If your company is large, this task becomes more complex. Then you need to consider where to hold the clinic in buildings within the same geographic area, or at locations nationwide.

✓ Select employees to serve as “on-site champions.” These individuals can drum up excitement about the program, ensure that rooms will be available for the scheduled clinics, and volunteer to hand out educational materials or collect consent forms. At Baystate Health (see page 12), the on-site champions are nurses, so they serve the dual function of educating their colleagues and giving them the vaccine.

✓ Make sure that enough vaccine has been ordered. It is important to do what you can to guarantee an ample supply of vaccine for the entire season. Nothing puts a damper on a flu immunization program more than not having enough for everyone who wants to be immunized.

✓ Confirm appointment times if necessary. Flu clinic will go more smoothly if the “flow” of employees coming and going is suitable for the size of the space.

✓ Be prepared to answer any questions that employees may have about flu vaccine. Provide informational handouts, such as those found online at: http://snipurl.com/cdc_handouts.

Be Prepared: Make sure you have enough vaccine on hand to reach your goal.

Nothing puts a damper on a flu immunization program more than not having enough for everyone who wants to be immunized.

DAY OF THE CLINIC

✓ Double-check the setup of the room or rooms where the clinic is being held. Look to see that everything is arranged correctly and that all needed supplies are in place.

✓ Check that all employee consent forms are collected. Assigning a volunteer to this task is an easy way to ensure that all employees submit their forms. Forms are typically filled out and collected the day of the clinic.24

TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE CLINIC

✓ Confirm the location (or locations) for each clinic. In addition, the room should have a large open space, multiple entrances and exits, and have the capacity to hold several tables and chairs and possibly a refrigerator to store vaccines.

Vaccination Cost vs. Savings25 (approximate)

- Average cost of vaccination per person
- Average work day savings for every averted illness due to vaccination of a single employee
- Amount saved per person due to vaccination

- $11.63
- $15.38
- $30.01

Give Productivity a Shot in the Arm: How Influenza Immunization Can Enhance your Bottom Line
CASE STUDY #2
Influenza Immunization: Boosting Participation Rates a Priority for Intel

For the 2010 flu season, Intel is reevaluating participation rates in its on-site flu immunization program. The company’s goal is to do better than the 2009 rate of 19%, increasing it to at least 30%. Intel plans to do so by following best practices in the field—ensuring that immunizations are easy to get and convenient, relying on effective communication strategies, getting senior management buy-in early on, and offering incentives.

Intel is well positioned to reach this goal—or surpass it. The company has a long history of building a culture of wellness, with flu immunization as an important part of these efforts. In recent years, this culture has evolved into a comprehensive prevention-focused initiative, called Health for Life, which has integrated flu vaccination into the company’s benefit model and design. Patti Clavier, Senior Project Manager, Health & Well-Being, notes that, “The program is built through evidence-based medicine and customized for Intel’s unique culture.”

The first change that senior management put into place is a new reimbursement strategy. Instead of having to pay for the immunization and wait for reimbursement, all U.S. employees will receive the vaccination free of charge. This change will remove the paperwork involved in submitting and processing claims, thus simplifying the process. At some global Intel locations, flu immunizations are also available free of charge to employees’ family members. “We believe it is important to extend prevention and wellness to the family unit and do so whenever possible,” Clavier added. “Ensuring that family members are also protected against influenza is critical to improving the productivity of our employees and reducing absenteeism.”

Number of employees: 43,472 (U.S.)
Number of facilities: 300 in 50 countries
Employees immunized: 8,308

New Marketing Efforts, Convenience, Incentives Aim to Increase Participation

As part of Intel’s commitment to improving participation rates, the company is preparing to launch a major marketing effort, which includes a series of articles on preparing for flu season, as well as various types of outreach using posters and e-mails. To encourage vaccination, Intel will be offering flu immunizations earlier in the season, beginning at the end of the summer, and offering them for a longer period of time.

These new marketing initiatives will be added to ongoing outreach provided through Intel’s intranet, the company’s hub for communication. Posts run the gamut from flu prevention information to links for on-site vaccination opportunities. The Web site is a frequent destination for employees during flu season.

Convenience is another essential ingredient to increasing participation rates. Those locations with on-site Health for Life centers are well-equipped to provide this service. During flu season, employees can simply go to the clinic at specified times to receive their vaccination. Health care providers are available to administer immunizations and coordinate those hours with employee schedules. At many Intel locations, Intel has a vendor agreement with Walgreens to provide on-site flu immunizations to their employees.

These options are offered to make getting flu vaccine as easy as possible. “We have found that the more convenience we provide, the more participation we get,” Clavier points out. “Convenience has truly become a mantra for our prevention and wellness programs.”

Under the umbrella of Health for Life, employees are given an incentive for participating in a health check; they are awarded a $25 gift card. Intel offers an additional reward through a points program. Receiving a flu shot earns employees points under Health for Life, as does filling out a health risk appraisal (HRA), logging onto the Health for Life Web site, and performing physical activities. The HRA queries employees about whether they have received their annual flu immunization, another reminder of the importance of flu prevention to their overall health.

“Senior management is behind all these innovations,” says Clavier. “Their buy-in, along with the conveniences built into the program and increased awareness of the importance of flu prevention, are key to the long-term success of our flu immunization program.”

Give Productivity a Shot in the Arm: How Influenza Immunization Can Enhance your Bottom Line

Our program is built through evidence-based medicine and customized for our culture.”

Patti Clavier
Senior Project Manager
Health and Well-Being,
Intel
CASE STUDY #3  
Why Planning is Critical for Hennepin County’s Flu Effort

During the influenza season, Hennepin County, MN, employees don’t have to worry about where to get their vaccinations. The county offers them free to all full-time employees and retirees. The influenza immunization effort is at the heart of Hennepin County’s wellness initiative, HealthWorks, that is designed to connect employees, their dependents, and retirees with services to maintain or improve their health.

Jill Hamilton, manager of HealthWorks, and her staff of three work behind the scenes, orchestrating the logistics of providing these services to 7,500 employees across 144 sites in the county. “Through HealthWorks, we’ve built a branded culture of wellness,” says Hamilton. “We send a consistent message about how to achieve a healthy lifestyle.”

An added benefit provided through HealthWorks is free screenings for cholesterol, body composition, blood pressure, bone density, and glucose offered when employees receive their annual influenza immunization. The “bundled” wellness screenings have proven to be extremely popular, giving employees an added incentive to take the step of seeking influenza vaccination and at the same time receiving an overall health check.

Planning, Convenience Essential to a Successful Flu Program

Communication has been an important part of establishing Hennepin's culture of wellness. The influenza immunization program has a robust outreach component. Hamilton works with the Public Affairs department to develop educational materials about influenza prevention and vaccination. E-fliers, the county newsletter, and posters also are used to let people know where to go to get their free immunizations and screenings.

Starting in the spring, the team begins working with contacts at each building, determining which rooms are available, reserving them, and working out a flexible schedule to accommodate day and evening shifts of employees.

Even the small details must be addressed. How a room is configured determines how it is set up, ensuring that the lines of people waiting for their vaccination can move quickly and efficiently. Some county units, such as the Adult Corrections Facility, for example, are at a distance from the county seat. Coordinating with detention center staff, Hamilton must make arrangements for transportation and work out any other logistics, such as access for the HealthWorks staff and vendors in the secured buildings.

“Convenience is key,” says Hamilton. “We listen to what people say works for them and plan accordingly. Lunch hour times may vary from building to building, and we’ve learned that people prefer getting their influenza immunization at the end of their shift. These adjustments make a difference.”

Hennepin County’s efforts have resulted in a good turnout over the past couple of years. In 2009, the county held 16 clinics for seasonal influenza immunizations and five for H1N1, despite some delays in receiving doses. About 1,320 employees received the seasonal vaccine and 1,077 received the H1N1 vaccine. In 2009, more employees—almost double the number of 2008 participants—received the seasonal vaccine. With one vaccination for both seasonal and H1N1 influenza strains being offered in 2010, Hennepin county is determining whether it will hold more wellness clinics to accommodate an anticipated increase in demand from employees seeking immunization.

“We plan to host over 30 clinics at 25 worksites in 2010,” says Hamilton.

“When it comes to wellness programs, don’t expect employees to come to you,” says Hamilton. “As employers, it’s our job to reach out to them with programs and information.” By communicating effectively with employees countywide about the seriousness of influenza and the importance of immunization, and making the vaccination clinics convenient and accessible, this initiative has seen great success.

Industry: County Government  
Number of employees: 7,500  
Number of locations: 144 sites  
Employees immunized: 1,320 with seasonal; 1,077 with H1N1

Jill Hamilton  
Manager of HealthWorks, Hennepin County (MN)
Evaluation

Clinic evaluation should be a year-round process.

The most consistent thing about providing employee vaccinations is change. Employee numbers change. Flu virus itself changes. And employee receptiveness toward your program may also change year to year. This requires a year-round evaluation process. Here’s how to review your program and improve it as you go:

1. **Set program goals.** For flu clinics, the goal is often high participation rates. Partnership for Prevention recommends that companies strive for a rate of at least 80%. If there is an understanding that a company is not going to reach that goal in the first year, consider what steps need to be taken to ultimately achieve it. The section entitled *Best Practices* suggests ways to work toward this goal.

2. **Start collecting data immediately.** Data from the first year of the program will provide a baseline against which you can compare progress from year to year. This information provides a snapshot of your organization’s perception of the value of flu vaccine and how much work lies ahead in educating staff members about its importance.

3. **Consider developing an employee satisfaction survey.** As with participation data, developing a survey for the first year and then administering it in subsequent years will help inform what improvements to the program are made. For example, if staff indicate that they don’t think flu is a serious illness, that tells you that a comprehensive education campaign may be needed. If they note that the clinics are overcrowded, then you know that work needs to be done to improve scheduling. Surveys can be administered online or distributed during staff meetings. If appropriate at your company, you may consider placing “suggestion boxes” in strategic locations to encourage employees to provide feedback on flu immunization program.

4. **Keep the communication channels open.** Throughout the program, make sure that ongoing discussions among members of the implementation team are taking place to note what is going well and what needs to be changed. At the end of flu season, develop a list of recommendations for how to improve the program. Eliciting suggestions from employees throughout the season also can result in new ways to enhance program communications.

5. **Determine who in your organization did and did not receive the vaccine.** Finding out the types of employees, such as office workers or salespeople, who received the immunization, their age, and where they are located geographically, can help you figure out what groups you are having trouble reaching. For example, if many customer services representatives lack access to e-mail during the day and were not immunized, it may be because they were not aware of the clinics. If that is the case, you should consider alternative ways to provide outreach.

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### Days lost to Flu each year

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<th>Dimension</th>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Absences</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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*What do employees have to say?*

Provide a mechanism to collect year-round questions, observations and feedback from employees on how your program is working. Make sure the system fits how they like to communicate.
CASE STUDY #4
Baystate Health Wins With its ‘Champion’ System

Baystate Health, an integrated health care delivery system serving one million people in northern Massachusetts, has an important investment in keeping its staff healthy—especially during flu season. Ensuring that healthcare workers are vaccinated protects patients from becoming infected. Additionally, training temporary workers to fill in is a huge expense and a logistical challenge. To address these concerns, in 2007 Baystate began training nurses to serve as “flu champions,” volunteers to give flu vaccinations to their co-workers during flu season.

Flu champion program has been a resounding success—resulting in a participation rate of 75% for the 2009 flu season. More clinicians are volunteering to be flu champs in the upcoming flu season, allowing the program to expand and reach as many employees as possible throughout the day and night shifts. The nurses see the service as being good for employees and patients,” says Dr. Paul Medrek, Director of Occupational Health at Baystate Health, whose office runs the program. “We’re building an esprit de corps, where everyone is present and healthy.”

Their efforts have paid off. Flu program received the Baystate President’s Quality Distinguished Performer Award for 2008-2009. This recognition is given to a team-based activity that promotes health care quality.

Training, Communication Integral to Flu Program

After signing on to become flu champions, nurses attend a two-hour training session where they learn how to order the vaccine from the hospital pharmacy and what procedures they need to follow. At a large facility such as Baystate Medical Center, there could be as many as 60 flu champions per shift. Throughout the entire health system, flu champions administer about 45% of the vaccinations given during flu season, which runs from early fall to the middle of December. The remaining 30% are given at on-site clinics or special clinics.

Apart from developing a well-trained cadre of flu champions, it is equally important to raise awareness among staff about the importance of being vaccinated. At the beginning of the season, the occupational health team holds open forums, in which employees can receive information and ask questions. Then, through e-mail blasts and newsletter articles, as well as on a Web site dedicated to influenza, the health team and communications staff continues to spread the word.

To ensure that the right message is getting out, the team uses information collected from surveys to address the unique concerns of their workforce. “Many people say they are healthy, so they don’t need a flu shot,” Medrek notes. “To counter that, we remind employees that they can be a carrier of the virus while being asymptomatic, so they can unknowingly spread the disease. If they’re not willing to get the shot for themselves, they should do it for their family members and their patients. We found that the notion of getting the shot to help protect those they come in contact with really resonated with the staff.”

Linking Healthy Behaviors with Financial Gains

Receiving the vaccine also comes with incentives. In addition to getting vaccinated free of charge, those employees who are immunized receive 25 points toward Baystate’s wellness incentive program called Baystate Healthy Rewards. Employees can engage in a variety of activities to earn points, such as participating in a walking club, attending a wellness program or getting preventative screenings, “We wanted to make the link between healthy behaviors and the cost of healthcare,” says Medrek. Employees who earn 200 points receive a $200 wellness credit toward health benefits.

It is never too soon to begin preparing for the next flu season. Flu champions begin ordering the vaccine from the hospital pharmacy in the spring to be ready by the third week in September. While orchestrating such a large, complex program is a challenge, the results are tangible—a healthier, more productive workforce less likely to pass on flu to unsuspecting friends, family members, and patients.

“The program works for everyone,” concludes Medrek. “Employees don’t have to take a chunk of time out of their day to be vaccinated. They get the shot when it’s convenient for them. And management gets a more productive workforce less prone to absenteeism.”

Dr. Paul Medrek
Director of Occupational Health,
Baystate Health

“...We found that the notion of getting the shot to help protect those they come in contact with really resonated with the staff.”
Determining Return on Investment (ROI)

Most companies need to show that the money they invested in the program has resulted in some savings. As a first step, you can calculate your ROI by subtracting the cost of the investment from the gain and dividing that result by the cost of the investment. The answer will be a percentage. Keep in mind that the most important part of the calculation is deciding what a cost is versus a gain. Depending on the way a flu program is set up, this can vary from company to company. The following online calculator can help you determine your ROI: [http://snipurl.com/roi_calculator](http://snipurl.com/roi_calculator) (see below for a sample ROI calculation).

Achieving a more nuanced view of ROI, however, takes time and involves considering a range of factors. Reducing costs is not the only benefit. In fact, flu programs often show success through other measures, including increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and decreased presenteeism. Other areas to consider when calculating ROI include health and employee engagement outcomes. Health outcomes encompass decreases in the occurrence of flu and flu related complications, while employee engagement outcomes include improved productivity, increased satisfaction with the workplace (linked to senior management involvement) and a sense that the organization is concerned with the well-being of its employees.

In order to develop a sound business case that projects future ROI, consider viewing outcomes of your program as follows:

**YEAR 1**

- Strive for high levels of engagement, participation, and satisfaction with the program.
- Develop a communications strategy that will help you achieve your goals. The strategy can be modified from year to year.
- Continue to enhance communications to foster greater employee engagement.

**YEAR 2**

- Set the bar higher for employee engagement, participation, and satisfaction.
- Compare direct health costs from year 1 to year 2 to see if they have improved.

**YEAR 3**

- Continue to set higher goals for employee engagement, participation, and satisfaction.
- Continue to compare direct health costs from year 1 through year 3, to see if they have improved.
- At this point, it is possible to see cost savings through decreased inpatient services and/or emergency room use.

Sample Return on Investment (ROI) Calculation

It is important to realize that ROI calculation is specific to each organization. In addition to the formula below, organizations can consider increased productivity, direct health costs, incentives offered, and reduced overall absenteeism when calculating ROI. The factors used for calculation will vary depending on the characteristics of each organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average estimated cost of a lost work day for your associates:</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of lost work days due to influenza:</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total estimated cost of lost work days due to flu (per employee):</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of associates working for your company:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of associates who get flu each year (typically 10%-20%):</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESTIMATED IMPACT OF FLU ON YOUR COMPANY</strong></td>
<td><strong>$20,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best Practices

Based on research and employers’ experiences, best practices are beginning to emerge about how to increase participation in on-site flu immunization programs.

For many organizations, reaching the Healthy People goal of 80% immunization participation is a new goal to work towards. To help, here is a list of best practices both new and experienced clinic leaders can add to their tool kit:

The Importance of Convenience

Employers have found that providing varied channels for flu immunization helps improve compliance. Sanofi Pasteur held multiple clinics at different locations throughout flu season, along with adding a mobile cart to the mix. Baystate Health had success with a flu champion model, which allowed employees to get a vaccine without much preplanning. Those companies with on-site medical clinics also try to offer vaccinations at convenient times for employees. Across the board, successful vaccination programs take into account the importance of making access to flu vaccine convenient and fit within the structure of their organizations to accommodate varying schedules and preferences.

Role of Education

A study conducted by researchers at several highly regarded institutions found that misconceptions about flu vaccines present a real barrier to compliance. In the study, companies that followed a prescribed advertising campaign that included one poster per 20 employees, three e-mail reminders, and if possible, one flyer per employee, experienced almost an 11% increase in compliance.

Value of Communication

Employers have many platforms to spread the word about the importance of receiving flu vaccines. Depending on the culture of your workplace, communication can be accomplished through print materials, online resources, face-to-face sessions, and new media, such as podcasts. Multiple departments should be involved in planning the communication approach as a way to build support for the program within the company.

Senior Management’s Role

A few key ways that senior managers can be effective advocates for the program include showing support by being vaccinated themselves, offering free immunization for all employees, holding a meeting about the importance of being immunized, and being involved in the development of the educational campaign.

Tips for your flu clinic

✓ Be aware that the CDC encourages all manufacturers and distributors to use a strategy that delivers vaccine to all providers in a comparable time frame. Partial shipments of vaccine should allow providers to begin offering immunization early in the season.

✓ Use multiple platforms to collect employee feedback throughout the year. Online and paper surveys, solicitations in employee newsletters, e-mail requests, posts on Facebook and Twitter, and staff meetings are all ways to engage employees in discussions and to encourage them to offer suggestions about the program.

✓ Similar tactics can be used to recruit more volunteers. Work with volunteers from previous years to encourage their colleagues to get involved. Another approach is to start a campaign to add volunteers to the team as early as the summer. Offer incentives such as gift cards for volunteering.

✓ Track participation each year you hold a flu clinic. This information lays the foundation for an ROI system leading to at least 80% participation.
Planning among Departments

When multiple departments, such as human resources, medical affairs, internal communications, and public affairs, work together to develop a comprehensive campaign, there is a greater likelihood that more employees will take ownership of the program and support it. The planning process often includes weekly meetings, during which goals and strategies are developed. With more people engaged in the endeavor, more employees will be knowledgeable about the program, increasing the likelihood of broad support.¹³

Identifying Wellness Champions

Employees at each site know the culture of their particular location and can help bring staff along. At Baystate Health, flu champions had the dual function of actually giving injections, which proved to be the cornerstone of the program. On-site champions also can help with logistics, such as finding a room to hold flu clinic, distributing educational materials, and helping in every way to ensure that the event goes smoothly.

Offering Incentives

The value of using incentives has been confirmed by research and experience.¹³ Incentives often take the form of points accrued that build to a decrease in the health insurance premium. They can also be part of a larger wellness initiative.

Some companies offer monetary incentives such as gift cards to employees after they receive their vaccination.

Setting the Right Tone

Sanofi Pasteur was able to provide a welcoming and family-friendly environment at its events, which included games and activities for children and treats such as ice cream.²¹ While this practice is important, some companies found that the ease of getting vaccinated “on the fly” led to even greater compliance. This is why it is so important to talk with your employees to learn what is best for your organization.

What can Wellness Champions Do for You?

Wellness champions, company employees who serve as in-house advocates for a flu program, can promote and support the program in the following ways:

1. Help spread the word about the location and times of the clinics.
2. Be involved in the logistics of the program.
3. Help find space for the clinics at their location.
4. Distribute educational materials the day(s) of the clinic.
5. Hold information sessions for staff about the program.
6. If wellness champions are also nurses, they can administer the vaccine.

Types of employees typically covered by workplace flu clinics

Immunizing persons other than just employees can help in preventing further illness at your company.

- All full-time employees: 92%
- All part-time employees: 76%
- Immediate family members of employees: 20%
- Retirees: 20%
- Contractors: 16%
Conclusion

The Partnership for Prevention recommends setting a goal of at least 80% participation in workplace flu immunization programs. Reaching this goal is crucial for the health of the workplace. During a given flu season, approximately 226,000 people are hospitalized from seasonal flu-related complications. And depending on the severity of flu season, deaths can range from a low of 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

Influenza is also expensive. It costs companies $6.2 billion in lost productivity, as well as $10.4 billion in direct medical costs.

These numbers can be greatly improved if more people are immunized against flu. At the workplace, employers have an opportunity to work with employees to increase participation in their flu programs. Best practices, supported by research and experience, provide a framework for achieving this goal. Developing a year-round education and communications component; encouraging different departments to work together through the planning and implementation process with senior management support; providing ready access to flu vaccines throughout the workday; and offering incentives for getting immunized and engaging in other healthy behaviors are all strategies that have proven to be effective.

Providing flu vaccine at the workplace protects your employees’ health, while safeguarding your bottom line. It’s a win-win for everyone.
Resources and References
Sample Handouts and Educational Materials

An online tool kit is available at www.prevent.org/flu. It includes educational and informational handouts that can be copied and distributed to your employees, as well as worksheets to use during the program planning process. The tool kit may also serve as a model for developing your own materials.

Myths and Facts about Flu
Top myths about flu and how program leaders can put them to rest
www.prevent.org/flu/toolkit1.pdf

Flu Hygiene Tips
Tips and guidelines for preventing flu in daily life
www.prevent.org/flu/toolkit2.pdf

Sample Flu Vaccination Timeline
Template calendar to guide you through the planning process

Outcomes for Determining ROI
Potential outcomes for measuring the effectiveness of your flu program

Timeline for Achieving ROI
Template to guide you through measuring ROI over a three year period
www.prevent.org/flu/toolkit5.pdf

Summary of Best Practices
Summary of best practices for flu immunization programs

Sample Flu Immunization Clinic Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Finalize budget and deadlines for program</td>
<td>✓ Confirm vaccine order</td>
<td>✓ Begin developing or reviewing the clinic and education/promotion plan for the coming flu season</td>
<td>✓ Share response data and solicit responses from relevant departments: human resources; finance; senior management</td>
<td>✓ Start planning for your next budget cycle</td>
<td>✓ Make sure clinic staffing is in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Secure relationship with top management and incorporate them directly in the program</td>
<td>✓ Finalize a contingency plan (or update existing plan) to address challenges from the past flu season</td>
<td>✓ Review response data to improve immunization delivery for the next season</td>
<td>✓ Add new best practices, as appropriate, to your planning process for the upcoming influenza season</td>
<td>✓ Send a preview/re-reminder for expectant mothers and parents on Mother’s Day for the upcoming clinic</td>
<td>✓ Start recruiting volunteers and other support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Finalize a vaccine purchasing plan</td>
<td>✓ Set dates for clinical evaluation period</td>
<td>✓ Share final company rate with employees</td>
<td>✓ Add influenza risk to health education programming</td>
<td>✓ Share response data and solicit responses from relevant departments: human resources; finance; senior management</td>
<td>✓ Start a volunteer drive that will last through the end of October to handle the early rush of employees getting the vaccine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Plan a thank-you event for committee members and volunteers to be held after flu season ends</td>
<td>✓ Wrap up this year’s flu immunization program</td>
<td>✓ Hold thank-you event</td>
<td>✓ Coordinate efforts with your human resources department, which generally does open enrollment for health and other benefits in October—there might be opportunities for joint promotion and activities</td>
<td>✓ Develop/review evaluation tools for upcoming clinics</td>
<td>✓ Finalize evaluation tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Communicate that vaccination is mandatory</td>
<td>✓ Distribute campaign results to appropriate audiences</td>
<td>✓ Review final company rate to develop goal for upcoming program</td>
<td>✓ Develop/review evaluation tools for upcoming clinics</td>
<td>✓ Announce immunization rate goal</td>
<td>✓ Announce immunization rate goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Online Tools**

Each of the following tools can help with program planning, implementation, communication and evaluation of the program’s success.

**Planning**

Flu clinic planning guide:  

Information about making the business case for flu vaccines:  
http://snipurl.com/ncqa_sohc_report

**Communicating to Employees**

Print and web materials for businesses to promote vaccinations:  
http://snipurl.com/flu_business

**Implementation**

Implementation guide with suggested handouts:  
www.fluology.com

**Evaluation**

Cost benefits analysis worksheet:  
http://snipurl.com/cdc_cost_analysis

The cost of flu in your workplace:  
http://snipurl.com/roi_calculator

Return-on-investment calculator of the impact of a worksite program:  
http://snipurl.com/worksite_roi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ✓ Order communications materials for print, online and video use  
✓ Begin previewing the clinic in employee communications vehicles | ✓ Start your media blast with employees  
✓ Complete a facility check to make sure space, medical staff and immunization scheduling are in place  
✓ Remind top officers and managers about their upcoming roles in the program  
✓ Ensure evaluation tools are in place to monitor clinic attendance and company interest | ✓ Continue the communications push  
✓ Launch the clinics  
✓ Use evaluation tools to monitor clinic attendance and company interest | ✓ Continue the communications push  
✓ Continue clinics throughout the month  
✓ Use evaluation tools to continue to monitor clinic attendance and company interest | ✓ Begin budget planning for next season’s program  
✓ Share company rate to encourage vaccination to meet goal  
✓ Remind employees about the vaccine and the continued risk of influenza during and especially after the holiday season  
✓ Continue to check data collection efforts and start communicating results | ✓ Begin planning work for next flu season’s program  
✓ Continue to work on budget/planning deadlines; finalize budget  
✓ Send reminders to encourage vaccination through holidays  
✓ Continue clinics as needed |
References


