

# Case Studies

## WITH RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS, MEDIA GENERAL INTENSIFIES FOCUS ON WELLNESS, PARTNERING WITH BENESYST TO INCENTIVIZE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Media General, an independent, publicly owned communications company based in Raleigh with interests in print, television and interactive media in the east and southeast US, employs more than 4,000 active full-time and 500 part-time employees. With an average employee age of 42, it was no surprise that health insurance claims related to chronic disease were on the rise. Media General wanted to take more effective action to encourage employees to improve their health through providing incentives for making wise lifestyle and disease-prevention choices.

### MAKING THE CASE FOR WELLNESS

Since 2006, Media General has been sponsoring wellness related initiatives to encourage greater employee awareness about health and fitness issues. However, due to the recent economic downturn significantly impacting media and advertising companies like Media General, several programs including wellness were eliminated in an overall effort to reduce costs. "It wasn't feasible to continue our original program in 2007 and 2008, but our health claims continued to rise and we knew that we needed to do something," explains Laura Bondurant, Director of Employee Benefits at Media General. "Last year we came up with the idea of offering a wellness incentive account that would operate like a FSA. We call our program MGFit." Under the MGFit program, employees are eligible to earn credits by doing certain activities (health screenings, preventative and health improvement programs, etc.). Once they've successfully completed the program, they submit documentation of their accomplishment and earn credits which convert to cash towards certain healthy-lifestyle rewards. For example, the employee can draw against those funds to pay for gym memberships or work-out attire or related gear. The program operates on a calendar year basis with each employee eligible to earn up to \$300 in credits.

While Bondurant and the Media General HR team knew that they needed a wellness program, they were also very aware that they couldn't afford a program that was ineffective, expensive to administer or that required significant time from the already stretched HR team. "HR hasn't been exempt from our company's downsizing and

### BENESYST BELIEF #10 BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that caring, trust-based relationships lead to loyalty. That's why invest in the people, processes and systems that drive long-term client relationships.

### MEDIA GENERAL

[www.mediageneral.com](http://www.mediageneral.com)

### INDUSTRY

Media & Advertising

### CHALLENGES

Health claims were rapidly rising and management wanted to effectively incentivize healthy lifestyle and self-care choices.

Administering a wellness program couldn't require more head count or increase the work load for HR.

Needed flexibility to change wellness activities and continually evolve the employee reward options

### BUSINESS IMPACT

Thanks to Benesyst, the MGFit program is up and running very successfully. In just over six months, 1,800 claims have been submitted and processed and nearly \$118,000 in wellness credits have been earned by employees.

cost controls during the contraction, but we truly believe that healthier employees are better employees. We also wanted to find a way to make this happen because, in the long term, the program could impact our overall health costs and reduce workers compensation and disability claims.”

### **BUILDING ON AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP**

When it came time to design the administration of the program, Media General turned to Benesyst, a benefits administration technology leader, for assistance. For several years Media General had relied on Benesyst for FSA (health and dependent care), COBRA Administration, and retiree benefit administration services. “It just made sense to ask Benesyst for help even though they didn’t have a fully-defined wellness platform in place.” comments Bondurant. “For all our other needs, the Benesyst technology has been very flexible. Because this is a new program, we know that we are going to need to adapt, as we find out what works best to incent the right wellness behaviors. We feel certain that the technology and the Benesyst team could help near term and as we move forward.” Beginning in late 2009, Benesyst and Media General worked together to utilize wellness programs from CIGNA, the University of Michigan and other resources incorporating new wellness incentives and rewards into a flexible platform to support effective change.

“We were very much a partner and highly involved in the development,” says Bondurant. “We tested the system and collaboratively worked to enhance the automated workflow. The Benesyst team was great. They had to change several aspects of their existing technology. But they did it, and they did it quickly. I’d say it’s a huge success.” And Benesyst has since expanded the rewards system to an enterprise-level platform that can effectively provide a wide range of employer wellness incentivization needs. The system has the ability to involve a differing mix of carriers, wellness resources and the employee in an evolving effort to improve health.

### **ABOUT BENESYST**

Benesyst is an established, high technology, high performance benefit administration outsourcer. Benesyst is the creator of BeneSmart®, an industry-leading web-based (SaaS) benefit enrollment & eligibility management platform that automates key benefits management processes while equipping organizations with advanced tools to enable strategic oversight, improve bottom line results, and elevate employee engagement. Benesyst is also a best-in-class FSA, Wellness and COBRA/Retiree Continuation administrator, offering high performance and innovative solutions for these traditionally outsourced services. Our carefully selected and experienced staff combined with continual investments in communication, processing and interactive technologies provides employers with benefit outsourcing services that receive industry-leading HR and participant satisfaction ratings. By partnering with Benesyst, you are ensuring your organization’s success. Our client retention rate exceeds +97%; just one indication of the regard in which employers and the consulting community hold our services. For more information email [sales@benesyst.net](mailto:sales@benesyst.net) or phone 866.786.3366. Or visit our website at [www.benesyst.net](http://www.benesyst.net).

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**“Because of Benesyst, our HR team can do more with fewer people. And we have more time to think creatively and build new strategic programs, like wellness, which our employees really value and ultimately will impact our bottom line.”**

– Laura Bondurant, Director of Employee Benefits

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### **QUICK RESULTS**

MGFit was launched in April 2010 using the model co-developed by Benesyst and the Media General team. “The new program is working beautifully. Our employees have already earned \$118,000 in wellness credits and we have processed close to 1,800 rewards in just a little over six months” according to Bondurant. But most importantly employees are excited about the program and glad to be participating. “The last few years have been hard on media companies. Employees have been under a lot of stress due to furloughs, layoffs and cost cutting. It’s really nice to be able to offer them such a positive program to our employees. They see it as a huge plus and it really seems to have lifted spirits.” When asked about her experience and the decision to choose Benesyst to pioneer a brand new Wellness platform, Bondurant explains, “It’s been our experience that the Benesyst team will think “out of the box” and do what needs to be done to accomplish a task. Our vendor/client relationship has evolved over time. When we asked, Benesyst once again offered us the right mix of technology, service and cost that made them the obvious choice. It was a team effort and it just worked out great. We are very happy.”