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Workplace Wellness Programs Fare Well During Economic Downturn, Reveals Buck Consultants Survey

NEW YORK: March 17, 2009 – Many employers are increasing their employee wellness communications and most expect wellness budget cuts will be no greater than other cutbacks, because these programs help employees cope with issues brought about by the economic downturn. These are among the survey findings released today by [Buck Consultants](#), an ACS company and one of the world’s leading human resource and benefits consulting firms.

“Despite pressure to reduce costs in many other areas of operations, 45 percent of respondents report increasing their wellness communications to highlight available services that can assist employees with issues brought on by the economic downturn,” said Ruth Hunt, a principal in Buck’s Communication practice who co-directed the survey. Areas of support include Employee Assistance Plan counseling for stress or depression, and the need for financial planning resources.

Buck conducted its interactive audience survey with employer delegates attending the 4th Annual Employer Health & Human Capital Congress, held in February 2009.

“Our findings suggest that wellness has ‘come of age’ as a vital benefit offering, especially during financially difficult times,” said Barry Hall, Buck principal and global wellness leader who also directed the survey. “Since the onset of the financial crisis, workers’ use of wellness services has increased for 53 percent of respondents, and only five percent have seen a decrease.”

In terms of wellness budgets, 19 percent are likely to increase spending on wellness. Another 59 percent have experienced no budget changes, but many are nervous about the possible need to make cuts in the future. However, among those expecting cuts, 78 percent expect them to be no larger than other corporate cutbacks.

“This study confirms our experience in consulting with clients that wellness programs have not been an early target for budget cuts,” said Hall.

In preparation for the 4th Annual Employer Health & Human Capital Congress, Buck conducted a separate survey of employer delegates to examine the “culture of health” in today’s workplace. The study defined culture of health as an environment that promotes healthy lifestyle choices.

Findings include:

- Only one-third of respondents have a culture of health today, but 87 percent intend to pursue this philosophy for the future.
- The top priority for enhancing wellness programs is measuring outcomes (56 percent) – in terms of cost effectiveness, employee behavior, and health status.
- The biggest barrier to achieving a culture of health is leadership commitment (47 percent).

In addition to the studies above, Buck Consultants conducts an annual survey of wellness programs titled “WORKING WELL: A Global Survey of Health Promotion and Workplace Wellness Strategies.” It is available to the media by contacting Ed Gadowski at 201-902-2825. It is available to other interested parties for \$150 from Buck’s Global Survey Resources, 500 Plaza Drive, Secaucus, NJ, 07096-1533. Telephone 1-800-887-0509. It also can be ordered online at www.bucksurveys.com.

Buck Consultants, an ACS company, is a leader in human resource and benefits consulting with more than 1,500 professionals worldwide. Founded in 1916 to advise clients in establishing and funding some of the nation’s first public and private retirement programs, Buck is an innovator in the areas of retirement benefits, health and wellness programs, human capital management, compensation, and employee communication. News and other information about Buck Consultants are available at www.buckconsultants.com. Buck is an independent subsidiary of [Affiliated Computer Services, Inc.](http://www.affiliatedcomputer.com)

ACS, a global FORTUNE 500 company with approximately 70,000 people supporting client operations reaching more than 100 countries, provides business process outsourcing and information technology solutions to world-class commercial and government clients. The company's Class A common stock trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "ACS." Learn more about ACS at <http://www.acs-inc.com>.

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