

# How healthy is your bottom line?

**T**he link between health and economic health is well established. Yet each year we spend more and more on health care and seem to get less and less healthy.

It's time we get serious about the fact the majority of our direct and indirect costs are a result of the chronic disease associated with lifestyle choices involving insufficient physical activity and poor nutrition.

As West Virginians, these trends are even more alarming because we live in a state that appears on the top of too many bad lists and the bottom of too many good ones.

As an owner of a business that helps people "get physical" and recover from illness or injury, I often am asked what can be done to reverse these trends. First, I can tell you that every dollar spent on prevention returns between three to five times the investment in savings for medical treatment, as well as lost productivity from absenteeism.

This bottom-line impact appeals to me. I don't have all the solutions, but my business provides me with an insider's view about what works (and what doesn't) with clients and employees.

I'd like to offer the first two of my 12 Steps to Healthy Business Bottom Line. I'm wondering what impact it will have on you, your employees and your business when you integrate these recommendations into your priorities for 2008.

## HEALTHY BOTTOM LINE



**Mick Bates**

### Start with Yourself

It's been said you can't fix a problem with the same thinking that created it. So it's time for new thinking. For every business owner or executive, that starts with a look in the mirror. The results you've gotten reflect what you've been doing.

You can preach health (or anything else) all you want. But if you don't practice what you preach, your words will engender only words; your inaction and will be met with inaction. You can only lead others to a healthier way of life when you lead by example.

Despite the many demands on your time, when your employees see you investing in your own health, you become believable and inspiring. If you are serving fruit rather than donuts at the morning breakfast meeting, exercising, taking healthy breaks, then and only then, will you have moral ground to stand upon when you encourage others to do their part ... to take responsibility for themselves, their work team(s), and their families. As an employer, manager or parent, you will benefit by "preventative maintenance" of your most valuable assets — you and the people who are important to you.

### Start Small, One Step at a Time

With the start of each new year, we resolve to be healthier. Unfortunately, most good intentions fail; they fail because people try to do too much, too quickly, not recognizing that the path to better health is not a sprint but a steady walk.

So, pick one thing this month that you are going to do differently.

See **BATES, 4B**

## BATES

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Maybe it's eating one piece of fruit a day or walking 10 minutes each day. (If you feel you want to and are able to do more, then add one thing for you and your family — or one thing in your business.) Then do just those items on your list. Do nothing else.

At the end of the month, if you haven't yet achieved the first item, then stay with it. Even though it's tempting to have a new focus, avoid adding any items until you've adopted the first one as a new habit.

Each new month, add one new

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objective and keep doing the original one. This "bite-by-bite" strategy enables you to see results.

Your success inspires you to keep your resolve and, at the end of a year, you will be doing at least one healthy habit, and maybe 12, for your health, your family's health and the health of your business and community that you were not doing a year before.

Do you believe it's possible? Think what a difference that

would make to the health of our state if everyone did that!

I believe. I believe in a healthier West Virginia. I believe we can rise from the bottom of the good lists and disappear from the top of the bad ones. We can be a top 10 state in every category. It won't happen overnight, but it can happen if we all start with ourselves and then focus on our families, workplaces and communities. We have the opportunity to create a healthier future if we start today and start small.

So what will you do this month to make your bottom line healthier?

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