

Abstract

# An Evaluation of Weight Loss Challenges in the Workplace <sup>†</sup>

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**Background:** An evaluation of weight loss challenges in the workplace to measure their effectiveness is necessary in providing support to human resources as part of the Healthy Workplace Programme. Our objective was to provide information to participants based on diet quality to support weight loss in a healthy way and to evaluate the effectiveness of weight loss challenges in a workplace setting.

**Methods:** Participants were invited to take part in a weight loss challenge at their respective workplace at four separate workplaces in the Auckland CBD. Participants could choose to take part as an individual or as part of a team and had the opportunity to win prizes according to results achieved. Weight loss challenges ranged from 8 to 12 weeks and participants were weighed weekly or monthly with weekly e-mails providing support. Support provided during the challenges included weigh ins, information emailed weekly, lunch and learn sessions, and prizes. Information provided focused on sustainable balanced eating and activity patterns and managing eating behaviour. A survey monkey was completed post challenge to evaluate the effectiveness of the weight loss challenge.

**Results:** Data was collected from four workplaces from September to December 2017. Smaller workplaces achieved larger retention rates than larger workplaces. This varied from 17.6% to 98%. Average weight loss ranged from 2.3 kg to 5 kg for participants who completed the challenge (significance not analysed). Participants used differing methods to lose weight with increased activity levels being the most popular method. Supporting material was positively received and helped participants (52%) to lose weight.

**Conclusions:** Weight loss challenges in a workplace setting provide an opportunity for staff to lose weight and the potential to make changes to live a healthier lifestyle. Supporting information can be an effective tool to encourage effective weight loss and change to a healthier lifestyle in the workplace.



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