For Bober, the wellbeing and fulfillment of its 2,000 team members are top priority. This independent, family-owned resort makes an unprecedented investment in that commitment, to empower its staff with the tools and resources to enrich their lives with healthy-living practices and work-life integration.

Back in 2003, Denise Bober, today the resort’s VP of Human Resources, and colleague, Pat Cavola, Director of Team Member Development, set out to extensively research wellness initiatives to lay a new foundation of health and wellness for its employees. They wanted to elevate our workplace and do more for our organization, and introduced Corporate Athlete™ to management, not all bought into the initiatives in the beginning, she said, noting they either did not want to change or had some fears. Over time, they slowly began to believe in the program and participated. Just over a year after Bober first attended in Orlando, she encouraged the resort’s senior leadership team to attend as well. That was in 2006, and 10 years later, The Breakers sees the results after regularly implementing this program on site. Corporate Athlete™ remains a cornerstone of the organization’s wellness platform, a 2 1/2-day executive training curriculum, and has contributed to higher levels of energy, productivity and fulfillment for all who have participated in it.

Nonetheless, all managers are eligible to participate in the Corporate Athlete™ program that, as Bober explained, is like a living laboratory. “For three days we feed them (managers) on what goes into the standards of excellence of the Corporate Athlete™ program,” she said. “There is a physical component to it, and we want to make the program as experiential as possible for all team members as we just having them receive information through lectures.”

Over time, Bober and her HR team have expanded it further with other initiatives, based on what they have learned. One such outgrowth of Corporate Athlete™ that is available to all team members, is the ‘Breakthrough to Energy’ (B2E) program. Since 2008, more than 1,400 team members have participated. It focuses exclusively on nutrition and fitness, the two critical components for restoring and expanding an individual’s energy capacity, based on the latest research in nutritional sciences and physiology. B2E also offers practical and cost-effective strategies that team members can easily incorporate into their own routines — from exercise tactics to shopping lists to choosing meals in The Breakaway Café (the resort’s team member cafeteria, which features a tremendous array of healthy dining options). In June 2015, the American Heart Association honored The Breakers with its “Innovation Award” for this program.

A tobacco-free workplace, The Breakers’ myriad wellness programs include an EAP program (employee assistance), health and fitness campaigns, incentives and employee forums. Just a few examples: The Breakers’ Annual Health & Wellness Expo is a full-day event with vendors specializing in healthy living, financial wellness, safety, healthy cooking, community service and environmental sustainability. The Mount Everest Tower Trek stair climbing challenge, launched in 2010, encourages team members to climb all 5,000 steps of its 17-story tower and log several flights of stairs—from the basement to the building’s seventh floor—which equates to the height of Mount Everest.

To fuel motivation, the company installed special lighting, painted the walls and hung inspirational artwork on the walls of the stairwell. Approximately 575 team members have participated since this stair-climbing program began. Incentives are also offered and include discounts on health insurance, gift certificates at the resort’s retail shops or an edible arrangement sent to a participant’s home.

Within the organization’s wellness culture, Bober knows that communication to team members about company offerings is imperative. A monthly newsletter reflects the mantra of a “life well lived,” and it highlights the many wellness initiatives available to staff, such as personal training, cardio tennis, and an on-site green market from November to May, where they can buy veggies, grass-fed meats, and produce. “We also promote the availability of our health coach, with whom team members can meet with at a minimum of once per year,” noted Bober, “and we also feature ‘Create My Plate,’” an interactive meal program at The Breakaway Café run by our Health & Wellness Advisor, where they learn the 12 Nutrition Best Practices.”

Fitness trackers such as Fitbits are used and data is collected through partner Sterling Wellness. Team members are apprised of other wearable tech available to track and offer a free app on team member phones to track their progress.

Nonetheless, with all of these successful programs, Bober takes heed of the company’s philosophy of continuous enhancement, or as President Paul Leone likes to say, “On our best day, we can always be better.” In 2014, an outside wellness consultant was brought in to do an analysis of the progress of all their wellness programs. “The goal? To study the outcomes of the all related initiatives by examining how they are received by employees, how The Breakers and the employer perceives their effectiveness, and to what degree — based on the company’s potential — does a culture of wellness exist.

Focus groups of 15 supervisory employees and 45 at the line level were held along with surveys and one-on-one interviews among all focus groups; each participant had engaged in one of The Breakers’ wellness programs. The research and due diligence showed that over the past 10 years, the company has built a robust wellness program and health and lives have notably improved because of these initiatives that were created and integrated within the workplace. Bober explained that common achievements among team members were the ability to lose weight, eliminate prescription medications, and extend health and wellness knowledge into their home lives to family members.

“The consultant measured what our progress has been over the last decade, it’s the many wonderful things we were doing,” Bober explained. “And now we have the data to prove it.”

Within 10 minutes of arriving on the Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute campus in Orlando, Bober and her colleague immediately proceeded to have their blood drawn. Both professionals were intrigued by the medical component to the program.

“…how the body works, and that the ability to manage energy and achieve wellbeing involves physical, mental, emotional and spiritual components.” Tactically, it covered learning how to eat light and often and to sleep, move and breathe the right way, but so much more.

“We thought about the unprecedented experience of spending three days in the company of other managers talking about purposes in life and what would be the desired outcome of their time investment—how do they show that in Corporate America?” Bober reflected. “There was a realization that we wanted to take back to our employer the value of what to believe in and the means to achieve that purpose. We were so gratified to get the support of senior management; our president was behind it from the very beginning.”

However, when Bober and Cavola returned to The Breakers and introduced Corporate Athlete™ to management, not all bought into the initiatives in the beginning, she said, noting they either did not want to change or had some fears. Over time, they slowly began to believe in the program and participated. Just over a year after Bober first attended in Orlando, she encouraged the resort’s senior leadership team to attend as well. That was in 2006, and 10 years later, The Breakers sees the results after regularly implementing this program on site. Corporate Athlete™ remains a cornerstone of the organization’s wellness platform, a 2 1/2-day executive training curriculum, and has contributed to higher levels of energy, productivity and fulfillment for all who have participated in it.

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While there is never 100-percent engagement, Bober is extremely pleased with the results of team member participation who take advantage of all that is available — from health challenges, education posters and on-site health screenings, to discounts on spa services and flu vaccines. Team members who achieve their wellness goals and receive incentives are recognized at all team meetings and become role models in the organizations; they can also become facilitators in the breakthrough to energy programs. Because The Breakers’ employees speak 56 languages and understand the language of health, the company has built a robust wellness program and health and lives have notably improved because of these initiatives that were created and integrated within the workplace. Bober explained that common achievements among team members were the ability to lose weight, eliminate prescription medications, and extend health and wellness knowledge into their home lives to family members.

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Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute is a sponsor of the Breakers Palm Beach case study.