

# Credit union's point system gives employees healthy lifestyles — and extra paid time off

By **Karen Dybis** - July 25, 2019



If you need to motivate your employees to find a work-life balance, one of the best ways to do it has to be the one that [Cabrillo Credit Union](#) is using: Offer them another day off for participating.

You read that right: If a staffer follows the credit union's mindfulness program, they can earn additional vacation time. And earning those all-important paid hours off can come from doing activities a worker already enjoys doing, such as hiking, reading self-help books, doing puzzles or even going to the beach.

It's all part of a program Cabrillo calls the CHAMP initiative, explained Whitley Johnson, director of Culture and Training for the California-based financial institution.

CHAMP stands for the Cabrillo Health and Mindfulness Program, and since its January launch it has become a popular HR program, Johnson said.

Some background: Cabrillo Credit Union was established in 1955 to serve Border Patrol Agents in San Diego. Today, it serves as the primary financial institution for anyone employed by the U.S. Border Patrol, along with other federal agencies in the San Diego area. Cabrillo CU, with four branches in the area, is open to anyone who lives or works in San Diego County.

The CHAMP program works like this: Over a four-month timeframe, employees track their activities that relate to health, work-life balance or mindfulness. There are 16 different activities that Cabrillo suggests, Johnson said, and it is up to employees to track and turn in documentation of the activities they are doing.

If you've been gardening and send a picture in of your weeding activities or beautiful flowers, you get a point. If you take a stress test and turn in your results, you get a point. If you take three days off of work, you get a point. If you go to a wellness event at work...well, you see where Cabrillo is going here.

Cabrillo is flexible with what activities count and how employees do them, Johnson added. For example, ice skating is one activity that can earn a point. But with its location in California, employees might not get that many chances to get out on the ice. So rollerblading is an acceptable substitute, she noted.

It's a smart move to encourage workers to take care of themselves through employee benefits, research shows. The 2018 SHRM Employee Benefits survey indicated that wellness benefits can help reduce the incidence of employees developing four of the 10 most costly health conditions for U.S. employers.

At Cabrillo, every time you earn the required points, you can earn an additional eight hours of leave or vacation, Johnson said. With three opportunities throughout the year to earn these hours, employees can pick up as much as 24 extra hours to use for vacation.

"We're not going to be picky," Johnson said. "And it's not expensive to do or to track internally. We have an HR rep who gets the pictures or documentation, which is added to a master Excel spreadsheet. As we check off the boxes of what they've done, we let them know when they've earned their extra hours."

Cabrillo's HR staff also tries to make sure there are lots of work-based activities that promote work-life balance as well. For example, they hold 5K races, they have a June picnic with employees' families. They are closed on the day after Thanksgiving so people can have a long holiday weekend. And they recently auctioned off more vacation days to raise funds for a local hospital.

"We try to do an activity each month. We like to do things that make a difference and show that we value their time," Johnson said.



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