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WHOLE LIFE CHALLENGE × MyEyeDr.

CASE STUDY

MyEyeDr. used the Whole Life Challenge to demonstrate their commitment to their employees' health and wellness.

PUBLISHED DECEMBER 2018





The Challenge put people in a mindset that the company cares about their own well-being. That was a takeaway that none of us could have predicted.”

-Angela McCoy, Chief Administrative Officer

The Numbers

Market/Industry: Health Care Services

Year Founded: 2001

City/Location: Vienna, Virginia

Total Employees participating in the Whole Life Challenge: 80

Number of times played the Challenge: 2 for leadership team, 3 times for C-Suite

Dates of Challenges: Fall 2018



MyEyeDr., headquartered in Vienna, Virginia, provides eye care services at community optometry offices in the Midwest, Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast. The 3,000 employees are spread out over 422 offices across the East Coast. Many of the employees spend much of their work week on the road, away from their homes, families, and coworkers.

This widespread nature of both the company and each individual's job had always presented wellness challenges for the employees, but the company had not emphasized work-life balance until early 2017 when Bob Teixeira joined the company as its chief financial officer.

"We were assimilating and trying to gel as a senior team," said Angela McCoy, the chief administrative officer. "And Bob said, 'Hey, it feels like we are going to have some issues with work/life balance.'"

Bob had previously done the Whole Life Challenge with his wife, so he suggested the Challenge to the senior team. Angela agreed, because "when the new CFO tells you to do anything, you should probably do it," she said with a laugh.

The executives played their first Challenge together in January 2017 and loved the experience, which Angela said helped everyone come together and communicate.

"The reflections broke through some silos, which I thought was really cool. We had fun with it, and [the C-Suite] did it two or three times [that year]. It was a great way for us to find balance, keep ourselves centered, and move toward well-being," she said.



MyEyeDr. executives announced the five-year vision for the company at the 2018 leadership team summit in Orlando, Florida. **The five-year plan centers around becoming a purpose-driven organization, with employee wellness as an important part of the overall strategy and vision.**

“We asked our leaders to sign up for the Challenge even before they came to the summit,” Angela said. “Wellness is in our promise statement, so we really wanted them to start thinking differently about wellness.”

The Whole Life Challenge co-founders, Andy Petranek and Michael Stanwyck, also attended the summit, explaining the Challenge and the 7 Daily Habits to attendees.

At each break, the participants experimented with one of the habits, learning how hydration, mobilization, exercise, nutrition, and reflection can contribute to overall wellness and can happen anywhere—even at a conference away from home.

Angela said participating in the Challenge together helped the leadership team forge connections among people working in different locations.

“Everybody was challenging each other, and seeing each other in the gym, and it felt like we were in it together, rather than being spread apart,” Angela said.

The Whole Life Challenge inspired the leadership team to connect on a personal level, allowing them to discover things they had in common beyond work, leading to deeper connections within the team.

“These people hardly ever interact, they are spread across the country. They loved that they got to talk about [the Challenge] with each other in person,” she said.



Paul Armour, a regional director for MyEyeDr., participated in the Challenge and attended the leadership summit.

Paul lives in Florida and typically travels from Tuesday through Friday, covering six states. **When the executive team presented the Whole Life Challenge to him, Paul had one request: he wanted to include his wife.**

Paul and his wife are both active, but some of their discipline faded with the birth of their daughter seven years ago. They had both put on weight and wanted to make wellness more of a priority.

"I'd joined a gym about a year and a half ago and initially got some good results, but found it very difficult to kickstart discipline around food," Paul said. When Paul heard about the Whole Life Challenge, he was intrigued, but he knew he'd only have success if it was a family effort.

It was equally important for Paul to play the Challenge with his colleagues, who helped him stay on track. The district managers knew to have healthy eating choices for him when he came to town, "otherwise I'd get a bit grumpy on them," Paul said.

He said the best moment came during the leadership summit. It was two weeks into the Challenge, and a group of ten people walked into the hotel bar. "We were a big group going to a fairly empty bar and the bartender is thinking, 'Oh this is going to be great,'" Paul said.

Then everyone sat down and ordered club sodas with lime. Paul laughed at the thought of the bartender's disappointed face when he realized nobody in the group was going to order alcohol. "Having everybody around you (at the summit) who was staying disciplined was great, especially that early on," Paul said.



The competitive element combined with the accountability aspect was what made the Challenge a success, Paul said. He was able to stay motivated when he got home from the summit and had lost eighteen pounds by five weeks into the six-week Challenge. His wife shed more than ten pounds.

And because of their participation in the Challenge, Paul's seven-year-old daughter expanded her palate beyond macaroni and cheese and chicken nuggets, discovering she actually likes broccoli. Paul said the experience led to conversations with his daughter about how what she eats impacts her health, her brain, and how she feels.

The Challenge also helped Paul develop healthy habits while on the road. Recently he had an early morning flight and planned to get tea and oatmeal at Starbucks. He couldn't find a Starbucks at his concourse in Atlanta, but instead of getting an egg-and-bacon sandwich—his go-to pre-Challenge choice—he found a smoothie shop selling rolled oats.

"Before I wouldn't have made the extra effort," Paul said.

Paul plans to sign up for the next Challenge, and this time he'll broaden the family involvement—officially signing up his daughter along with himself and his wife.



In addition to improving the health and wellness of employees, the Whole Life Challenge can also help new hires feel more connected with fellow coworkers and the company as a whole.

Olivia Luke is an area manager with MyEyeDr. She joined the company in July of 2018 when her company, Ossip Optometry, was integrated into the MyEyeDr. family. Soon after starting work for MyEyeDr., Olivia signed up for the Whole Life Challenge.

She said playing the Challenge helped her get to know her colleagues before meeting them face-to-face for the first time at the leadership conference. "It helped me bond with them, seeing their reflections every day and knowing we are in this together, before I even met any of them," Olivia said.

She saw many of her teammates shared similar struggles and interests. "It was nice to put names with faces (at the conference) and actually meet people and feel connected and like I had similarities with those people," she said, "it gave me a couple of things to talk about, and I formed friendships."

The mother of two boys, ages three and five, Olivia said the Challenge helped her become more aware of being healthy. Instead of going to the movies and sitting around the house watching TV, she now makes an effort to choose active family activities like going to a park or taking a hike.



Olivia said the Challenge gave her more energy, both at work and at home. She feels well rested, and more engaged in work.

Without the structure of the Challenge, Olivia said she wouldn't have been motivated to commit to these healthy changes.

"It's great to have that the support system—both with the app and professionally. I like doing (the Challenge) with people in my workplace, knowing I can just make small changes and that still makes a difference," she said.



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IMPROVING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

The Whole Life Challenge helped MyEyeDr. address two potential wellness issues at their company: frequent travel and decentralized employees.

MyEyeDr. employees across the country formed connections with their colleagues, and the company demonstrated their commitment health and wellness, creating a healthier, happier work environment.

The Whole Life Challenge worked so well for MyEyeDr. that they are rolling out the initiative company-wide (to over 3,500 employees) for the New Year's Challenge.



Interested in Bringing the Challenge to your Company?

We'd love to help – and we'll start with a one-on-one conversation, geared toward helping you understand if the Challenge is right for you and your team. To begin, just contact Jenna Gruttadauria (our highly-responsive Director of Partnerships) by [scheduling a meeting using her online portal](#), emailing jenna@wholelifechallenge.com, or calling (323) 432-0930.

For more information...

visit business.wholelifechallenge.com and the [Getting Started](#) page.



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