



## Editor's Message

# HOW LIFE-EFFECTIVE IS YOUR PROGRAM?

No doubt, the need to establish systems to measure program effectiveness is a critical success factor of any reputable health promotion program. But, as futurist Alvin Toffler stated 20 years ago in his landmark book *The Third Wave*, there are multiple bottom lines — not just return on investment. For example, what are the societal or ecological implications of investing in a stated venture?

As a profession, do we lose sight of the other bottom lines that worksite health promotion programs have to offer? After all, a positive ROI is not a guarantee that a program will flourish, let alone survive. This has become evident by the fact that some highly recognized worksite programs have either been significantly downsized or eliminated after becoming C. Everett Koop National Health Award recipients — the Oscar of our profession.

By no means am I suggesting that we place less attention and resources on traditional program evaluation that measures economic impact and program outcome. As this issue demonstrates, there is an expanding body of knowledge that worksite health promotion works, and we, as a profession, need to promote these findings to corporate decision makers whenever we have the opportunity. However, let's not ignore the fact that we are in the people business, and there are other ways we need to measure benefit.

First, whenever a decision maker asks you, "How cost-effective is your program?" I suggest you counter with the question, "How life-effective do you wish this program to be?"

Next, I suggest we develop an additional index for outcome research —

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the personal return on investment. The PROI is the bottom line of behavioral research and, in fact, parallels the research findings of James Prochaska and his stages of change model. In a nutshell, PROI is the qualitative measure of a person's commitment to change and his or her assessment that the change was worth the effort (expense) on his or her own terms.

The fact is, as professionals, we are collecting PROI data almost every day. They come in the form of testimonials and unsolicited memos from appreciative participants. They come in the form of spontaneous thank-yous to the CEO or other senior officers during company events. They come in the form of participant surveys. Yet, why haven't we been able to better quantify these soft measures to create those other bottom lines? I am open to your suggestions.

On that note, our annual evaluation issue promises to be the best yet. Once again, we are grateful to Dee

Edington and his associates from the University of Michigan's Health Management Research Center in putting together this edition of "Ten Research Studies You Can't Afford to Ignore," on Page 23. Also in this issue, Ron Goetzel, Timothy Juday and Ronald Ozminowski provide an excellent summary on ROI research (see Page 12), while Michael O'Donnell, editor of the *American Journal of Health Promotion* shares his views on the state of health promotion (see Page 6).

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P.S. The Association of Worksite Health Promotion will celebrate its 25-year anniversary at its 1999 International Conference, Sept. 16–18, in Nashville, Tenn. This gathering promises to be a memorable event. Don't miss it!

## Do the Write Thing

If you have an article idea — a Case Study, Idea That Works or Program Profile — or would just like to express your opinion, *AWHP's Worksite Health* wants to hear from you. Just fax your idea to 847/480-9282 or e-mail us at [worksitehealth@awhp.org](mailto:worksitehealth@awhp.org).