



The Wellness Councils of America Presents...
A WELCOA Expert Interview

Platinum Plated

Lincoln Plating Demonstrates \$800,000 Return On \$80,000 Investment



Marc LeBaron
Chairman and CEO, Lincoln Plating Company

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WELCOA President David Hunnicutt, PhD sat down to talk with Lincoln Plating Chairman and CEO Marc LeBaron about their worksite wellness program, a 2003 recipient of WELCOA's Platinum Well Workplace Award. In this interview, they talk about the importance of worksite wellness to Lincoln Plating, how it's positioned them as a leader in the metal finishing industry and how broad-based senior level support continually drives their program and the organization ever forward.

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ABOUT THE WELLNESS COUNCILS OF AMERICA

The Wellness Councils of America is one of North America's most trusted voices on the topic of worksite wellness. With over a decade of experience, WELCOA is widely recognized and highly regarded for its innovative approach to worksite wellness.

Indeed, through their internationally recognized "Well Workplace" awards initiative, WELCOA has helped hundreds of companies transform their corporate cultures and improve the health and well-being of their most valuable asset—their employees.

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Topics Covered

- Q1:** How important is the idea of healthy and productive employees to Lincoln Plating?
- Q2:** As CEO of Lincoln Plating, what are you hoping to gain from the health and productivity programs at Lincoln Plating?
- Q3:** How has wellness at Lincoln Plating impacted the organizational culture?
- Q4:** Tell us about the leadership program at Lincoln Plating and what you're hoping to accomplish with it.
- Q5:** There are many companies throughout the nation struggling with rising healthcare costs. What are your views on today's rising healthcare costs?
- Q6:** Are you optimistic you'll be able to manage healthcare costs over the next 15 years?
- Q7:** As a wellness advocate for Lincoln Plating, what does your health routine look like during the course of a week?
- Q8:** As a busy CEO who travels often, is maintaining healthy nutrition a difficult task?
- Q9:** What advice can you offer to health promotion practitioners struggling to win senior level support for their health promotion programs?
- Q10:** What other advice do you have for health promotion practitioners along the lines of creating a results-oriented health promotion program?

SIDEBAR:

Genesis of a Platinum Program.

In 1987, Lincoln Plating's wellness program was comprised of a first-aid station for safety and a scale for weight management. Find out how their program has grown and developed from its humble beginnings to the Platinum Well Workplace it is today.



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Marc E. LeBaron
Chairman and CEO,
Lincoln Plating

Marc E. LeBaron is the Chairman and CEO of Lincoln Plating Company located in Lincoln Nebraska.



Lincoln Plating one of the nation's largest and most diverse metal finishing companies, providing services to companies such as Harley-Davidson Motorcycles.

Marc has been with Lincoln Plating since 1976, serving previously as Vice President and later President before his current services as Chairman and CEO. Marc has also held leadership positions in many industry organizations including the National Association of Metal Finishers, the Surface Finishing Industry Council, and the American Electroplaters' Society.

Marc can be contacted through Lincoln Plating's website at www.lincolnplating.com.

Q1: How important is the idea of healthy and productive people to Lincoln Plating?

LEBARON: It's extremely important. For us, the notion of healthy and productive people goes back to the genesis of our wellness program 15 years ago. At Lincoln Plating we believed, and still do, that healthy people are more productive. Healthier people are happy not only in their work lives but also in their personal lives. People do a better job when they feel good about themselves, and we know wellness plays an extremely important role in this process.

Q2: As CEO of Lincoln Plating, what are you hoping to gain from the health and productivity programs at Lincoln Plating?

LEBARON: First, we believe wellness will make and has made our people much more productive. So, improved productiv-

ity is something we certainly hope to accomplish. Beyond productivity, we want our people to be happy and energetic. We know our wellness program is a key element in making this happen. When I walk around on our plant floor, we talk about enthusiasm, about being excited and about the energy people bring to their jobs—wellness plays a significant part in building this energy and enthusiasm. Wellness at Lincoln Plating is about paying attention to more than the number of widgets our people produce during the day. Wellness is about how someone feels about themselves and their job, and how this translates to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Q3: How has wellness at Lincoln Plating impacted the organizational culture?

LEBARON: It's interesting how many of the new people we hire today already knew about our wellness program when interviewing with us. I believe our wellness program is one of the reasons Lincoln Plating attracts the best people in the area. We bring in new hires and they know about our wellness program. They've read



"THE ASSAULT ON THE MOUNTAIN, AS WE CALL IT, IS DESIGNED TO SIGNIFY OUR LEADERSHIP'S COMMITMENT TO, NOT ONLY THE ORGANIZATION, BUT ALSO TO WELLNESS."

David Hunnicutt, PhD
President,
Wellness Councils of America

David Hunnicutt, PhD, was named President of WELCOA in 1995. Under Dr. Hunnicutt's guidance, WELCOA routinely distributes millions of publications each year to its corporate membership of over 2,500 companies, and over 700 Well Workplaces. These publications are designed to increase quality of life, enhance employee productivity and improve personal health, and well-being.



Known for his pragmatic approach and strong background in organizational development and corporate leadership, Dr. Hunnicutt is widely recognized as a national wellness advocate. By dedicating his professional energies to advancing the cause of corporate wellness, Dr. Hunnicutt consults with hundreds of organizations each year including Merrill Lynch, Caterpillar, and the United Nations to help them link health promotion objectives to business outcomes.

about it in the papers or they've heard about it from other people. Our wellness program has become a part of our culture. People want to be a part of it; they want to be involved. We also see this at every level of the organization—from new hires and entry-level positions to those people coming in to leadership, engineering or technical positions.

For those who've been with us since we started our wellness program 15 years ago, there was some skepticism early on. People weren't sure where we were trying to go with a wellness program. But a number of those early skeptics are now leading the charge for our wellness program. In fact, a man who's been with Lincoln Plating for more than 40 years is one of our biggest wellness champions. This champion speaks about the concept of wellness and how a commitment to it relates to each person's commitment to his or her job and to Lincoln Plating in general.

Q4: Lincoln Plating sponsors an innovative and aggressive leadership program for its people, especially those in leadership positions. Tell us about this program and what you're hoping to accomplish with it.

LEBARON: We have a 12-month program focused on learning about the elements of leadership including commitment and leading by example. One of the key elements at the end of the program is an assault on Pike's Peak, a 14,000-foot mountain in the Colorado Rockies. The Assault on the Mountain, as we call it, is designed to signify our leadership's commitment to not only the organization but also to wellness. At the beginning of the program, we conduct a complete physical profile of the group to establish a baseline. We do a follow-up profile just before the hike. The improvements we've seen are phenomenal.

We've sponsored two Assaults on Colorado mountains. The first assault was part of an early program that paved the way for our current leadership program. Our first program involved only six of Lincoln Plating's leadership team. Because of the excitement and enthusiasm generated by



The group from Lincoln Plating after completing the Assault on Pikes Peak, the culmination of their leadership training program.



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our first leadership program, we expanded it to include a yearlong curriculum culminating in the Assault on the Mountain. Our second assault included 26 people, so the program has really taken off.

It’s been fascinating to see how the program has affected each participant’s view of his or her job and leadership, as well as how each has integrated wellness with their positions as leaders and individuals at Lincoln Plating. One of the things we’ve attempted to do is incorporate wellness with all of our strategic initiatives. Wellness isn’t a stand-alone program or department here. It’s integrated into everything we do.

Q5: Marc, there are many companies throughout the nation struggling with rising healthcare costs. What are your views on today’s rising healthcare costs?

LEBARON: Serving as the chair of a large healthcare system board of directors, I’ve become intimately familiar with healthcare and healthcare costs. From what I’ve seen, healthcare costs will continue to rise. The only way we will stop this trend is to get to the source of the costs—unhealthy behaviors and lifestyles. There are certainly some things we can do in terms of pool-

ing or buying or working through preferred provider organizations and the like, but those strategies simply pick around the fringe. At the end of the day, if businesses want to get at the core of healthcare costs, they will need to focus on the health of their people and minimize the need for healthcare utilization.

Q6: Over the course of the last 15 years, Lincoln Plating has done an excellent job managing healthcare costs through worksite health promotion. Are you optimistic you’ll be able to continue this trend over the next 15 years?

LEBARON: I am optimistic—in fact, confident is probably a better word—that we’ll continue to do better than our peer groups and similar companies with comparable populations. We have a well-defined, proven track record that shows we’re ahead of our peers when it comes to health promotion programming, as well as the results we experience because of our programming. We are convinced our wellness activities and our overall health promotion program will continue to deliver the ROI we’ve experienced over the years. Costs are certainly going to rise. We’re not so naïve to think we’ll see healthcare costs trend downwards, but I’m fully confident Lincoln Plating will experience a much less dramatic rise in healthcare costs than many companies similar to us. We’re seeing it today, and we’ll continue to see it in the future.

Q7: As a wellness advocate for Lincoln Plating, what does your health routine look like during the course of a week?

LEBARON: I usually do strength training three mornings a week. In fact, my wife and I both get up and work out three mornings a week. She’s really gotten into



the routine with me. Up until about 15 years ago, she didn't have a regimented exercise program. She can now tell a huge difference in how she feels. In a way, being part of a family and being involved has made a big difference in our health.

Anyway, three mornings a week we're in the gym by 5:30, and we work out for about 70 minutes focusing mainly on strength. Three or four times a week we'll also work on aerobic activity, normally jogging. Sometimes, depending on the weather, we'll get out and do some biking.

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In terms of strength training, I'm not trying to bulk up or look like Hulk Hogan. My goal is simply to maintain good muscle tone and bone structure, as well as my strength. Additionally, it's been proven that keeping a relatively high percent of muscle helps a person burn more fat, so strength training has been helpful in terms of preventing weight gain.

People often ask me about how hard it is to get up in the morning and work out. Like anything, it's just become a habit. Sure, there are times when we stay up late or when I'm traveling that make getting up in the morning more difficult. But it's something everyone should do, and the payoffs are tremendous. Moreover, most mornings I'd be up at 5:30 anyway, so I might as well make the most of it by working out.

Q8: As a busy CEO who travels often, is maintaining healthy nutrition a difficult task?

LEBARON: Not really. I think nutrition is important, but I believe in following a diet and exercise program that's easy to maintain. There are too many people who diet or radically change their eating habits for six months, see dramatic results, but can't maintain them because they're doing things they hate. In our family, we focus on moderation. I think that's the key. We try to eat well, avoiding fatty, unhealthy foods. Occasionally we'll splurge and have something fun, but for the most part we focus on steady, healthy eating habits. We're not extreme in terms of all out avoiding certain types of foods, and this approach is easy to maintain. We don't feel like we're totally going without certain fun foods, but we're also cautious about what we eat.

Q9: Marc, as you well know, senior level support for work-site health promotion programs is critical. You also know it's something many health promotion practitioners struggle to secure. What advice can you offer to health promotion practitioners struggling to win senior level support for their health promotion programs?

LEBARON: My advice is to focus on the big picture of wellness when selling the concept. By this I mean different senior level personnel are motivated by or focused on different aspects of wellness programs. For some CEOs, it's the financial aspect of health promotion programming that's interesting to them. For others, however, it may be productivity opportunities, or even cultural opportunities.

When presenting and selling wellness to senior leadership, it's important for health



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promotion practitioners to present all of the benefits of health promotion programming—the ROI evidence, the culture change and productivity evidence. Any one of these benefits individually is certainly attractive, but their sum total represents a tremendous benefit that's likely to interest senior management immensely. Thus, it's important to present wellness across its entire spectrum.

Over the years I've made several presentations to groups of CEOs and other senior management about our program, the things we do and the results we've experienced. Invariably, I get questions about the financial impact of health promotion, and many say how much they'd like to see the same ROI in their worksites. Others approach me about the cultural aspects and how it's influenced internal satisfaction at Lincoln Plating. Everybody focuses on something different, so it's important for health promotion practitioners, when selling the idea of health promotion to senior management, to present wellness in its' broadest context. Once the broad context is presented, health promotion practitioners will discover what's really motivating their senior people, and can then use this information to focus on the specific selling points in moving forward.

Q10: What other advice do you have for health promotion practitioners along the lines of creating a results-oriented health promotion program?

LEBARON: There are three things I think are very important. The first is regarding senior level support. For worksite health promotion programs to be effective and demonstrate results, CEOs must be involved, and they must believe their people can make a difference. It's a core belief necessary for success in health promotion. Once a CEO believes in the health promotion program, and believes in his or her people, the light comes on and it's easy to see the elements coming together to work for the organization.

Secondly, I believe CEOs need to walk the walk. People in small and large companies are often told, "Do as I say, not as I do." When it comes to wellness, a CEO doesn't have to run 10 miles a day, seven days a week. They do, however, have to embody wellness in their lifestyle, and they need to recognize people in their organization for making changes and for believing in wellness. This creates the cultural element allowing wellness to flourish throughout an entire organization.

Lastly, I think it's important—as I mentioned earlier—to look at wellness not as a separate department or function within the organization but as a part of every function of the organization. At Lincoln Plating, wellness is woven into corporate strategy at every level. It's woven so well that when we do supervisory reviews, there's an element of the review process addressing wellness. When we do reviews of senior leadership, there's an element pertaining to walking the walk and participating in wellness activities. I can't emphasize enough how important it is for organizations to not only make wellness a part of corporate strategy, but also make it fun, interesting and important. Wellness must be integrated; wellness is futile if it's a separate, stand-alone department. I truly believe this.



GENESIS OF A PLATINUM PROGRAM

How Lincoln Plating Carefully Crafted Its Platinum Well Workplace Program

Before 1987, health promotion at Lincoln Plating consisted of a first aid station for safety and a scale for weight management. Even in the mid '80s this was far more than what many companies were doing for their employees. For Lincoln Plating, however, it just wasn't enough when it came to the health and well-being of its valued employees. A conversation between the company nurse and then president Marc LeBaron, would serve as the genesis of a Platinum program that's a far cry from the early days of wellness at Lincoln Plating and most companies today. Both desired a wellness program that would provide greater health management for the organization's employees, retirees, and families, and both understood the value of health promotion to Lincoln Plating.

They set out with a health needs and interest survey, later conducted a Health Culture Audit, and began benchmarking some of the nation's leading wellness programs. With results in hand, they met with the company's newly formed Wellness Committee and senior management—giving birth to a future Platinum Well Workplace.

Off to the Races

Within a few years, Lincoln Plating won its first Silver Well Workplace award, racing towards bigger and better programming to come. In 1995, while focusing on a team-based, competition model to health promotion, Lincoln Plating re-certified its Silver award with plans on achieving a Gold Well Workplace award in short order. During the next several years, as demand for more sophisticated wellness programming became apparent, Lincoln Plating focused its efforts on employee needs and interests. Employees wanted to change behaviors and they wanted the programming to help them get it done.

By 1997, Lincoln Plating's program had grown in popularity and was achieving concrete results. They knew it was time to go for the Gold, which they received later in the year. As the program continued to grow, the need for a full-time Wellness Coordinator became pressing, and Tonya Vyhldal was hired to take the program to the next level by focusing on improved pro-



The WELCOA Platinum Well Workplace Award

gram design, implementation, tracking, evaluation and coordination with the Wellness Committee. In April 2001, Lincoln Plating re-certified its Gold Well Workplace, and set its heart on achieving Platinum status within several years.

After much hard work and dedication to building a sustainable, results-oriented health promotion program, the Wellness Councils of America certified Lincoln Plating as a Platinum Well Workplace in the spring of 2003.

Lincoln Plating Platinum Health Outcomes

- Lifestyle-related health claims represent 19% of Lincoln Plating's healthcare costs compared to 25% nationally.

Lincoln Plating Platinum Financial Outcomes

- Between 1995-2000, Lincoln Plating estimates saving between \$600,000 and \$800,000 in worker's compensation costs and \$200,000 in associated medical costs—on an \$80,000 investment.
- In 2002, Lincoln Plating's healthcare costs per employee were projected at \$5,029. By years end, the wellness program held healthcare costs per employee to \$4,593. Saving them more than \$400 per employee.
- Lincoln Plating's wellness program has reduced employee turnover from 27% to 16%.
- Between 2000-2001, Lincoln Plating's wellness program reduced worker's compensation costs by \$200,000.



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