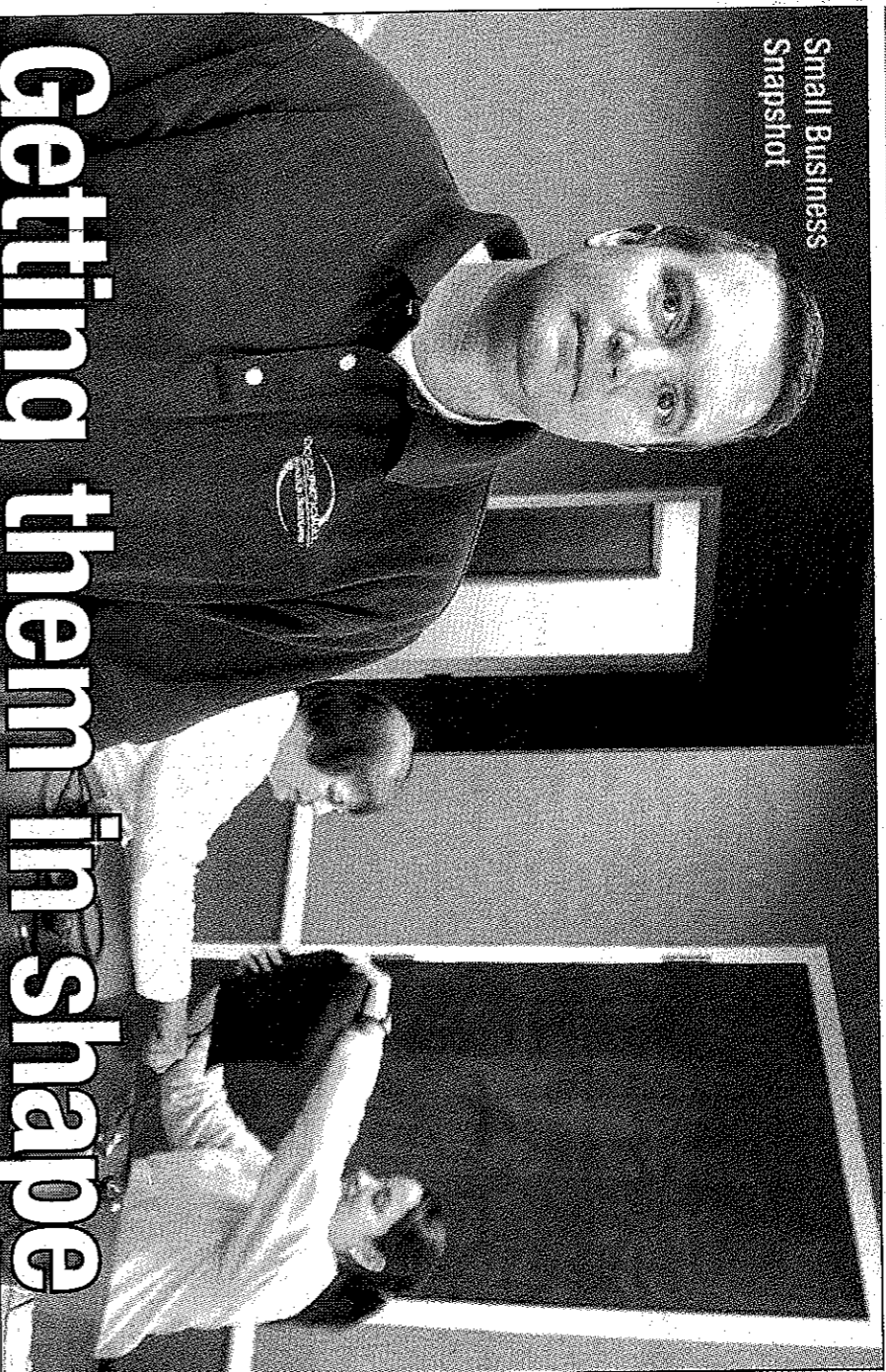


STRATEGIES

Information and tips for doing business better



RON BATH • BUSINESS FIRST

Small Business
Snapshot

Occupational Health Solutions designs incentive programs for employees to get healthier

Getting them in shape

BY ED GREEN
BUSINESS FIRST STAFF WRITER

Occupational Health Solutions LLC is a Louisville-based company that designs and implements health and wellness programs for employers.

The following questions were answered by David Berkenmeier, company president.

IN SMALL BUSINESS SNAPSHOT, Business

First questions a small-business owner or manager to gain insight into the business. To suggest a company for a Snapshot, contact managing editor Carolyn Greer at greer@bizjournals.com.

I saw that companies were looking for ways¹ to improve the health of workers.

How do you determine how a company can help its workers become healthier?

"Employees fill out a questionnaire. We come in and do an assessment with height, weight, blood pressure. We pinch them with skin-fold calipers (to determine) body fat. We do a step test for aerobic capacity. We do timed abdominal curls, and then we do a flexibility test."

What prompted you to get into this business?

"I have a degree in public health, and I came to Louisville in 1993 and did an internship in a corporate fitness center. That led to the development of Occupational Health Solutions because

What do you do with the information?

"We identify the high-risk people, and then we implement health coaches who will contact (employees) quarterly to work on goals² and objectives — whether it is weight or blood pressure issues. ... The employer gets a snapshot of what their group looks like and areas they need to address through our health coaches.

"We will implement weight-loss programs, smoke-cessation programs, whatever they need."

The programs are voluntary. How do employers convince employees to take part?

"They encourage employees to participate by offering a financial incentive. That is what gets numbers up. Most of them average between \$10 and \$20 per week credit (on health benefits premiums) for participating in the health program." Some employers require participation in the programs to receive health benefits.

Does the rising cost of health care drive your business?

"I have a double-edged problem. As a small employer, I feel the same pain that everybody else feels with the rising costs of insurance. But at the same time, it is good for business."

Contact the writer via e-mail at EGREEN@BIZJOURNALS.COM.

Occupational Health Solutions LLC

Business: Designs and implements health and wellness programs; manages corporate fitness centers

Cost: About \$100 per employee

Founded: 1993

Employees: Four full-time; 22 part-time

Top official: David

Berkenmeier, president

Clients: More than 100 in 15 states

Largest local clients:

Publisher's Printing Co., Zeon Chemicals LP, Bellarmine University, Fulfillment Concepts Inc.

Web site: www.healthyworksife.com

Photo above: David Berkenmeier, president of Occupational Health Solutions LLC, recently was on location at Fulfillment Concepts Inc. giving health assessments to employees.

The business case for implementing a prevention program

- **Prevention efforts improve health.** Studies support the relationship between modifiable risk factors and resulting injury or death, suggesting that 75 percent of illness and premature death in the United States could be avoided or mitigated through prevention efforts.
- **Prevention efforts reduce costs.** Individuals who are in low-risk categories and who practice preventive behavioral choices have fewer medical claims in all categories, including absenteeism, drug use, hypertension and body weight. There also is growing evidence that well-designed and well-implemented prevention programs can produce a positive return on investment.
- **Prevention efforts increase productivity.** Improvements in the health risk profile of a workforce have been shown to reduce health care costs and worker absenteeism.