

"STAPLES" FARM BLITZ

INNOVATION BLUEPRINT:

THE FIRST EVER FINANCIAL WELLNESS AT WORK VIDEO GAME



January 2015

Financial Wellness at Work Is Growing

More and more, employers are turning their attention to financial wellness programs, or employer-sponsored efforts that aim to increase the financial security and stability of employees. Beyond a simple extension of an employee benefit package, financial wellness programs offer significant returns for employers and employees alike. Growing evidence demonstrates that financial stress is a significant distraction at work and leads to absenteeism and reduced productivity, and employers are increasingly concerned about the effects of financial stress on their workers.¹² Similar to the already popular health wellness programs, financial wellness programs can make a large impact for a relatively small investment.³⁴

Traditional Programs Lack Engagement Strategies

It is no surprise, then, that financial wellness at work programs are gaining popularity.⁵ A recent study found that more than three-quarters of employer respondents were very or somewhat likely to introduce or expand their focus on the financial well-being of their employees in 2014.⁶ The majority of these financial wellness at work programs will aim to increase financial knowledge and education. While these improvements are a promising start, there is, as with traditional financial education, an engagement gap. For many reasons, low- and moderate-income workers often do not attend or remain engaged in traditional financial education programming.⁷

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) recently addressed this gap in a report on the potential and benefits of promoting financial wellness at work: "The mechanism for delivering financial wellness programs may be as important as the content," the report states. "Employees may be reluctant to discuss embarrassing financial information with coworkers or even with contractors hired by an employer to deliver financial education

unless it becomes more of an ingrained part of the workplace culture." In short, for financial wellness programs to be successful, they need to be consistently available, engaging, and offered through a medium with which employees feel comfortable.

"Staples" Farm Blitz: A New Model for Financial Wellness at Work



"Staples" Farm Blitz, the first ever financial wellness at work video game, offers a new model for delivering financial education in the workplace. This version of the award-winning Financial Entertainment title Farm Blitz is a mobile app and web-enabled casual video game that challenges players to manage their debt while harvesting crops on their own farm. As players purchase farm supplies on credit, they also accumulate "debt bunnies," which represent compounding interest and fees. At the end of each round, players are tasked with using their profits to

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2. American Institute of CPAs. AICPA Survey: Money Stress Taking Toll on Many Americans' Waistlines, Friendships, Sleep. 23 Apr. 2013. <http://www.aicpa.org/press/pressreleases/2013/pages/aicpa-survey-money-stress-taking-toll.aspx>
3. Soeren Mattke et al. Workplace Wellness Programs Study. 2013.

4. <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/workplacewellnessstudyfinal.pdf>. Financial Finesse. "Impact of Employee Financial Stress on Health Care Costs." 2011. <http://www.financialfinesse.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/ROI-Case-Study.pdf>
5. Aon Hewitt. "2014 Hot Topics in Retirement." 2014. [http://www.aon.com/attachments/human-capital-consulting/2014_Hot-Topics-Retirement_Report_vFinal\(1\).pdf](http://www.aon.com/attachments/human-capital-consulting/2014_Hot-Topics-Retirement_Report_vFinal(1).pdf)
6. Parrish, Leslie, and Lisa Servon. "Policy Options to Improve Financial Education: Equipping Families for Their Financial

pay off their debt (and get rid of their bunnies) and add to their savings. Additionally, Kyra, the resident farmer in the game, provides advice about the importance of emergency savings and the risk of being buried by too much debt due to unexpected health, family, or work-related expenses. Players watch their net worth grow as they play and manage their money well, building confidence and understanding as they seek to win the game.

The video game platform, as opposed to the traditional and often formulaic financial education model, offers novelty and fun for its users. It leverages the popularity and immersive quality of casual video games to increase demand and adoption for financial wellness programming. In a recent focus group conducted by a major national foundation, employees--when asked if they would rather play a video game, like "Staples" Farm Blitz, or receive traditional online financial education training--responded unanimously that they would prefer to play a video game offered by their employer.

More importantly, unlike many financial wellness programs, video games may offer the option of technological integration with existing financial services, thus bridging the often wide gap between education and real-world action. D2D's prior work with Staples in developing a customized version of Bite Club, a retirement savings-linked video game, provides a blueprint for how a game could integrate directly into an account. For example, as a player goes through a game's levels, she might be prompted to transfer money into her savings or 401k account, which she could do seamlessly, without game disruption.

"Staples" Farm Blitz offers significant advantages over traditional financial wellness at work programs, which often center on methods of financial education that have proven to be unengaging, especially for financially vulnerable workers. As employers seek to increase their financial wellness offerings, they should consider the potential impact and engagement that the Farm Blitz platform could provide. Beyond its inherent appeal, it is also cost-effective and instantly scalable, and bypasses many of the challenges to implementation and effectiveness that have thus far prevented or discouraged employers from offering financial wellness programs.

As employers continue to expand financial wellness programs to their employees, D2D looks forward to

continuing to innovate with the Financial Entertainment model and expand access to financial wellness video games to workers and workforce development programs across the country.



Acknowledgments

Financial Entertainment is made possible by our partners, funders, advisors, and volunteers who have supported the idea of making innovative games to build financial capability. The Doorways to Dreams Fund would like to recognize Staples, Inc. and the Staples Foundation for their ongoing commitment to financial capability innovation, research, and creative marketing outreach. This paper was written by Melanie Kwon Duch, with editing by Nick Maynard, Kristen Bryant, and Maggie Clark.

About Us

Doorways to Dreams (D2D) Fund is a national nonprofit that strengthens the financial opportunity and security of low-to-moderate income (LMI) consumers by discovering ideas, designing solutions, pilot testing and evaluating designs, and driving innovations to scale. To do this, D2D works with the financial services industry, government agencies, national nonprofit groups, state and local community groups, and public policy organizations. D2D's innovation process has twice impacted the federal tax code and spawned new financial products and public policies responsible for helping 750,000 Americans to save \$175 million. Visit us at www.d2dfund.org.

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7. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

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