

The Secret To Making A Healthy Change: Small Steps = Big Impact

New Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts program combines science and cash to drive healthy behaviors

BOSTON, Jan. 25, 2018 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- This New Year's Eve, nearly one in three of us resolved to make a positive change in our lives. Many of us promised to lose weight, start an exercise program, quit smoking, or do something else to improve our health. Sadly, those good intentions usually last about as long as Mom's apple pie at the holidays. Anywhere from 40% to 80% of us don't keep our New Year's resolutions, most often because we set unrealistic goals that lead to frustration, disappointment, and ultimately failure.

"When people are super motivated, they may choose to tackle difficult habits. However, when their motivation drops, they often won't continue their quest," says B.J. Fogg, PhD, of Stanford University's Behavior Design Lab and one of the world's leading authorities on behavioral psychology. "A better way forward is to take tiny steps consistently, and to feel good about progress, no matter how small." Fogg's work in the field of behavior change is the foundation for *ahealthyme Rewards*, a new program offered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross) and powered by Virgin Pulse. It brings the secrets of successful behavior change to Blue Cross members.



A personal experience grounded in science

According to Fogg, the most effective change programs will "help people do what they already want to do." Since each person's health goals are unique, *ahealthyme Rewards* helps members decide the path to health that works best for them. The Virgin Pulse platform leverages this and other principles of behavior change, says Rajiv Kumar, M.D., chief medical officer and president of the Virgin Pulse Institute. "Our solution is a deeply personalized and easy-to-use mobile and web experience where participants can choose their own goals, track their progress, take part in motivational team challenges, and receive timely nudges. As they progress through our program, we celebrate and reward them along the way, which enforces their behaviors and turns those into sustainable healthy habits."

Meeting the needs of consumers and accounts

ahealthyme Rewards is tailored to small- and medium-sized businesses that often can't afford the turnkey wellness programs offered to larger businesses due to economies of scale. Fully funded by Blue Cross, the program will benefit both Blue Cross members and customers. "We know that today's health care consumer is focused on well-being and that they want to be recognized and rewarded for healthy habits and smart choices," said Cathy Hartman, vice president of prevention and wellness at Blue Cross. "As important, we know that a healthy, active employee is more engaged, more productive, and happier at work - *ahealthyme Rewards* creates the environment and culture that drive business success for our customers."

How it works

Blue Cross customers who opt into the program have their employees enroll in *ahealthyme Rewards*. Enrollees receive a free Max Buzz activity tracker to measure their results or they can use an existing device. Synching other devices, tracking progress, joining challenges, and receiving rewards all takes place in the palm of your hand with the *ahealthyme Rewards* app powered by the Virgin Pulse platform. There is also a social feature within the platform that allows users to share their progress with colleagues and friends, which further encourages behavior change. Participants can earn up to \$400 a year for meeting the goals they set and can choose to receive their rewards as a direct deposit to their bank account, a Visa gift card, in health and wellness merchandise, or by directing the reward to an in-platform charity.

This innovative health engagement program is available to Blue Cross fully insured accounts with 100 to 249 employees beginning January 1, 2018. We will extend the offering to accounts with up to 499 employees beginning January 1, 2019.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We're the trusted health plan for more than 25,000 Massachusetts employers and are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we're rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About Virgin Pulse

Virgin Pulse, a leading provider of technology solutions that promote employee engagement and wellbeing and part of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group, helps employers create workforces that are happier, healthier and ultimately more productive. The company's modern, mobile first platform delivers a personalized user experience that utilizes gamification to engage users in building habits that inspire meaningful and measurable change across individuals and the businesses they serve. By helping employees thrive at work and in all aspects of life, Virgin Pulse is helping change lives and businesses around the world for good. More than 3,000 global organizations representing many of the Fortune 500 and Best Places to Work, have selected Virgin Pulse's solutions to engage their workforces and drive their businesses forward. To learn more, visit www.virginpulse.com.

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