

Putting Nutrition Professionals to Work: Business Trends & Opportunities: Part One

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The primary purpose of the "Putting Nutrition Professionals to Work" report is to provide guidance to Nutrition Professionals who are seeking work within their field.

Part One of this report series provides analysis of the U.S. market for health and wellness services. Part Two examines marketing tactics that can be employed to capitalize on the trends and opportunities described in these pages.

Market Outlook for Nutrition Professionals

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job market for Nutrition Professionals is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2014¹. Consistent with this finding, business analysts have noted a shift in consumer preferences toward healthier food and beverage options and some change among food manufacturers to accommodate this shift².

The shift is attributed to a variety of factors, including an aging population³, a growing concern within the general populace about health and wellness⁴, and the widely recognized increase in obesity rates among both adults⁵ and children⁶.



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A Big Business Shift is Underway

Also driving the growth in health and wellness consumption is the increasing availability of convenient "healthy-gourmet" foods that have the potential to replace some less healthy American food favorites. Whole Foods Market, for instance, has been able to capitalize on the health and wellness trend by offering its customers a wide variety of healthy alternatives to the comfort foods that have long been staples of the American diet. Some have argued that the success of Whole Foods can be attributed to the fact that it offers many prepared foods which allow consumers to improve their diets without compromising on the convenience and taste appeal that are such powerful sales drivers in the food business.

Mainstream retailers have followed suit, increasing the number of organic foods and beverages on their shelves and highlighting those products that are free of trans fats and other potentially harmful ingredients. Several analysts have noted the significant increase in sales of organic products over the last decade⁷. Indeed, even the world's biggest producers of processed foods — long regarded among the nutrition savvy as the purveyors of poor nutrition — are now creating foods that appeal more to health-conscious consumers⁸.

The increase in bottled water consumption is another indicator that Americans are becoming more concerned about the types of foods and beverages they put in their bodies. As one author noted:

"Thirty years ago, bottled water barely existed as a business in the United States. Last year, we spent more on Poland Spring, Fiji Water, Evian, Aquafina, and Dasani than we spent on iPods or movie tickets — \$15 billion. It will be \$16 billion this year."⁹

Some analysts have suggested that the increase in bottled water consumption is driven partly by the perception that healthier living has become "hip." We believe it also is driven by the desire to be thin and attractive.

Greater concern about the environment is also driving the shift toward healthier living for some Americans. Among others, Wal-Mart — the world's largest retailer — has recognized this shift in the American psyche and has increased its offering of organic products¹⁰. Thus, while organic foods and healthier alternatives to so-called "comfort foods" have traditionally been confined largely to "health food stores" and "specialty retailers," wellness is now going mainstream and is being embraced by a larger proportion of the population.

While this growth is encouraging, capitalizing on it can be challenging, especially for those who sell products and services that are not familiar to consumers, care providers, and Human Resource managers. For instance, while recent studies have documented a rise in awareness about the health risks associated with trans fat consumption, research also suggests that some consumers have only a cursory understanding of what products do and do not contain trans fat¹¹. Thus, there is still much work to be done to educate the public about nutrition.

Our research indicates that Americans are more cognizant of nutrition than they were in the past but that many still do not have the knowledge necessary to achieve their healthy aspirations. People have a hard time changing what they don't understand. For this reason and others, we believe that the market



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for holistic nutrition professionals, who emphasize fresh, natural, organic, whole foods and quality dietary supplements, will continue to grow in the future. It is also apparent that many new practitioners whose services are aimed at this market need guidance in the area of sales and marketing in order to help them maximize their efforts to acquire and retain clients.

A Consumer-Centric Perspective of Health and Wellness

The Hartman Group has been studying this shift in the American culture for many years and has offered a framework that is useful to Nutrition Professionals who seek to capitalize on the trend toward wellness. Using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, Hartman Group analysts have concluded that there are three salient consumer segments in the U.S. that, taken together, represent the "Wellness World." Understanding the nature of these segments is a useful element of a larger analysis of how to put Nutrition Professionals to work.

The Wellness World model relies on a logic of intensity: Those who have a strong and consistent commitment to wellness fall within the core segment, those who have less and/or intermittent commitment fall within the mid-level, and those who consistently have little or no commitment to health and wellness fall within the periphery segment. Thus, while core consumers are smaller in number, they are heavy users of wellness products/services and also represent the driving force fueling the wellness movement. Our work suggests that a majority of consumers who routinely use Nutrition Consultants are core wellness consumers.

An aging population, greater awareness of wellness, and frustration with the mainstream health care system are all fueling growth in the wellness movement.

Core Wellness Consumers

This segment represents about 14% of the US population and scores high on all wellness measures. Core consumers are usually very consistent in their behavior and rarely deviate from their wellness ideals. They are proactive about their health, tend to be more concerned about the environment than average consumers, and are well educated on matters of wellness. These careful, savvy consumers enjoy the experience of wellness consumption as well as the perceived health benefits. Many feel a sense of uniqueness by virtue of their affiliation with the wellness culture and have taken on wellness ideology as a kind of identity constructor. In other words, "healthy" and "wellness" represent central aspects of who they are socially and psychologically.

Some research suggests that many core wellness consumers are frustrated with conventional health care and seek alternative remedies for current or potential health and medical problems. Research clearly reveals that core consumers are closely connected with the culture of wellness and live within social networks of consumers that share their commitment to wellness values (i.e., ideological perceptions). Consumers in this segment are sometimes referred to by analysts as wellness "advocates" or "campaigners" because they are firmly committed to wellness ideals and often share their knowledge of wellness with others who are less committed and informed. They represent the ideological core of the wellness movement and arguably must be appealed to and leveraged in any effort to engage large-scale successful brand-building and wellness community-building efforts.



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While this segment is a vital part of the wellness movement, it should be emphasized that business efforts that target this segment exclusively often struggle to achieve significant growth. These consumers are small in number, already well-educated on matters of wellness, and they tend to be very selective.

Our perception is that the mid-level segment represents the greatest opportunity for Nutrition Professionals.

Mid-level Wellness Consumers

This segment represents about 62% of the US population. Mid-level consumers tend to score high on some wellness measures but low on others. The segment is sometimes referred to as the “messy middle” because consumption behavior tends to be inconsistent and, at times, contradictory.

When discussing nutrition, health, and wellness, individuals in this segment tend to emphasize the notion of “balance.” This notion is sometimes used by these consumers to justify contradictory patterns in behavior (e.g., eating a Big Mac and then going jogging to “balance” the intake of junk food). These consumers are heavily influenced by social context. In general, wellness products and services must be convenient and relatively inexpensive before these consumers will consistently use them.

Past research indicates that many people in this segment are seeking more information about health and wellness but are not fully committed to the lifestyle. Consumers in this segment tend to embrace mainstream approaches to health and wellness but may reject concepts that are unfamiliar or culturally marginal. For this reason, it is important to appeal to them using mainstream language and an approach that highlights tangible benefits to better health, such as increased energy, stamina, and ability to achieve personal and professional goals.

Periphery Wellness Consumers

This segment represents the approximately 24% of the U.S. population least interested in health and wellness. Periphery wellness consumers desire health and well-being, but their behavior is frequently at odds with this desire. Their food and beverage consumption tends to be consistent and can generally be characterized as nutritionally unhealthy. These are the folks that, for instance, frequent fast food establishments or rely on prepared and packaged foods for most of their meals. Periphery consumers could be targeted as research subjects, but they do not currently represent a viable market for most Nutrition Professionals.

However, there is some indication that, as healthier alternatives to traditional American comfort foods become less expensive and more widely available, these consumers will engage in more mid-level behaviors. Also, when these folks become ill and do not have success following the traditional medical model, they could become very interested in healthy, natural ways to restore health, which might cause them to seek out a nutrition professional and engage in a long-term education and support program.

While the Wellness World model provides an important framework for understanding the wellness market at a macro-level, it is important to realize that many consumers — especially those in the mid-level segment — do not always act consistently. Indeed, some analysts have suggested that many people



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do not fit just one "profile." Rather, their behavior varies significantly as a function of environmental and social influences¹².

The Four Primary Market Segments

From the standpoint of sales and marketing, it can be concluded that there are four primary markets for nutrition consulting and related activities: Consumers, Businesses, Schools, and Health Care/Clinical settings.

As we examine these sales opportunities, it is useful to bear in mind that regardless of the segment one is working within, most users of nutrition services will come from the core and mid-level of the Wellness World. While these consumers are at least somewhat knowledgeable about healthy eating, many need to be educated about the *Eating for Health™* approach before they can be enrolled as customers. A 45- to 60-minute introduction to the benefits of working with you that shows how you help clients make the transition to healthier dietary habits and choices is a great way to market your services to any or all of the market segments we will be discussing.

Consumers

The consumer market for nutrition consulting and related products is large but highly fragmented, meaning that most sales to consumers are relatively small and much marketing must be done to make a living by delivering services exclusively to this segment. Moreover, most people are unaccustomed to taking advice directly from nutritionists. In other words, though many Americans could benefit from working with Nutrition Professionals, their busy lifestyles and deep-seated routines makes it difficult to reach and retain these prospective clients.

Consumers are more likely to utilize the services of a Nutrition Professional if they are undergoing or have recently undergone a significant change in their lives that compels them to re-evaluate their lifestyles and eating habits. Analysts sometimes refer to such events as "triggers" because they tend to cause significant lifestyle changes and can drive a long-term commitment to better nutrition. Because these triggers often signal attitudinal and behavioral change with regard to nutrition — and a greater willingness to consume "better-for-you" foods and beverages — it is important to bear them in mind when considering how to market nutrition products and services:

- ▶ **Personal Illness:** Illness is arguably the most powerful behavioral trigger driving people to seek the assistance of a Nutrition Professional. Consumers who are experiencing serious illness have an obvious need for good nutrition and they represent a significant proportion of people who currently use the services of Nutrition Professionals. Bear in mind that registered dietitians typically work in hospitals or in mainstream clinics. The type of food they recommend is often not fresh, whole, natural, or organic. As such, it is crucial for holistic nutrition professionals distinguish that their services will optimize health by recommending the highest quality of natural food and reliable dietary supplements. New clients need to be reminded that having a personal nutrition mentor or coach will greatly enhance the management of a chronic illness or recovery from an injury or non life-threatening complaint.



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- ▶ **Energy Crisis:** Consumers often state that they lead busy lives and need products and services that give them more energy and help them get through their busy days. The need for more energy is thus another factor that can motivate one to use the services of a Nutrition Professional. Most often, such consumers have tried an energy product or beverage without ever considering their intake of refined carbohydrates, caffeine, and adulterated foods. Nutrition professionals can speak to the importance of providing real food to support a healthy and resilient endocrine system, which is the best way to ensure a stable and dependable energy level.
- ▶ **Illness of a Loved One:** The illness of a loved one, especially a primary relative, can motivate consumers to seek out the services of a Nutrition Professional. In most cases, the need for ongoing education, assessment, support, and collaboration with other health professionals is needed when such a change occurs.
- ▶ **Care of Children:** Having a baby has a significant impact on the eating habits of an expectant mother and her partner. Expectant mothers and families with young children are excellent candidates for nutrition consulting services. Indeed, they are often quite motivated to shift routine eating patterns for the better. Having a child or blended family can cause one to re-evaluate diet, environment, and lifestyle. Note that the consumption of organic baby foods – as well as clothing and diapers – is on the rise¹³. While some analysts have suggested that this shift is driven by a greater concern for the environment, the growth of the market for organic baby products is likely driven more by a concern for health and the wider availability of organic products.
- ▶ **People whose health issues cannot be resolved with allopathic medicine alone:** Many of the consumers who seek out nutrition services are dissatisfied with the medical care they have received. Often, they have been put on medications that have not corrected their primary symptoms and/or have created aggravating and, at times, debilitating side effects. A skilled Nutrition Consultant can advise clients on how to improve their diets and select appropriate dietary supplements that can enable their physicians to reduce non-essential medication. Pain management, fatigue, mood, and sleep disorders are areas in which nutrition can be very helpful in dealing with a person's underlying metabolic issues and needs by increasing nutrient uptake to support recovery and rejuvenation.
- ▶ **The "Hip" Factor:** Some research suggests that it's become more "hip" to be healthy. This suggests that Nutrition Professionals should aim their marketing efforts at people who live, work, and play in social contexts in which health and wellness are "cool" or "hip." In some cases, depending on the population segment with which one works, appealing to the desire to be part of the "in crowd" that is on the leading edge of wellness could motivate new clients to seek your services. Anyone who improves his or her health through improved nutrition, attitude, and lifestyle modifications is a potential testimonial and referral for your work. If you work with a celebrity, they can be your poster person.



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It is important to recognize these triggers when considering how to promote your health and wellness products and services. Thus, where appropriate, marketing materials should emphasize that better nutrition can help reduce illness, increase energy, and help prepare a child for a healthy, successful life. In certain circles, the relationship between health and beauty can be emphasized to illustrate the fact that optimal nutrition can help one appear hip and sexy.

Businesses

In recent years, analysts have recognized a shift toward wellness in the Human Resources (HR) departments of both small and large companies. Companies concerned about the rising costs of health care and interested in retaining high-value employees and keeping workers productive are increasingly instituting programs designed to reward their employees for engaging in healthy behavior.

Our observations suggest that demand for Nutrition Professionals within the HR community is driven by the following factors:

- ▶ **The Need for Productive Employees:** Nutrition Professionals can appeal to the need of HR managers at companies large and small to keep their workforces happy and productive. Good nutrition can increase productivity, reduce absenteeism, and, in many cases, lead to a happier, healthier workforce. Past studies have examined the *Return on Investment* (ROI) that employers can expect when investing in employee health enhancement and disease prevention. These studies show that, depending on the initiative:

"Combined health enhancement and risk management intervention strategies focused on lifestyle behavior change have been shown to yield a \$3 to \$6 ROI for each dollar invested in 2 to 5 years. These ROI numbers include only the medical cost impact of these programs, so they substantially underestimate the total ROI by excluding cost outcomes like absenteeism, disability, and lost productivity while at work¹⁴"

Thus, it is clear that health and wellness programs can have a positive and measurable impact on profits.

- ▶ **The Need to Provide Appealing "Benefits":** Many HR managers work as recruiters and spend a significant amount of their time trying to find and retain qualified employees. Benefits, especially health care benefits, are an important part of this effort. Marketing materials targeted to businesses should include a description of lectures and group programs that are interesting to typical employees and can help them and their families live a happier, healthier lifestyle.
- ▶ **The Need to Maintain and/or Improve Morale:** Providing employees with information on nutrition and healthier workplace snacks can communicate a company's concern for the welfare of employees, thereby improving the employee-employer relationship and overall morale.



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Schools

In recent years, we have observed greater recognition within the education community that nutrition and academic performance are intricately linked. The rise in childhood obesity is also fueling concern about nutrition in schools, and some research suggests that students with behavioral problems become more manageable when they are provided with a proper diet.

California schools have a mandated wellness policy that spells out the need to provide nutrition education to food servers, faculty, children, and their parents. This is an area of low-hanging fruit for Nutrition Professionals with prepared curriculum that is not too threatening to the mainstream population. The focus of such efforts would be on providing children with fresh and local fruits and vegetables for lunch and snacks. Establishing "Kidz Culinary Academies" (Bauman, 2007), wherein children prepare food at school or as part of an after-school program and bring home recipes for their families to try out, is one effective approach.

Health Care

Doctors across the board — including, medical, naturopathic, osteopathic, chiropractic, psychiatric, and dental — can and must be made aware of the immense value a nutrition educator, consultant, and/or natural chef can bring to their practices. Nutrition professions meet the needs of patients who want to learn how to better care for themselves. Doctors lack the time and training to respond to the questions many of their patients ask about foods, herbs, supplements, and lifestyle. The cost to the patient of seeing a nutrition person is typically one-quarter to one-half that of seeing the doctor.

Nutrition professionals can provide classes and groups for people with illnesses who want to become proactive in their recovery. Three steps are needed for this to occur: 1) patients demand nutrition services from their doctors and insurance providers; 2) costs of nutrition services are moderate; and 3) outcome research is provided to demonstrate the efficacy and cost savings for bringing *Eating For Health™* nutrition not only into the doctors offices, but into hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living communities.

When our medical care system truly embraces health care, we will see an immediate change for the better. If *Eating For Health™* food was served to doctors, nurses, office staff, and patients, we would see less medical burnout and illness, better morale, and less costly overhead.

Building a World Wide Wellness Community

While there are many ways to market health and wellness services, online communities and social network sites are among the fastest-growing sites on the Internet. Building community around the notion of wellness and related values is among the most effective ways to encourage people to embrace better nutrition and health. It is also a means by which to link the efforts of individual Nutrition Professionals with others who have common business interests, creating an environment in which like-minded professionals can work together to achieve common objectives and share leads and insights.

Given the fact that Bauman Nutritionists have a somewhat unique approach to nutrition and nutrition consulting, it is useful to consider working with Bauman Nutrition to develop content for your website and to link with their efforts.



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CONCLUSION

It takes daily use of good skills and practices to build and sustain a nutrition business. The most successful people are the ones who know that what they have to offer can help anyone and everyone. They are willing and able to speak up for the value of the work, not just about themselves. Such people form associations, partnerships, and referral networks with a wide variety of like-minded professionals and clients.

Our analysis indicates that building a web of businesses that links you to as many diverse, interesting, and successful people as possible is the key to building a successful nutrition business.

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