Corporate wellness programs often fail, despite good intentions. Could taking some inspiration from how elite athletes are trained help improve workers’ health and productivity?

When the Seahawks and Broncos faced off in the Super Bowl on Sunday, a handful of players on both teams had at least one thing in common: they had trained at the elite workout facilities of a company called Athletes Performance.

Fast Company named Athletes’ Performance as one of our Most Innovative Companies of 2011 for its high-tech and scientific training regimens for pro athletes, ranging from prepping college football recruits for the NFL’s annual week-long recruiting bootcamp to helping Olympians who will appear in Sochi this month reach their peak performance. The firm also works on military bases with elite troops like Navy SEALs.

Now after a recent rebranding to the name Exos, the “human performance company” is aiming more and more to apply the lessons it’s learned working with the peak specimens of our species to an entirely different world that tends to be far from its physical prime: Improving the health, wellness, and productivity of corporate workers.

Corporate wellness programs are growing in popularity as companies seek to both reduce health care costs and squeeze higher productivity from employees. But such programs can be a minefield for businesses to navigate. It’s not easy to keep employees participating and, while promises from providers in this market are high, results can be mixed.

“It’s a heavily polluted industry,” says Exos CEO Dan Burns. “A lot of programs have put out solutions that have not lived up to their promises. There’s a lot of skepticism out there.”

Exos, based in Phoenix Tempe, Arizona, aims to do it differently based on focusing on prevention and outcomes rather than disease management. Working with customers such as Intel, Google and Walgreens for the last few years, the company thinks it has evidence that its approach works. “What athletes need as a human system is not different than the general population,” Burns says.

When Exos works with athletes, the company goes through a process of evaluating each player’s needs and developing a personalized plan that includes elements of nutrition, movement, mindset, and recovery. It uses technology to help develop and track these personalized plans, such as wearable sensors in practice jerseys, and employs behavioral scientists to boost motivation and focus. For the military, which pours money into training its elite forces, Exos claims to have reduced injuries by 70%.

Its work in the corporate wellness world yields similar results. An example is a 14-week trial with Intel and researchers at Arizona State University to compare the Exos program to Intel’s existing wellness initiatives conducted in 2010.

Intel workers in the Exos program were given an initial assessment that identified their limiting factors—whether they were mental or physical—that inhibited them from achieving their goals. They then received different sets of exercises to work through, attending training sessions two to three times a week and meeting with coaches and nutritional experts. The trial showed such major fitness and health improvements that Intel now uses Exos’s programs and fitness facilities deployed at 17 of its U.S. work sites. Exos runs the fitness centers, where machines like treadmills can be easily programed to run personalized workouts based on each worker’s goals.

Of course, this sort of training costs money, and not every Fortune 500 company is spending on initiatives like this yet. But Burns think the potential is there, especially as companies try to achieve more productivity from their workers—health often plays an unseen but vital role at getting office workers to their peak performance. Burns also finds that employees will stick with the work when they also have “skin in the game,” paying a gym membership fee, for example, rather than simply responding to temporary incentives or mandates from their employer.

“Most people who participate in corporate wellness programs today are already in a fit state,” says Burns. “The [return on investment] are in the those in the middle—in targeted intervention aimed at prevention.”