



FACTS

Physical Activity Promotion in Business and Industry

Overview

Technology has changed so many jobs and in many ways made them 'easier', but often this now means sitting behind a desk or in a vehicle all day or supervising automated tasks that were once performed manually. Lean thinking¹ in business and industry is about reducing waste and doing more with less—less human effort, less equipment, less time, less space—while exceeding customer expectations.¹ Yet the result of such technology, however unintended, is employees more apt to be unhealthy, at least in part, due to sedentary lifestyles which results in more missed work.¹ In turn, short-term disability and health care costs go up while productivity goes down.

Business and industry executives can encourage active lifestyle changes for employees and their families by creating workplace policies, leveraging community resources, and using health incentives. It is just plain good business sense to encourage good health.

Benefits of Workplace Physical Activity

- Participating in appropriate physical activity through the workplace can provide the employee with both physical and mental health benefits and in turn lower the employer's health care costs and increase productivity.ⁱⁱ
- Employed adults spend approximately half of their workday waking hours at workplaces-offering physical activity programs at work could increase the amount of physical activity amongst employees.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Worksite physical activity programs offer a convenience for employees, group support and provide additional avenues of communication amongst employees.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Regular physical activity increases energy and reduces stress and also lowers the chances of osteoarthritis and heart disease/stroke.^{iv}
- Workers report that physical activity is a means by which they can reduce stress. Stress is playing an increasingly important role in workplace illness and sick days.^v

- Promoting health adds to a corporation's image of promoting social responsibility and helps to offer a competitive edge.^{vi}

Best Practices and Model Interventions

Some of America's employers, both public and private have put their belief on the value of physical activity in the workplace to work. These programs can and should become models as well as launching points for other employers working to establish their own initiatives.

- **Flex-Time Policies:** Flextime can provide more physical activity opportunities for employees Such policies allow employees to alter their work schedule starting/ending times, schedule breaks at non-traditional times, and etc. can help motivate/enable employees to participate in physical activity during the day yet still maintain their expected work hours.^{vii}
- Worksite wellness participation got a 56 percent boost at an Ohio manufacturing company when they created a virtual walk across the country program.
- A Washington, DC based nonprofit organization that fights obesity has embraced Instant Recess^{viii}, a nationwide push to establish a daily 10-minute exercise break.^{ix}
- The CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity conducted a pilot program, "StairWELL to Better Health" in Atlanta that included making physical changes to a stairwell in an office building, adding music and utilizing motivational signs to determine if such changes motivated employees to choose the stairs more often. Data did indeed suggest that such enhancements can increase stairwell use among building occupants.^x
- **Participation in Community-sponsored events:** Many organizations sponsor walks, runs, etc. for charitable causes. Employers across the country often sponsor a team or otherwise support employees' participation in such events as the Walk for Diabetes, Race for the Cure, Walk America, Relay for Life, etc.^{xi}

Policy Changes to Increase Physical Activity-A National Physical Activity Plan

The United States first National Physical Activity Plan (Plan) was launched in 2010 with a vision: One day, all Americans will be physically active and they will live, work, and play in environments that facilitate regular physical activity.^{xii} The Plan, a public-private sector effort, consists of a set of policies, programs, and initiatives directed to increasing physical activity in all segments of the American population. The Plan provides a roadmap to get America moving. It addresses the behavioral, policy, educational, medical and physical infrastructure issues that affect how and why so many Americans are not moving. It unites professionals across sectors – in business, recreation, sports, fitness, medicine and public health, transportation and urban planning, and education – in a massive effort to collaborate and solve the problem. Countless numbers of organizations are working together to change our communities in ways that will enable every American to be sufficiently physically active.

Immediate Priorities for the Business and Industry Sector

- **Identify best practices and model interventions. Establish the NPAP as a leading “go-to” resource. Evaluate effective physical activity interventions in the workplace.**
 - Establish best practice criteria for integrating regular physical activity into the workplace.
 - Build a database to identify the best practices for worksite wellness with a focus on physical activity. The database will include research and evaluation of real life physical activity programs
- **Develop a multi-communication and outreach plan designed to engage, inform and inspire leaders to promote active lifestyles in organizations, industries, and local communities.**
 - Gain public commitment from a minimum of 500 corporations will support the National Physical Activity Plan to implement physical activity policies that complement the NPAP.
 - Collaborate with businesses and industries to develop a comprehensive, integrated marketing and communications plan to facilitate businesses promoting physical activity opportunities through the workplace.
- **Develop legislation and policy agendas that promote employer sponsored physical activity. Carefully protect individual employees’ and dependents’ rights.**
 - Provide model legislation for physical activity in the workplace.
 - Create an inventory of existing legislation at the state and federal level.

- Work toward in both the legislative and regulatory arenas on policy changes that embrace physical activity in the workplace.
- Track ‘wins’ at the state and federal level and evaluate successes by September, 2015.

The National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity (NCPA) is the leading force in the country promoting physical activity and fitness initiatives. NCPA is a diverse blend of associations, health organizations, and private corporations, advocating for initiatives and policies that encourage Americans of all ages to become more physically active. NCPA is providing the leadership for implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan. For more information, visit <http://www.physicalactivityplan.org>

ⁱ Pronk, NP., Physical Activity Promotion in Business and Industry: Evidence, Context, and Recommendations for a National Plan, *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2009, 6(Suppl 2), S220–S235.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical activity and health: a report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 1996.

ⁱⁱⁱ Conn, Vicki S., Hafdahl, Adam R., Mehr, David R., Interventions to Increase Physical Activity Among Healthy Adults: Meta-analysis of Outcomes, *Am J Public Health* 2011 101: 751-758

^{iv} Health Canada. Canadian Perinatal Health Report, 2003. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2003.

^v Health Canada, The Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work.

^{vi} Karch, Robert, Health Promotion: Physical activity at the workplace in the USA, *Br J Sports Med* 2010;44:i74 doi:10.1136/bjsm.2010.078725.243

^{vii} Campbell KP, Lanza A, Dixon R, Chattopadhyay S, Molinari N, Finch RA, editors. *A Purchaser’s Guide to Clinical Preventive Services: Moving Science into Coverage*. Washington, DC: National Business Group on Health; 2006.

^{viii} http://www.tonyancey.com/IR_Book.html

^{ix} Hallett, Vicki, Office Workers Embrace Daily Instant Recess ‘Exercise Break’ Wilton Villager, Posted on 06/06/2010, <http://www.wiltonvillager.com/story/487426>

^x Kerr, N.A., Yore, M.M., Ham, S.A., & Dietz, W.H. (2004). Increasing Stair Use in a Worksite Through Environmental Changes. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 18 (4): 312–315.

^{xi} Presented by the Michigan Department of Community Health’s Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section

^{xii} U.S. National Physical Activity Plan (2010). National Physical Activity Plan. Retrieved January 5, 2011, from <http://physicalactivityplan.org/theplan.php>

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