



WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Mobilise your colleagues to get moving at work

Companies are embracing and promoting employee health and wellbeing more than ever before. Through various programmes and initiatives, companies are showing employees that they are invested in their health and wellbeing. However, having these programmes and initiatives is not enough. They are only successful if employees know what is available to them; they utilise the benefits, and the company environment supports health and wellbeing initiatives.

What is a wellbeing champion?

Within the work environment, a wellbeing champion exemplifies wellbeing, and guides and advocates good health and wellbeing within the company. A wellbeing champion encourages and motivates colleagues to be more mindful of their health and wellbeing and creates awareness about employee wellbeing programmes and initiatives.

Here are some ideas for achieving this:

Action plan for workplace activity

Keep it simple

With our busy work schedules, meetings and project deadlines, time is of the essence. Some flexibility and a range of options will allow everyone a chance to get involved in exercise programmes. If you are emailing health messages – keep things simple and to the point to ensure that people are actually reading the material.

Keep it interesting

Programmes usually kick off with much fanfare, then die off as things get boring.

The key is to motivate the team to continue. People also enjoy social interaction, so when it's a team effort, it's usually more fun. Use social media platforms to keep everyone informed of programmes and challenges and post updates of achievements.

Keep them motivated

If you make programme participation worthwhile for people, they are more likely to want to get involved. Incentives like extra leave days, a small financial incentive, onsite office massage treatment or work-at-home days can be a powerful motivation to get people involved. A points system can be used to track progress.



Ways to get active at work

Getting active at work is all about finding ways to get moving while still being productive and getting through your daily work load. Many of us spend a number of hours at our desks in front of a computer.

Ample research exists on the dangers of sitting for long periods and the increased

risk for chronic diseases – even if you exercise outside of work hours. Experts suggest moving around for at least five minutes every 30 minutes or so.

How can you motivate your colleagues to find ways to get moving during the workday?



Walk the talk

Start off by making movement a priority for yourself and let your colleagues know that you are taking your health seriously.

- Find ways to get moving. Walk to see a colleague at their desk instead of sending an e-mail or take the stairs to the next department. Make toilet breaks count. Take the stairs to the loo on the next floor. In fact, always use the stairs and avoid lifts and escalators.
- Do regular stretches and office exercises at your desk throughout the day. Experts suggest putting these daily 'exercise periods' into your office calendar programme. When



- the reminder pops up on your screen – stop and exercise.
- When you talk on the phone, stand up. Do calf raises or march on the spot.
- Build in a 10-minute exercise break into the agenda of your next meeting.
- If company policy allows, swop your chair (at least for part of the day) for an exercise ball to strengthen core muscles and improve your balance.



Get everyone involved

Encourage your colleagues to join you in your quest to get more exercise.

- Start a fitness challenge between departments. By creating some competition, with a reward or incentive, you can motivate people to take part and stick with the programme. Nobody wants to be the one to let the team down.
- If space allows (an empty office is great), ask management to consider buying a stationary bike and/or thread mill for an onsite gym or ask colleagues to lend their unused gym equipment from home.
- Encourage everyone to walk or ride and to 'clock' their kilometres and keep a visual record in the gym. For example, who in terms of the number of kilometres covered, gets to Cape Town from Joburg first (1400km) or Durban (570km) or PE to Cape Town (756km).
- Organise a lunchtime or after-work fitness class. It's easy to access and right there at work (convenient!). Even a 10 to 15-minute session is better than spending lunch at your desk or sitting in the company canteen.
- Hold standing or walking meetings to brainstorm new ideas – use the company grounds or a local park. Meetings can be real time wasters but research shows that standing meetings tend to wrap up faster.
- Make it something social. Get colleagues and their families together for a family fun walk or Parkrun. Add an incentive to raise money for a charity of the company's choice.

Healthy eating

A healthy diet and exercise go hand and in hand. Together, diet and exercise can help to reduce the risks (high blood glucose levels, overweight, high blood pressure) for non-communicable diseases, and assists in alleviating the consequences of stress and anxiety.



Questions to ask to help colleagues make better food choices at work:

1. What snacks are on offer at the vending machine? If it is loaded with junk food, speak to the relevant person about stocking it with nuts, small dried-fruit packs, raisins, muesli bars and low fat crackers.
2. What meals are served in the canteen? Check that there are healthy options on offer. Fruit, vegetables and low-fat proteins should be available. In summer consider salads and sandwiches. During winter opt for hearty soups or stews.
3. Does everyone have access to fresh water? Check that the various departments have a water cooler. Is it properly maintained? If not, speak to the relevant person to get this checked. Water and sugar-free fruit juice should also be available at the vending machine.
4. Does the company encourage people to take a lunch break? Taking a break in the middle of the work day is important to help you clear your mind and refocus on the next part of the day. Encourage your colleagues to take their lunch away from their desk, and to include some exercise into this break.

Resources:

- <http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>
- <http://www.ccohs.ca>
- <http://www.businesszone.co.uk>
- <https://www.themuse.com>
- <http://fitness.mercola.com>