Wellbeing

Don’t just sit there: 3 ways to reenergize at work

Read 6 minutes

How much of your day do you spend sitting down?

With laptops, cell phones and video conferencing, you’d think more and more of us would spend less time tied to desks. But, our sedentary lifestyle at the office persists.

In part, we’ve realized working remotely isn’t feasible for some critical tasks. It can prevent relationships from being formed, disrupt team brainstorming sessions and sometimes technology cannot be relied upon.

The Steelcase Global Report, a major study of the workplace conducted in 17 countries, found the countries with the biggest willingness to be mobile still came back to the office the majority of the time.

In China and India, more than 50 percent of employers equip employees with laptops and cell phones. However in China, only 7 percent work remotely every day and 24 percent never leave the office. Similar trends are reported in India where 25 percent never leave the office and a huge percentage of employees find a need to come to the workplace despite having mobile devices. Unfortunatly, this means too much sitting during the day for many workers.

For those of us who spend hours upon hours sitting at a desk, our physical wellbeing can suffer. The Washington Post reports the average office worker spends 10 hours a day sitting. There’s no doubt, sitting is necessary at times. Task like writing, focusing or performing heavy cognitive skills are performed better while sitting.

The problem is when we sit too much. We sit when we talk on the phone, eat lunch, sit on the train or in a car, and sit again when we get home to unwind. Experts tell the Post you should spend at least two hours per day standing at work. Four hours per day would be a better goal. By taking a stand, we will not only improve physical health, but we will also refresh mentally and emotionally.

Workplaces can encourage employees to stand, move and reenergize by providing spaces that let us change positions without disrupting workflow. Designers at Steelcase created the Navi TeamIsland to help employees add movement to their days. It does this in three important ways.

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Alternate sitting and standing

First, let us remind you, your mother was right. Everything in moderation. Whether you enjoy working sitting or standing, you shouldn't do either for the entire length of your work day. Your office can help by providing you with a variety of posture settings to promote physical wellbeing.

The Navi TeamIsland is built with a high sit and a full depth carpeted platform to rest your feet. This allows people to easily sit supporting their back and legs in a comfortable position. It also lets workers stand up seamlessly and continue working without having to change locations or find a new open space.

Team up – and move – for success

According to the Steelcase Global Report, workers are more highly engaged when they can choose from a range of spaces that best support the work they need to do. On any given day people need to focus, collaborate, rejuvenate, socialize and learn throughout their day. No single space can support these diverse needs. When workers have the ability to choose different spaces, it allows for more movement throughout their day.

The Navi TeamIsland's trapezoid design lets team leads join employees for brainstorming sessions or impromptu decision-making moments even in limited space. The ability to quickly team up and return to individual work addresses our cognitive need to do different types of tasks throughout the work day while moving throughout the office. An easily stored third workspace podium in the Navi creates an efficient way to let teams collaborate anytime the mood strikes.

Remember to Sit too

It's important to note that just as too much sitting can limit activity, static standing is also not good for you. Just as sitting too long at work is bad for you, so too is standing for too long. Switch frequently between sitting and standing; that offers positive health outcomes according to the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society. Lounging is also ok. Since work is more collaborative, lounge and casual meeting spaces are increasingly important and these spaces should be designed to support various postures. Collaborative seating should support postures such as reclining, standing-height and perching. People should have options – sometimes they will want to huddle at a table and other times they prefer to sit in a more relaxing and casual settings. They key is to provide as much choice as possible that support various postures.

Navi TeamIsland allows for workers to sit, stand and even perch all within a small space. Workers have can impromptu standing meetings at the end of the desk or a relaxed collaboration with the Return Podium.

By making small changes throughout the day, workers can improve their physical wellbeing at work. The right balance of sitting, standing and walking can help workers feel better and achieve more.

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Ken Tameling is General Manager globally for Seating, Surface Materials at Steelcase. In his global role, Ken is responsible for product development, marketing and overall profitability of seating. He is also responsible for the management of Steelcase’s surface materials offering.