



Ideas and Information for Human Resources Professionals

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WELLNESS

LET'S ALL GIVE A STANDING OVATION FOR STANDING UP

Who would have thought that being a "couch potato" could be detrimental to your health? Seriously, if you thought it was okay to sit all day, then you need to evaluate your personal health even if you exercise regularly.

Most people would be amazed at just how long they sit each day. Whether you're driving, watching TV, eating, or working, chances are you're sitting during all of these activities and probably sitting right now reading this newsletter. Most people -- especially those in generally good health -- will ask, "so what?" but it turns out that they might be surprised to discover that sitting is very bad for overall health.

An article on *Bloomberg* titled [Workers Take a Stand Against Sitting](#) references an analysis published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* where researchers looked at data in 47 separate studies and came to the conclusion that sitting for long periods of time was linked with a higher risk for heart disease, cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and even death. Even if the person exercised often, the analysis found that sitting for many hours each day was associated with poor health. The reason being is that the amount of time most people typically sit during the day outweighs the benefit they get from exercise. However, the more someone exercised tended to reduce the negative impact of sitting.

So just how long is too long to sit? Even though the studies analyzed were varied, the researchers determined that sitting for fewer than four hours a day was ideal and sitting for more than eight hours a day constituted prolonged -- and therefore bad -- sitting. In fact, a *CNN* article titled [Sitting Will Kill You, Even If You Exercise](#) noted that according to the *World Health Organization*, sitting for eight to 12 or more hours a day increased the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 90%!

Where this really comes into focus is how long most people sit at their desks while working. In a traditional nine-to-five office, that means most employees are already sitting for eight hours or coming very close to it, considering



that during lunch and rest breaks the employees are still probably sitting down.

A possible solution is the latest trend in "standing" desks. Just as their name implies, a standing desk is the same as a traditional desk except that it can vary in height so that the employee is able to stand while working. As employers are more in tune with the benefits of having healthy employees, they are looking into more options to get workers to stand up and walk around. Standing desks are usually more expensive than traditional desks, but companies should consider the health benefit to the employee and the potential it has toward ROI instead of the added expense. In the 2014 *Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Employee Benefits Survey*, which is an annual survey that gathers information on the types of benefits employers offer to their employees, it found that 20% of companies offered subsidies for standing desks -- an increase over the 13% that offered a subsidy in 2013.

This trend appears to be great news for employees who want to stand while working, but what should someone do if their company is unwilling to provide this type of desk? One option is that the employee purchase the desk for their personal use and can take it with them should they ever leave the company. Other, less expensive options include making standing a health goal and keeping track of how much you're sitting. You can then use that log to reduce sitting time little by little each week. When you're at work, try not to stay hunched over a desk too long and actually get up and walk around the office for a few minutes. At home while watching TV, rather than fast forwarding through the commercials on your DVR, get up and do some activity. Once you've achieved the ideal daily sitting time of four hours or less, you can give yourself a standing ovation.

TECHNOLOGY

THINK GLOBALLY, LEARN MOBILE-LY

Most companies have some form of employee training program, but those that are progressive are embracing the mobile or e-learning platform. The benefits of this type of learning are twofold: It can be done anywhere and at any time, and the learner doesn't have to be removed from what he or she is learning about.

Gone are the days when an employee or group of employees would have to meet in a classroom setting at a specific location on a specific day and time. Plus, the employees can usually apply in real time what they're learning rather than having to wait until they leave the classroom.

Now, employees can find help immediately regardless of their location. They can learn new tasks right where they need them and perform that task instantly. This is truly revolutionary when you consider how this was done in the past.

An article on *Human Resource Executive Online* titled [Innovations in Mobile Learning](#) chronicles the increase in mobile versions of learning. However, the author cautions that training designed and developed for a PC often can't simply be transferred to a mobile device. That's why most e-learning providers are utilizing a "mobile first" strategy where e-learning is the primary focus.



In that article, an e-learning provider said that just two years ago only 5% of their rollouts involved mobile devices, while that's jumped to 25% now and could be as high as 50% within the next two years. Adding to this, a technology consulting firm found that 89% of 200 respondents to their survey said their organizations offered some form of e-learning. Clearly, the trend for mobile learning is on the rise.

And why shouldn't it be on the rise? A major bonus to e-learning is that employees can access this training on their preferred mobile device and operating system (e.g., tablet, smartphone, Android™, Apple®, etc.). This allows them to determine what works best for their learning environment rather than having to learn a new system of delivery. Plus, the very nature of a mobile device makes the social aspect an integral part of the learning experience.

Companies can apply this aspect of social media to their e-learning so that employees can post queries to a forum and discuss what they've just learned. Allowing employees to interact with each other and share information provides insights into training that would normally not be possible.

This social aspect plays right into the real key to effective e-learning – short videos. Not only are these videos part of the e-learning experience, but a good mobile platform allows employees to upload their own videos to enhance and share the wisdom of the group.

While the traditional instructor-based learning will probably be around for a long time, it's clear that mobile learning has its place and is being adopted very quickly.

IF IT'S ON-SITE, IT'S ALRIGHT

During this period of health care reform, most employers are looking at ways to control health care costs while still maintaining a healthy workforce and providing excellent medical services to their employees. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is by having an on-site clinic or one that's nearby.

A survey conducted by the National Association of Worksite Health Centers (NAWHC) revealed that 95% of the companies surveyed said they met their goals -- at least partially -- of increasing employee satisfaction and productivity with an on-site clinic. When you consider such a high percentage was achieved, it makes having an on-site clinic a no-brainer; right? Especially when that same survey also found that more than 80% reported that access to care was improved by their clinic and increased participation in worksite health programs was increased by 75%. Even more amazing is that nearly 70% said the clinic improved their health and 64% said reduced medical costs were achieved.



How can such huge percentages be possible with such a seemingly easy solution? The answer is in the way employees use the clinic. In an article on *Employee Benefit News* titled [What's the Value of Onsite Clinics?](#), researchers at the NAWHC discovered that, rather than going to the emergency room (which can be expensive) for something that's not an emergency, employees went to their employer's on-site clinic. This was also a great time saver for employees in that they didn't have to take as much time off work for a minor, unscheduled medical issue. Furthermore, it appears that on-site clinics are a better way to get employees to use and benefit from preventive health care and management programs for certain health conditions. As such, the clinic can be a terrific central focal point for where work-related health programs are hosted.

Most on-site clinics provide basic services such as minor care, preventive screenings, and wellness programs. A few also provide behavioral health services and more than 30% can even handle primary care. According to the NAWHC, the latter service is expected to grow. Another statistic that's predicted to increase is the number of employers that have on-site or nearby clinics.

That's because these clinics are being examined by employers of all sizes. It's not just large employers who can benefit from them. In fact, the NAWHC survey found that the number of employers that manage the clinic themselves is more than 35% and they utilize nurse practitioners and physician assistants to provide medical services.

Health care reform has caused employers to take a second look at having an on-site clinic and it appears that these employers like what they're finding. Clinics can be an invaluable resource that provides great ROI in curtailing health care costs, reducing employee absenteeism, and creating heightened satisfaction among employees.

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