



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE ACTIVE OFFICE

Everything You Need to Know to
Build a Healthier Workspace

The Case for the Active Office

What do you think of when you hear the term **“sedentary lifestyle”**? Is it the stereotype of a couch potato staring into the depths of a television? We hate to break it to you, but you and the couch potato have more in common than you might think. According to **The Washington Post**, the average worker spends about ten hours sitting per day. In fact, you are probably sitting as you read this.

Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic-Arizona and creator of the treadmill desk has made it his mission to bring people’s attention to the undeniable fact that **“sitting is the new smoking”**. **“Sitting disease”** is pandemic in offices across America and is taking a serious toll on employees’ health and productivity.

So what are employers and employees to do?

We encourage you to embrace the concept of the active office. Active offices are spaces that make healthy movement an integrated part of the workday. Rewiring a company’s attitude toward health can be a challenge, but we’ve simplified it for you. In this e-guide, we’ve put together a few simple and effective steps to help you take the literal leap to a more active office.

What’s Inside: 6 Steps You Can Take Today

- 1 Get Outside and Get Moving
- 2 Make Movement a Priority
- 3 Rethink Your Seat
- 4 Build Movement Into Your Office’s Design
- 5 Make Time for a Midday Workout
- 6 Use Activity as a Reward

STEP ONE:

Get Outside and Get Moving

Remember in high school how the cool teachers would take the class outside every once in awhile? It shook the day up and got people moving. The same concept applies to the office.

Take advantage of the park across the street or the courtyard in the middle of the office complex and hold your meeting there. Nilofer Merchant's famous TED talk recommends holding walking meetings. Take it to the next level and get creativity flowing in the sunshine.

According to **Deborah Sweeney**, CEO of **MyCorporation.com**, holding meetings outside promotes a casual and informative flow of ideas, and getting bit of Vitamin D will help you recharge in order to take on the remainder of the day.

→ THE TAKEAWAY

Ditch your desk and take the next meeting outside. A change of scenery will energize your team, boost your mood, and encourage out-of-the-box thinking.

I've learned that if you want to get out of the box thinking, you need to literally get out of the box.

When you step outside, you give yourself over to nature, respecting its cycles and unpredictability. It keeps me more awake to what is happening around me by experiencing the extreme heats of summer, or the frigid power of winter. It makes me present to the world around me instead of being insulated from it."

-- Nilofer Merchant



5 Steps to Running an Effective Walking Meeting

1. Invite the right team

Walking meetings are most effective with 2-3 participants. This smaller size allows meeting-goers to exchange ideas easily while on the move. A larger crowd makes it more difficult to communicate while walking.

2. Set expectations

Be sure that when you create the meeting invitation, you let people know that you are planning a walking meeting. This will help participants prep for the meeting appropriately.

3. Put on your walking shoes (literally)

Keep a pair of sneakers under your desk and encourage your colleagues to do the same. That way, you can walk and talk without the distraction of uncomfortable shoes.

4. Meet with purpose

It's important to have a clear purpose for your walking meeting. Make sure that all participants understand the objective for the meeting in advance so they can prepare ahead of time.

5. Know your route

Have your route in mind before you start your meeting. This will enable your team to focus on the topic at hand rather than the Google Maps app.

STEP TWO:

Make Movement a Priority

Making movement a part of your workday is easier than you think. One easy way to get started is by taking the stairs instead of the elevator. This is probably the simplest and most effective way to get moving at work. According to Dr. Karen Lee, Director of Built Environment and Healthy Housing for New York City's health department, research indicates that if the average American adult climbed stairs for just two minutes a day (six to eight flights), enough

calories would be burned to prevent average annual weight gain.

Another old standard? Park far away from your office. Really. It's counterintuitive, but it's an easy way to force yourself to move a bit more than you might if you actually won the prized parking by the door.

Simple changes to your office habits add up.

 **THE TAKEAWAY**

Taking the stairs and parking far from the building are classic ideas that will pay off in the long run. Make strides with these original active office standbys.

Now interior designers [and architects] are getting interested in [active design] and in health in workplaces. ... It makes workers feel valued and a lot of this stuff doesn't really cost anything because it's where you locate things."

-- Joan Blumenfeld

Interior Design Director Perkins + Will New York



3 Easy Ways to Add Movement to Your Workday



Walk and talk

Instead of taking your phone calls from your office, use calls as an opportunity to get up and get moving. Not only will this up your steps count for the day, but it will also encourage you to give your full attention to the caller, because you will physically separate yourself from the distractions of your desk.



Water, water, and more water

The health benefits of drinking water are well documented (it prevents fatigue, aids digestions, boosts your mood, the list goes on). One unexpected benefit of staying hydrated is that it encourages you to get up and walk to the bathroom more frequently. More walks to the bathroom means move movement in your workday.



Cross-pollinate ideas

Whenever possible, try to chat with colleagues from different departments about the project you are working on. Not only will this cross-pollination give you a different perspective for your project, but it will also give you an opportunity to walk to a different part of your office.

STEP THREE:

Rethink Your Seat

To put it simply: your ergonomic office chair is not working for you.

If ergonomic office chairs “worked,” then why are so many people still plagued with neck, shoulder, back and hip pain? The reason is simple: there are plenty of “ergonomic” desk chairs, but there’s no such thing as ergonomic sitting.

No matter how many advanced ergonomic features your office chair may boast - lumbar support, upper back support, adjustable arm rests and seat tilts - the problem is that it still requires you to sit. The human skeletal frame evolved to support the body in motion; it was never designed to have the back and thighs locked into a 90 degree angle at the hips all day, as they are when we sit in an office chair.

There are many companies out there (Focal included) that are challenging the sedentary design of the traditional chair and creating active alternatives. Ditch your office chair and try a new, more active and engaging posture. Stand, lean, perch, and move. Not only will you feel better in the office, but you will work better too!

→ THE TAKEAWAY

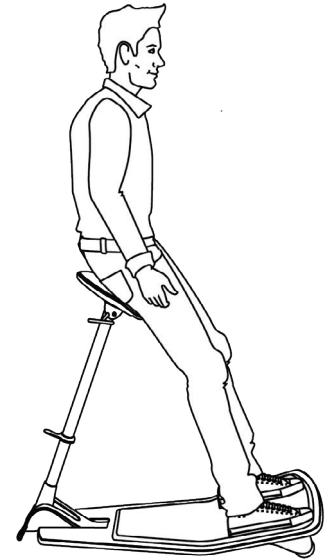
Try a more active alternative to the traditional office chair.

Meet the Locus Seat: Focal's Antidote to “Sitting Disease”

Change your chair, change your life. It’s as simple as that.

Instead of slumping into your office chair, try working in this active alternative instead.

The Locus Seat is designed to counteract the problems of sedentary office environments. The seat puts you in an active, yet completely sustainable posture halfway between sitting and standing. This “third posture” aligns your spine, engages your muscle groups, and keeps you moving all workday long.



There are solutions to chair-associated ill health that range from population-wide gym attendance, pharmacological administration, or genetic manipulation.

Alternatively, people could get up."

-- James Levine



STEP FOUR:

Build Movement Into Your Office's Design

As stated by Rick Bell, executive director of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects, "there is a direct relation between the built environment and people's lifestyles."

Even if your company is not redesigning your office space, you can embrace the principles of active design by rethinking your office layout. Try moving printers from individual desks to shared spaces or placing coffee makers in central pantries. These seemingly small design changes nudge employees to get up and get moving.

"This is not just to annoy people but to also add value," Bell says. "They can socialize with coworkers."



THE TAKEAWAY

When creating new workspaces, embrace the principles of active design, the architectural principle of creating spaces that encourage healthy lifestyle.

ACTIVE OFFICE EXEMPLARS

CLIF BAR

Healthy living is baked in (literally and metaphorically) to the company culture at Clif Bar. According to Well+Good, the protein bar company's Bay Area headquarters includes a 40-foot climbing wall that employees can scale during the workday. Beyond that, employees get 2.5 paid hours of workout time each week. They can also

work out with a personal trainer, attend a group fitness class, get a subsidized massage or acupuncture session, or get nutritional counseling—all without leaving the office.



NIKE

Fitness is at the core of Nike's business. So, it's no wonder then that the company's headquarters are creatively designed to get employees moving. Nike's world headquarters boasts facilities for basketball, racquetball, squash, track, and tennis, as well as weight rooms, a swimming pool, a

climbing wall, and a Tour de France simulation spin studio. More importantly though, there is a culture of wellness at the company. Employees are encouraged to take make use of the facilities and take exercise breaks throughout the day to boost their mental and physical energy.



STEP FIVE:

Make Time for a Midday Workout

The traditional office structure is fading away. Now more than ever, forward thinking employers are giving employees the freedom to decide when and where they work. Whether you're an employer or an employee, take advantage of this by integrating exercise into your workday routine. Making time for a midday workout not only gets you moving and boosts your mood, but also improves work performance and satisfaction.

According to Greatist, scientists have found that fitting in some fitness can increase work stamina.

In one study, a third of participants who devoted two and a half hours a week to exercise during work hours reported maintaining or increasing productivity (even though they spent less time at the office.)

Looking for that next big idea? Try going to a spin class during your lunch hour. Research indicates that moderate cardio exercise has been shown to deliver a two hour creativity boost immediately following that workout session.

➔ THE TAKEAWAY

Manage your own time efficiently and take advantage of technology and working remotely. Take a workout in the middle of the day in order to give yourself an extra energy boost!



3 SCIENCE-BACKED BENEFITS OF MIDDAY WORKOUTS

Need to convince your boss that a midday workout makes sense? Share these science-backed benefits and you will be headed to that lunchtime spin class in no time.



BOOSTS BRAIN FUNCTIONING

A study found a 5-10% improvement in cognitive function among those who exercised during the day.



ENCOURAGES YOU TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Moderate cardio exercise has been shown to deliver a two hour creativity boost immediately following that workout session.



IMPROVES JOB SATISFACTION

Research shows that employees who work out during the workday are more satisfied with their job. Happier employees = more productive employees.

STEP SIX:

Use Activity as a Reward

Set small achievable goals throughout your work day. Break down larger assignments into smaller ones. Once a task is finished, reward yourself with a five minute stroll outside. If something is taking you longer than anticipated, use a backup. Set an alarm for every 90 minutes and be sure to stretch your legs. Get your blood moving and come back to your desk refreshed and invigorated.

➔ THE TAKEAWAY

Get up from your desk in set intervals and use going on a walk as a reward as opposed to a snack or checking social media.

The Best Active Office Reward? Office Yoga

How does office yoga benefit employees? Let us count the ways...

Taking time to do a few yoga poses activates your muscles, relaxes the mind, and gives you the energy you need to take on the rest of your workday.

We partnered with the talented team at Unfold Yoga + Wellness to create a routine that counteracts the physical and mental stress of the office.

This 8-minute routine is designed to release the tension in your lower body that can arise from working behind a desk. It opens up your hips, reduces tightness in your quads and hamstrings, and inspires mental clarity and alertness. Best of all? You can do the routine right at your desk. No change of clothes or yoga mat necessary!



Conclusion

We encourage you to be creative in making a more active office. As Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos says, your company culture is your brand. Invest in your employees and they will invest in you. The steps in this e-guide may seem small and simple, but they will help put you on the path toward an active and invigorating company culture. We want to help you make your company a healthier place to work.



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RESOURCES

<http://www.zdnet.com/article/how-to-make-the-active-office-far-more-attractive/>
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2012/10/28/active-design-obesity-offices/1657075/>
<http://fitness.mercola.com/sites/fitness/archive/2013/07/12/staying-active.aspx>
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242254>
<http://www.everydayhealth.com/pictures/treadmill-desks-standing-desks-ball-seats-work/#01>
<http://lifehacker.com/the-desk-jockeys-schedule-to-healthy-living-behind-a-d-516248751>
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/alisongriswold/2012/06/12/to-work-better-just-get-up-from-your-desk/>
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<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2015/01/07/5-ways-to-move-more-at-work>
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<http://wellandgood.com/2013/10/21/7-amazing-healthy-office-perks/>