



RISE OF THE HEALTHY OFFICE

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Citing mounting evidence that sitting for extended periods of time is unhealthy, the American Medical Association is urging employers to offer workers alternatives to sitting, including standing workstations.¹

Physicians have been calling on Americans to get on their feet for decades, but the AMA made it official at their annual meeting in 2013, adopting a policy recognizing potential risks of prolonged sitting and encouraging employers, employees and others to make available alternatives to sitting all day.

But it isn't just physicians calling for a shift away from full-time sitting.

EMPLOYEE DESIRES

A majority of employees say they want the option to stand on the job.²

In fact:

- 75% of full-time employees of large companies wish they didn't spend most of their working hours sitting

- 84% prefer to sit and stand at will
- 61% dislike or even hate sitting all day

PRODUCTIVITY BENEFITS

Employees also say they'd be more productive if given the choice to sit or stand at will,² including:

- 60% of all full time workers
- 4 out of 5 employees wish that their employer would offer these workstations

HEALTH BENEFITS

There are also health benefits associated with a reduction in sitting.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of full-time employees admit they've previously sought medical treatment for aches and pains caused by their work environment.²

Healthy Office furniture offers promising benefits when it comes to reducing aches and pains associated with work. A Stanford University back pain study found that sit-stand desk users were 78% more likely to report a pain-free day than those who used regular workstations.³

A study from the Division of Health Policy & Management at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health, found that sit-stand workstation users replaced approximately 25% of their sitting time with standing, and reported an increased overall sense of well-being, decreased fatigue and reduced appetite.⁴

Employees overwhelmingly adopted the use of these workstations and they were rated as "highly popular" with 96% of participants.⁴

GOVERNMENT IMPACT

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a driving force when it comes to educating employers about the benefits of healthy office initiatives.

The CDC estimates productivity losses related to personal and family health problems cost U.S. employers more than \$225 billion every year. And the indirect costs of poor health—including absenteeism, disability and reduced work output—are even higher.⁵

In an effort to combat these costs, the CDC launched its Work@Health® Program in 2013. The mission of this employer-based training program is to improve the organizational health of participating employers and certified trainers, with an emphasis on strategies to reduce chronic disease and injury risk to employees and an eye to improving overall worker productivity.

Just one year after launch, the program provided training to more than 300 employers from 42 U.S. states, territories and the District of Columbia.⁶

Work@Health® Employer Training covers a number of foundational and core workplace health principles including:

- Why having a workplace wellness program makes good business sense
- How to assess the workplace health needs of organizations
- How to plan, implement, and create an environment that supports science-based workplace health programs, policies, and practices that provide a great return on investment
- How to know if your workplace health and wellness program is working and how to continuously improve its quality
- How to develop and leverage partnerships, community links, and resources to support workplace health

The CDC will continue to put a greater focus on workplace health initiatives in 2017, as evidenced by the commission of a nationwide workplace health survey announced in January.⁶

The CDC says Workplace Health in America is a nationally representative survey of US employers' workplace health programs and practices, and results are expected in late 2017-2018.

The main objectives⁶ for this new survey are to:

- Describe current state of US workplace health promotion in employers of different sizes, industries, and regions
- Create an infrastructure for ongoing information about national workplace health
- Provide free and accessible data for employers, researchers, and practitioners
- Identify promising practices for employer-based workplace health programs
- Advance workplace health promotion research

COMPANIES ARE LISTENING

Workplace health and wellness programs are becoming a common employee benefit in the United States. A RAND Workplace Wellness Programs Study found about half of employers with at least 50 employees, and more than 90 percent of those with more than 50,000 employees, offered wellness programs in 2012.⁷

The adoption of company wellness programs and shifts toward healthy office furniture can be seen clearly when examining the rate at which HR departments report providing or subsidizing the cost of replacing employee workstations with standing desks. According to the findings of Hanover Research, HR departments say spending on sit-stand workstations nearly doubled between 2013 and 2015 (13% vs. 25%).⁸

A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine cites new evidence-based guidelines developed specifically for employers looking to promote the avoidance of prolonged periods of sedentary work, indicating a gradual increase of two to four hours of standing or light activity per workday.⁹

EDUCATION

These trends aren't simply contained to the workplace. Educational institutions are increasingly exploring ways to combat sedentary behavior among students.

A 2015 study published in the Oxford Journal of Public Health shows that sit-to-stand desks in classrooms appear to be an effective way of reducing sedentary behavior (prolonged sitting) in a diverse sample of children.¹⁰

A study published in the American Journal of Public Health evaluated the impact of stand-biased desks with height-appropriate stools used by students in fourth grade classrooms. After 6 weeks, 70% of the students never used their stools to sit and the other 30% stood for the majority of the time that they were at their desks. Accelerometer data established that students burned 32 calories more per hour than before implementation of the intervention.¹¹

During a typical school day, this change would translate into 225 additional calories burned, the equivalent of walking, skateboarding, or roller-skating for one hour after school.¹²

Over the course of a school year, students who stand most of the day could be expected to expend 40,000 calories more than they would have had they been seated all day. Theoretically, this intervention could thus result in a net reduction of approximately 12 pounds per year in weight gain.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RETAILERS?

In order to better understand what these trends mean for the office furniture and supply industry, Deflecto commissioned Hanover Research to investigate the projected scope of the "Healthy Office" product category.

According to Hanover's Preliminary Market Assessment, delivered to Deflecto in April 2017, the Healthy Office segment could represent up to one-third of the total Office Furniture Manufacturing industry sales in 3-5 years.⁸

By 2021, healthy/active furniture products could account for up to \$9 billion of the total U.S. Office Furniture Manufacturing industry (\$27.4B).⁸

Product segments in this space include:

- Healthy Seating – 16.6 percent (\$1.4B)
- Healthy Desks – 7.2 percent (\$650M)

Electric sit-stand desks range from approximately \$500-2,000 apiece. Assuming this range is an acceptable proxy for estimating future market penetration of "healthy desks," there could be between 325,000 - 1.3 million units in use across U.S. offices by 2021 (this estimate does not consider cheaper alternatives to dedicated sit-stand systems, so the real figure may be substantially higher).⁸

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