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HEALTH

Wellness at Work: The New Healthy Epidemic

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By NICOLA BRIDGES



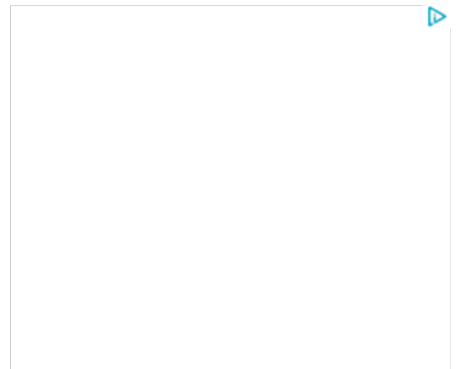
Forget sleeping on the job getting you fired. Forward-thinking companies today *encourage* rest and relaxation at work, providing employees with everything from high-tech power-nap pods to silent meditation and mindfulness rooms.

It's all part of a welcome health epidemic—sometimes known as the “Thrive Revolution”—that’s taking a 360-degree approach to workplace wellness programs, going beyond gym memberships and weight loss support to create a healthier, happier workforce.

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“Thriving is about creating a community workplace culture that promotes succeeding at life as well as work – not just how physical health or wellness is defined,” says Renee Moorefield, chair of the Wellness at Work initiative at the Global Wellness Institute and founder of Wisdom Works, a firm that has spent decades helping global brands including Coca-Cola, Nike and Merck recraft their health offerings.

Companies including Capital One, Zappos, Procter & Gamble, Ben & Jerry’s, Nike, Google and PricewaterhouseCoopers have been quick to embrace this philosophy, which results in increased loyalty because more people love their jobs.

“When I have the space and time to take care of myself throughout the day, that means I am more productive when I need to be and can more fully rejuvenate when I’m away from the office,” says Michele Titolo, lead software engineer at Capital One, which designates “sleeping nooks” throughout the office for midday naps. At its C1 Labs in San Francisco, they even take advantage of ceiling space, where ladders lead to high-above-ground sleep nooks.



Why We Get Tired in the Afternoon

I usually feel tired in the middle of the afternoon, and so do most people I know. Why does this happen? —Joshua B., Pemberton Heights, Texas This common sleepiness is generated by our brain’s inborn biological clocks, which control our circadian (daily) rhythms. These rhythms are found in most living things. Although they are innate, they ...
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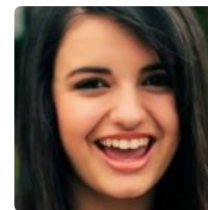
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A WELCOME WORKPLACE EPIDEMIC

Companies increasingly are willing to go the extra mile to keep workers and their families healthy and happy, to keep health costs down and retention and loyalty up, and create an increased sense of camaraderie. Hip tech giants and digital startups remain on the leading edge of businesses thinking differently about workplace health, thanks to millennials redefining how work priorities socialize with their personal time and life goals.



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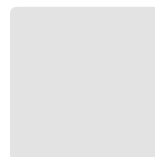
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At its campus in Mountain View, Calif., Google offers everything from kickboxing, nap pods and onsite swimming pools to a slide for people who want an energy thrill getting from floor to floor. Over at Zappos in the company quad, you'll see people playing tetherball, volley ball, shooting hoops and generally playing around on Recess Tuesdays. On other days, as part of Zappos' Wellness Adventures initiative, wellness coordinators randomly grab people from different teams away from their work to go and do something fun instead. It could be trampolining, laser tag or taking a quick golf lesson.

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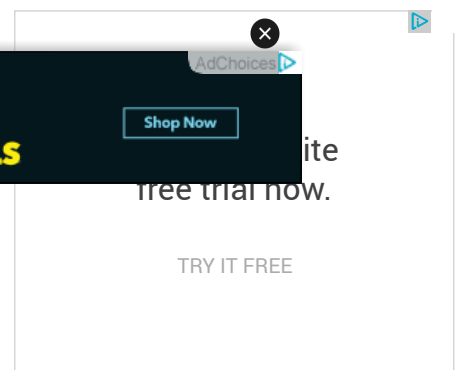
WHY BUSINESS IS NOW ONBOARD

Ron Goetzel has spent three decades evaluating the impact of workplace wellness programs and their effectiveness in both helping workers improve their health on the job and lowering health costs for employers and their employees. He's senior scientist and director of the Institute for Health and Productivity Studies at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

His research has proven that companies that take their employees' health seriously—and don't just pay it lip service—outperform the S&P 500 (the equity performance index tracking the 500 largest U.S. companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange or NASDAQ) by a whopping 3 to 1.

"It happens successfully when enlightened leadership says, 'Wait a minute—the most important asset we have is our gifted people.' Then they create a culture that reinforces health and well-being, where the boss frequently articulates the company's health offerings and perks and encourages the full workforce to take advantage of great wellness benefits without feeling guilty."

Goetzel points to winners of the [C. Everett Koop National Health Award](#), which recognizes outstanding worksite health promotion and improvement programs, such as that of O'Neal Industries (ONI) in Birmingham, Ala. The family-owned chain of metals service centers created a health and wellness program called LIVESMART. Employees get their health numbers checked regularly—blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, blood glucose, physical activity levels and tobacco use—but also take part in fun time-out programs, like one that gets workers from the warehouse to the



executive suite moving down the hallways to the sounds of Pharrell Williams' "Happy." Today, LIVESMART has saved ONI nearly \$500,000 in health costs, with a return on investment of \$1.52 for every dollar spent on keeping the company healthy. And that means more money to invest back into workers' wellness.

SAVING LIVES

Target—a \$70 billion company with more than 320,000 employees nationwide in its stores, distribution centers and at corporate HQ in Minneapolis—takes workplace wellness very seriously, and its numbers also tell a story of success.

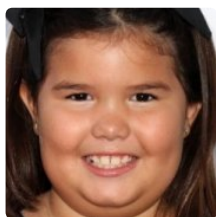
"In less than 12 months, more than 28,000 employees have already had their numbers checked at 2,000-plus biometric screenings and wellness events," says Stephanie Lundquist, Target's chief of human resources. "We leveraged \$78,000 for our Team Life initiative, and last year alone saved \$12.4 million for our team."

Even more crucial, Target's programs—like many companies'—have literally saved lives. Kim Wier, a senior technology services manager in Minneapolis, was six months overdue for her annual mammogram, just too busy with life to take time out to go and get it done. Then Target brought a Mammo a-Go-Go bus to her office—a mobile mammography unit from the Jane Brattain Breast Center—and she was quick to sign up.

"It was great," says Wier, 51. "I just walked down to the parking lot and was back at my desk within half an hour." The following morning, a radiologist called. Her mammogram showed a suspicious lump. After an ultrasound and an urgent biopsy, she says, "The nurse confirmed I did, in fact, have breast cancer. I met with the surgeon right away, and within 10 days had surgery and was on my way to recovery."

Wier credits Target's Team Life wellness offerings for saving her life. "It was so, so fortuitous that Target gives us these opportunities and I found my cancer," she says. "Having that mammogram right there at work saved me from chemo, a probable mastectomy and all sorts of horrible treatments. It makes me feel joyful and grateful to work for Target."

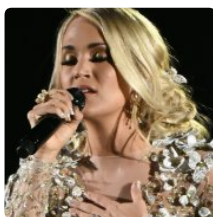
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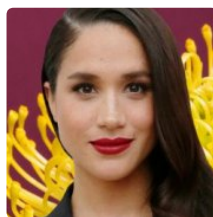
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