

# Walking While You Work



Research has shown that a sedentary lifestyle can contribute to many preventable causes of death, including cardiovascular disease and obesity. Now, research shows that even people who exercise regularly have increased risk of the same illnesses if they sit for more than four hours each day. Yet, as more employees' jobs require them to spend their workdays in front of a computer, there are very real challenges to addressing the issue.

Enter the treadmill desk, a product first marketed approximately four years ago that now seems to be gaining wider acceptance.

The idea is largely credited to Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic, who found that most people can use computers and talk on the phone while walking on a treadmill at a slow speed.

Several companies manufacture versions of the treadmill desk, including office furniture maker Steelcase, which makes a unit called the Walkstation that includes a desk and a custom treadmill. The treadmill, unlike conventional treadmills, has a maximum speed of 2.0 mph (3.2 km/h) in 0.1 increments and does not allow a user to adjust the incline.

TrekDesk, on the other hand, is a desk designed to be used with most treadmills. The desk, which has several height settings, fits over a treadmill, while allowing access to treadmill controls. TrekDesk also has features like two cup holders (one on the right and one on the left), a manuscript holder, and a phone stand.

Steve Bordley, owner and inventor of TrekDesk, says that when he first told people about the product he was "a bit of a laughing stock." Today, the desk is used by people in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Australia.

Several law firms and universities in Canada have incorporated the desk into their work environments, Bordley tells *HR Insider*. Salo, a U.S.-based financial staffing firm, has 12 TrekDesks its employees use for walking meetings and throughout the day.

Is the treadmill desk an idea whose time has come?

The correlation between employee health and a company's bottom line has HR and other members of the management team looking for ways to promote a healthier lifestyle. And, despite skeptics, the treadmill desk achieves at least one of the desired results: it gets employees moving.