

# Wellness in the Works

By Charlee Beasor

## Treadmill Desk Enables Workers to Step Up

**W**eight loss, mental clarity, better sleep, fewer aches and pains, and overall good health. Sounds appealing, right? The “prescription” to obtain these results is simple (and inexpensive): walking.

With the help of TrekDesk, a height-adjustable workstation that fits over a treadmill, employees can achieve the surgeon general’s recommendation that Americans get 10,000 steps a day. Currently, people are averaging less than one-third of that total.

For Steve Bordley, creator of the Phoenix, Arizona-based company, the workstations he created stem from a personal tragedy.

“Back in 1993, I was severely injured in an accident and it put me in a wheelchair for about six months. And it was about two years before I was up and moving. I was faced with no more movement, down to a couch for about two years,” he recalls. “Finally I was going back to the industry I was in – commercial real estate – with a large national company and I knew I would be at a desk for 12 hours a day.”

Facing a severe leg injury, nerve problems and terrible back pain, Bordley came up with the idea to put a slab across his treadmill to use as a desk while he walked and worked. Within a month’s time, he says, his back pain began to go away.

“I started sleeping better. I lost about 25 pounds. I started doing research and realized I was an exercise snob before – I used to think that working out meant lifting a lot of weights, burning calories and sweating a lot. I didn’t know about the benefits of walking. I started designing (TrekDesk) and that’s what led to starting the company,” he declares.

The workstations cost less than \$500. Each includes cup holders, accessory slots, a place for manuscripts and is compatible with nearly any treadmill. Bordley says everyday work activities are done just as easily while walking, though writing can be tricky.

“One of the main objections that people have is they equate exercise with sweating. But the thing to keep in mind is there is a distinction between movement and exercise. Our bodies need both, but they need movement more than anything,” he shares.

“Normal walking speed is about three miles an hour, but you walk on the TrekDesk about one mile per hour; it’s just keeping your muscles engaged. Sweating is objection No. 1; No. 2 is, ‘I’m going to be out of breath.’ That’s not an issue, either (Bordley was walking and talking – undetectably – during the *BizVoice*® interview).”



The TrekDesk sits over a treadmill and allows employees to work and walk at the same time.

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Steve Bordley, TrekDesk, at [www.trekdesk.com/trekdesk](http://www.trekdesk.com/trekdesk)

## ‘What’s Your Resolution?’ Campaign Keeps Employees on Track

“I will lose 25 pounds by working out more and eating healthier foods!” “I’m going back to school!” “We’re getting out of debt this year!” “This will be the year I stop smoking!”

Most New Year’s resolutions are made after midnight when the champagne (or sparkling cider, though that’s less effective for this example) is flowing. We’ve all made resolutions – either silently or out loud – that we often forget once the year is in full swing and we’re back to our old habits and patterns.

What if your employer actually assisted in making those resolutions stick? Monarch

Beverage, Indiana's largest distributor of beer and wine, has instituted the "What's Your Resolution?" program to encourage and support its employees in nine key areas.

"We have all these really great benefits and we know that ... most people have some kind of resolution, but the majority of those people don't see that through," comments senior vice president Natalie Roberts. "It's just designed to remind people of the programs that we have in place and hopefully encourage them to see their resolutions through."

She gives the following examples:

- Resolution: losing weight; Monarch program: Weight Watchers
- Resolution: quitting smoking; Monarch program: smoking cessation classes
- Resolution: helping others; Monarch program: a charitable foundation

The company is already seeing results. So far: 206 people (employees, spouses, dependents and partners) signed up to participate in the Indianapolis Mini Marathon. Its Biggest Loser competition yielded a weight loss of over 600 pounds for 91 employees, with one participant losing 16% of her body weight.

"We know that we've got a 2-to-1 return on investment as it relates to the cost we put into the program. The bottom line is that monetarily it makes sense to invest (in employee health). But just as important is that employees are happy with themselves. If they feel good about themselves, they are more likely to be productive, engaged and enthusiastic employees," Roberts asserts.

According to Roberts, Monarch's management team adopts the attitude that promoting the benefits in a positive light and encouraging employees to attend classes and work in the community are more impactful than emphasizing negative habits.

"From a company perspective, we try to have fun with this. We try not to make this a negative; we try not to point out to everybody what's wrong with them. We have this, 'We're in it together' mentality. We keep it competitive and fun," she notes.

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Natalie Roberts, Monarch Beverage, at [www.monarch-beverage.com](http://www.monarch-beverage.com)

## We're 'Takin' Care of Business' – But Not Our Health

A simple physics lesson from Isaac Newton goes a long way in describing today's workforce: A body in motion stays in motion; a body at rest stays at rest.

How does Newton's first law have anything to do with business? It is movement that is key to keeping Americans healthy and overcoming a rising obesity epidemic – one that is the result of an increasingly sedentary workforce, according to a recent *New York Times* article.

"We're moving beings. I believe that the body wants to move," says Carol Kennedy-Armbruster, senior lecturer in the kinesiology department at Indiana University.

The *Times* article explains that a group of researchers have targeted the workplace as one of the major factors in rising obesity. They found that in 1960, 50% of the labor market consisted of jobs that required moderate physical activity. Today, those jobs make up just 20% of the workforce. The remaining 80% of positions are sedentary (or require light physical activity).

What those numbers account for is a decline of 120 to 140 calories per day in physical activity, which seems to match up with the nation's weight gain over the past five decades, according to a report published in the journal *PLoS One*.

"One of the things I thought was really interesting after reading



**Monarch Beverage employees keep one of their New Year's resolutions of helping others by volunteering in Henryville following the early March tornado that tore through Southern Indiana.**

**Dr. Marty Siegel (left) and Carol Kennedy-Armbruster participate in a walking meeting around the Indiana University campus in Bloomington.**



that article was the U.S. Gallup Well-being Index ... shows that the work environment has one of the lowest ratings of well-being. Wellness at home and in hobbies is good, but it's the lowest at work," Kennedy-Armbruster remarks.

"I think it has to do with this whole idea that we equate work with work, but the new generation, they don't like that. They want wellness at work. It's kind of clashing with the older generation – it's an interesting occurring event. I believe wellness is going to come into the workplace because the workforce is going to demand it."

As part of her doctoral work, Kennedy-Armbruster's dissertation is on worksite wellness. She is contracted with the United States Navy on its Senior Health Assessment Program Enterprise (SHAPE) initiative, which educates and motivates senior personnel over age 40 to achieve long-lasting health through behavior change.

"What is death? Not moving any more. We really have to start thinking of movement in a much broader sense than just happening in a gym," she contends. "I've tried to integrate it into my teaching at IU. My students sit in my class, so I experimented with a walking test and set up stations around the track where they answer five questions and walk a lap and answer five more questions. I haven't done the research on it, but I can tell you they like it better. It's like their minds are clear."

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Carol Kennedy-Armbruster, Indiana University, at [www.indiana.edu/~kines](http://www.indiana.edu/~kines)

## Fresh Healthy Vending Empowers Good Nutrition, Entrepreneurship

Vending machines that dispense organic, healthy food choices are becoming a trend across the country in hospitals, schools, universities and workplaces.



It's a common scenario: Four o'clock hits and your stomach starts growling. With no afternoon snack awaiting you in the refrigerator, you find yourself gazing at your reflection in the vending machine, with mounds of unhealthy candy, cookies and potato chips staring back at you.

Reluctantly, you hit E5 and a candy bar falls into the bin below.

What if yogurt, fresh apples and carrots, organic chips or smoothies tumbled out of the machine instead? Better yet – what if you knew that's what your children were receiving for an afternoon snack at school?

"People want access to healthy snacks where they work, live and play. Sometimes there's not access; it's just soda or candy," says Fresh Healthy Vending President Dan Negroni. "Now, we give them access to healthy food so they don't reach for that."

The San Diego-based company provides vending machines that supply fresh fruit and vegetables, protein bars, baked chips and crackers, juices, coffees and much more. Item prices range from 75 cents to \$3.

"There's really a need for it in the communities. Old, stale candy and chips, something quick – that just continues obesity. We really were looking to take it to a different level, fight the obesity fight and that's what we did. It's taken off like wildfire," Negroni states.

Wildfire indeed: About 150 franchises in 45 states and nearly 1,500 locations have resulted.

Not only do the machines offer healthy snack alternatives, but the company's franchise model is set up in a way that encourages entrepreneurship across the country.

"We decided to do it on a franchise basis because we really wanted to get entrepreneurs involved in the individual communities," Negroni explains.

Once the franchisers purchase the machine (the typical cost is about \$11,000), they are provided with a location for the machine and are then in charge of stocking and upkeep. While there aren't currently any franchises in Indiana, there are several in Illinois and the surrounding states.

Another unique factor, says Negroni, is that some locations actually get paid to have a machine there through the Fresh and Healthy Vending Initiative. The program was created to help schools and businesses transition to healthy vending

and is a one-time grant for qualifying locations.

No need to worry about spoilage, either. The machines are linked to a satellite that sends a signal to the franchiser's smart phone when an item approaches its expiration date.

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Dan Negroni, Fresh Healthy Vending, at [www.freshvending.com](http://www.freshvending.com)

## Near-site Clinics New Trend in Employer-sponsored Health Care

**Y**our doctor is “working 9 to 5” (to borrow from Dolly Parton). Coincidentally, that’s when you work too, meaning you have to take an hour or two (or a half day, depending on your company’s leave policies) out of your normal schedule for a doctor visit.

Wouldn’t it be convenient if the doctor was across the street from your office and you didn’t have to take time out of your workday? Suppose you got a discount for going there from your employer-sponsored health insurance? To top it off, less money is coming out of the employer’s pocket to run and staff a clinic because the expense is shared with one or more other companies.

With a near-site health clinic (complementing the on-site operations coming into play at

many larger organizations), those “what-ifs?” are a reality.

“A good example is Monroe County government in Bloomington. They paid for 17 hours of care, but now have access to 40-plus hours of care in two separate locations,” relays Peter Dunn, principal at Activate Healthcare, which employs the health care providers and manages all functions of the clinic.

“They have 85 hours of access, but they’re only paying for 17 hours. They offer the space for the clinic, make it available and we actually hired a full-time medical team and then they made the clinic available to other employers – there are more than a dozen sharing the clinic. Everyone pays for somewhere between five and 15 hours of care, but they all get access to 45-plus hours of care.”

Activate Healthcare Principal Debra Geihlsler explains how the close health care access enables a trimmer bottom line for employers.

“A lot of employees, they don’t go to the physician and therefore they really wait until the last minute, when things are urgent. With improved access, they can catch things early and become educated on how their behavior becomes

attributed to how health issues affect them,” she notes. “Early identification can help control the costs.”

Another near-site example is at MacAllister Machinery and Pratt, both located on the east side of Indianapolis.

“(MacAllister) is really very happy with what’s going on. They love their clinical team, we have great participation and it’s been quite successful,” Geihlsler says.

Adds Dunn, “I think it’s a great way for employees to save money, as well as employers; (it is) improving retention, reducing absenteeism, helping employees measure care. We’re also reaching a lot of people who haven’t had good proactive primary care available to them. I think the other great thing is that it brings communities of care together. It brings improved access for other smaller employers.”

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Peter Dunn and Debra Geihlsler, Activate Healthcare, at [activatehealthcare.com](http://activatehealthcare.com)



Activate Healthcare physician Dr. Joseph Lisanti spends time at the Monarch Beverage on-site clinic, where he is able to treat employees during the workday.

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