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Free, healthy and a boost to creativity: companies must get staff walking

Encouraging walking, both within the workplace, as well as for travelling to and from work, brings significant benefits for staff and for employers, says Susan Claris.

Friedrich Nietzsche once declared that “All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking.” This is backed up by studies by Stanford University which have shown that a person’s creative output increases by an average of 60% when walking.

Yet while employers have become increasingly cycle friendly over the years – providing cycle parking, lockers and showers, cycle training, loans to buy bikes and cycle maintenance sessions – what are they doing to promote walking?

Encouraging walking, both within the workplace, as well as for travelling to and from work, brings significant benefits for staff and for employers. These range from creativity to physical and mental health, including a reduced risk of depression.

Other companies are incorporating a “daily mile” route to encourage employees to get out for a walk. Saga’s Group Headquarters at Sandgate near Folkestone, for example, has a marked out a mile in its grounds that staff can use for a meeting or a stroll at lunchtime.

Actions that businesses can take include promoting walking meetings, having a “daily mile” route promoting walking initiatives (such as Living Streets’ walk to work month), or even having a clinic to advise on walking and gait and posture, offering incentives to buy good quality walking trainers or activity trackers.

Walking is the lowest-carbon, least polluting form of transport. It’s a great social leveller and having people walking through urban spaces makes them safer for others. And best of all – it is free, it is reliable and it makes people happy. Who wouldn’t want that for their staff?

Adapted from *The Guardian*, July 2017