**Workplace physical activity is not an HR problem – it’s a productivity solution**

London Sport believes in the benefits of physical activity.

*Quelle surprise*. It is, after all, what we stand for.

But our vision of making London the most physically active city in the world isn’t a vanity measure or totem. It’s a vision that carries with it a host of benefits to Londoners, and to the capital city itself.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, London has the country’s largest working population, with a daytime population across the capital of over 10 million people. That’s a tremendously large group of people for whom increased levels of physical activity could contribute enormously to their physical and mental wellbeing, their social connectivity and their overall health. It’s also represents an enormous number of businesses who could benefit from a having a more active population.

In the first year of the Active Citizens Worldwide initiative, analysis of physical activity participation in London found that at its current rates, physical activity in London contributes £314m of productivity related savings through reduced sickness and friction costs. Across the three Active Citizens Worldwide Founding Cities (Auckland, London and Singapore), the total annual savings related to physical activity including health-related savings, reduced absenteeism and reduced friction costs totalled US$1.1bn.

It’s not only in health terms that businesses stand to benefit from increased employee physical activity rates. Active Citizens Worldwide found that physically active residents of the three Founding Cities reported 4% higher levels of self-rated happiness – a 2015 study from the Social Market Foundation, meanwhile, found that happy employees are up to 20% more productive than unhappy employees.

Put simply, an active workforce is a happy, healthy workforce – and a happy, healthy workforce is good for business.

That makes it a simple business decision, which makes it all the more surprising that research from Westfield Health shows just 23% of companies believe their organisation has a responsibility for employee health and wellbeing. At a time where UK productivity has experienced a slowdown more pronounced than any other western country, simple measures that can support increased productivity are worth their weight in gold.

That’s the thinking that underpins our workplace wellbeing partnership with Westfield Health, and it’s also the thinking that sits at the heart of our own approach to workplace health. By building a culture that values and promotes physical activity as a key pillar of our organisation’s approach to workplace wellbeing, we’re working to provide our employees with a raft of benefits, while benefiting our business at the same time.

At a business level, the decisions can be deceptively simple. From easy-to-introduce workplace adjustments (like supporting staff to exercise during lunchtimes, promoting standing and walking meetings, and promoting use of stairs for those staff able to use them) to business investments, such as our adoption of Westfield Health’s corporate wellbeing solutions or helping to fund employee sport teams, we are working to help London Sport to be a physically active workplace in a physically active city.

The evidence to do so is overwhelming. It’s time for workplaces to see past an HR problem and explore a productivity solution.

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*Our partnership with Westfield Health works to support the health and wellbeing of Londoners by targeting the capital’s workplaces and employers. Find out more about Westfield Health here.*