



Timely Information for Personal Success

## Our Offices Shouldn't Make Us Miserable

By Tom Gardner & Chloe Sosenko

**D**id you know that your work environment can lead to becoming obese, pre-diabetic, worn down by repetitive tasks, and even burned out? You'll eventually function at declining rates, and find it difficult to break the habits formed in your office.

This may seem like an exaggeration, but it's a fact in today's workplace. We can do better. And the motivation to try is economic: *a healthier workplace leads to higher performance and lower medical costs.*

❖ **Sitting disease** – The average adult spends nearly 8 hours each day sitting. The World Health Organization warns that a sedentary lifestyle doubles the incidence of heart disease and diabetes. Yep, *sitting disease* may be deadlier than smoking. *Your company can reverse this.* Start by creating rewards for venturing into the greenery with walking meetings and outdoor work on mobile devices. Install standing and treadmill desks. Movement is health.

❖ **Quiet time** – In a multi-decade study spanning 15,000 participants, the University of Massachusetts Medical School reported that meditation reduces the number of medical and psychological symptoms by more than 35%. Substantially more research needs to be done, but the flurry of recent data suggests that "quiet time" reduces anxiety and depression and expands the ability to focus.

Offering time for individual or group meditation in your office is the least expensive of our suggestions.

❖ **Snack your way to health** – Best-selling medical expert, Dr. Mark Hyman, advises people to "skip the vending machines." It's time for organizations to follow suit. No company is obligated to roll out convenient sugary snacks and drinks. Upgrade your vending machines to the healthiest alternative or abandon them. Fill candy bowls with nuts and fruit. Replace soda with flavored water. Bring in a nutritionist for a simple consultation to implement a new strategy.

❖ **Practice core strength in a conference room** – For the last 25 years, employees have gone to work and gotten sicker. In the next quarter century, they'll

*continued on Page 2*





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## Healthy Recipe: Protein Power Balls

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup sweetened coconut (toasted)
- 1 cup cornflakes
- 3/4 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup soy protein powder
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar

### NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 133
- Carbohydrates: 11 g.
- Protein: 9 g.
- Fat: 8 g.
- Fiber: 1 g.

### DIRECTIONS:

❶ Combine peanut butter, cornflakes, protein powder, brown sugar and chocolate chips into mixing bowl. Work mixture together with hands to combine ingredients.

❷ Use spoon to scoop out mixture and roll into golf-ball size balls. Roll in toasted coconut to coat the outside.

❸ Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Store in an upright container in refrigerator for up to 1 week.

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## Questions and Answers

### Use Clear Subject Lines

**Q:** I read somewhere that it's important to use clear subject lines in emails. That seemed far-fetched. Could this be true?

**A:** For many people, an email's subject line is an afterthought at best, and is either left blank or filled in with a one-word description like "Meeting." However, this subject line doesn't tell the recipient anything useful. Is it about the usual Tuesday staff meeting? Is it a note wrapping up last week's gathering?

Instead, use keywords to craft a short description of why you're emailing; for example: "Team meeting today at 3 p.m. in conference room," or "PowerPoint for Jones proposal attached." In addition, descriptive subject lines will help recipients navigate their inboxes and gauge whether the email is important or can be put off until later. ■

*Source: Ben Carpenter, author of "The Bigs: The Secrets Nobody Tells Students and Young Professionals About How to Find a Great Job, Do a Great Job, Start a Business, and Live a Happy Life" (Wiley, \$25.00).*

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*continued from Page 1*

go to work to get *healthy*. In 2011, we hired our first full-time personal trainer at The Motley Fool. I wish we'd done so 15 years sooner. Today, Samantha Whiteside presides over yoga, HIIT workouts, Zumba, and strength classes in spaces across our office. She coaches our colleagues around the world via Skype. The net result is a convenient solution for our employees that yields higher productivity, lower health insurance costs, and greater levels of satisfaction. Hire a full- or part-time physical trainer; you'll quickly get a return on this investment.

❖ **Every day is Saturday** – That's exactly what CEO Ricardo Semler tells his 3,000 colleagues at Semco, among the most enlightened organizations in history. Employees and their teams are liberated to define their work schedules. Parents have time for their families. Night owls can sleep late. Semco's rate of employee turnover is less than 1% per year. Does this lead to organizational chaos and underperformance? Nope. Semco sales, earnings, and company valuation have stunningly outperformed for decades. To unleash the talent that will expand your company's potential, you have to institute work schedules that are as flexible as possible.

### Summary

These ideas may seem extreme, but they're already practiced somewhere, so they *are* possible. Before you know it, you won't be able to hire the best talent unless they believe they'll get healthier by working with you. At some point, the data will lead to one conclusion: Your organization may face legal liability for not disclosing the risks of working there, and then addressing them. ■

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