



Timely Information for Personal Success

Lunch Breaks: Overlooked Source of Stress Relief?

By Mike Jacquart

The lunch “hour” may be a concept of the past, new research from staffing firm OfficeTeam suggests. More than half of workers (56 percent) said their typical lunch break lasts 30 minutes or less.

What are workers doing at lunch, besides eating? Respondents said they most frequently surf the Internet or social media (52 percent), followed by catching up on personal calls or emails (51 percent). That’s up from 27 percent and 25 percent, respectively, from a 2014 survey. Twenty-nine percent of professionals confessed to working during lunch.

These statistics aren’t surprising, but I do find the last one a bit *alarming*. If nearly one-third of professionals are *working* during lunch, what is the point of taking lunch? For one thing, if you’re anything like me, food crumbs tend to find their way onto your keyboard, and that makes your desk messier than it needs to be. More important, however, is the fact that we need to *get away* from our desks!

Too Busy for a Break?

I know what you’re thinking: “I’m too swamped to NOT work during my lunch!” I confess I used to buy into that mindset. When I worked at a local publishing company, we not only had a full hour for lunch (I doubt that’s the case anymore), but we ALSO had 15-minute breaks at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. I seldom took the scheduled morning “coffee break,” when the truth of the matter is it would have been GOOD for me to get away from my computer (ease

eye strain a little), and stretch my legs (and neck), AND de-stress by chatting with co-workers! And I wondered why I was so stressed all the time!

But I learned. At a subsequent employer, I made it a point of getting away from my desk for at least a 30-minute lunch break. I saw this as a great time to get to know my colleagues a little better, unfortunately they didn’t seem to see it that way. You guessed it: They worked straight through their lunch, quickly gulping down a sandwich or some leftovers at their desk.

“You know, you’re never not busy,” I would say. “If you’re waiting to not be so busy to take a break for lunch, you’ll be waiting a *long* time!”

One day, a co-worker mentioned that Taco Bell sounded a lot better than her day-old bologna sandwich, and so I thought we’d have a nice visit at the

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Healthy Recipe: Prosciutto Pizza

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound prepared pizza dough, preferably whole-wheat
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup 2 sliced prosciutto, cut into thin strips
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup chopped tomato

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Calories per serving: 306
 Carbohydrates: 33 g.
 Protein: 13 g.
 Sodium: 600 mg.
 Fat: 11 g.
 Saturated fat: 4 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Position oven rack in the lowest position; preheat to 450°F. Coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray.
- ➋ Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to about the size of the baking sheet. Transfer to the baking sheet. Bake until puffed and lightly crisped on the bottom, 8 to 10 minutes.
- ➌ Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion, prosciutto and crushed red pepper and cook, stirring, until the onion is beginning to brown, about 3 minutes.
- ➍ Spread the onion mixture evenly over the crust and top with cheese. Bake until crispy and golden and the cheese is melted, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and top with tomato.

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local TB. No, she meant she'd write down her order, I'd drive there and pick it up, drive back, and she'd eat at her desk! Aaaaah!! Frustrated, I basically gave up at that point and continued to eat by myself.

Eating Solo or as a Group: The BREAK is the Key

That last point, however, isn't all bad. While some of us, like me, longed for some company during lunch-time, others need to get away from people and just chill out somewhere. My wife, for instance, likes to hop in her car and drive somewhere relaxing, taking in nature.

That's okay, too. The point is, don't be glued to your desk all day long. Like I said, you're never NOT going to be busy, so get away anyway! Your eyes, neck, back, and most of all, your nerves, will appreciate it.

Final Tips

While networking/eating with colleagues is the ideal, OfficeTeam notes other ways in which taking a true lunch BREAK is beneficial:

❖ **You need to step away from work.** Getting out and taking a real break can help you return to the office more productive. Try exercising or walking to clear your mind.

❖ **You need to take time for yourself.** Running errands or taking care of personal tasks during lunch can result in a shorter to-do list later (which in turn can relieve stress).

❖ **You'll be better able to watch what you eat.** Packing a nutritious lunch and going somewhere to eat can keep you from impulsively grabbing chips and other unhealthy snacks from a vending machine.

OfficeTeam, a Robert Half company, is the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled office and administrative support professionals. The company has more than 300 locations worldwide. For more information, visit roberthalf.com/officeteam.

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