

Fresh Air, Fresh Ideas

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RealTime Productions

MPIWSC Member since May 2012

A walking meeting is an excellent opportunity for an infusion of fresh air and ideas. National organizations, TED talks, and top universities extol the brain benefits of even a 10 minute walk for a healthy body and mind. Harvard Medical School professor, John Ratey explains that “Exercise is really for the brain, not the body. It affects mood, vitality, alertness and feelings of well-being.” Stanford researchers discovered that creativity is increased by as much as 60% while walking!



Would you feel more appreciated, inspired or energetic after a walk-n-talk with your boss?

Hopefully all of the above! Walking meetings are making for more productive, energetic, and happier employees. AnswerLab CEO Amy Buckner Chowdhry walks with her employees for enlightening one on one meetings on the San Francisco Embarcadero and in Central Park in New York City. Beyond the benefits of their wellness promotion, this act of personal interaction builds morale, creates space for a more open dialogue, and offers a chance to slow the pace for a more authentic perspective.

What do I mean by a walking meeting? Just that – plan to meet with your colleagues, your boss or your clients *away* from the desk and walk during your talk.

Here are some of our ideas to incorporate walking meetings into your next program or conference.

Make it a real breakout! Break out of the building in smaller groups for 10, 20 or 30 minute street sessions. Realistically people will walk 2 or 3 in a single conversation group but reconvening with a larger group will keep the creative flow in motion.

Map the distance from your hotels to the convention center and send the walkers off in pairs. Create a start station in the lobby for attendees to “meet and hit the street”.

Resources:

For taking notes:

- Use your phone’s voice to text feature for the inspiring thoughts and innovations that you and your fellow walkers will certainly create along the route
- Dictation software and apps
- Old school? Designate a note taker to jot down key points and collect your thoughts again at the end of the route.

For your routes:

- Check with your CVB or DMO to see if they have any sort of walking tours for sites that you could use for your talk time.
- Utilize hotels running routes - typically available from the concierge
- Map it out and do a test walk on your site visit

For your walking shoes:

- Do you already have a coat check? Think about including a drawstring bag with your check-in materials for extra shoes.
- Worried about the weather on your walk? Loaner umbrellas or plastic ponchos provide plenty of sponsorship placement opportunities!
- Let people know in advance that you will have all the logistics taken care of...just bring some comfortable shoes for walking.

More on walking meetings:

TED presenter Nilofer Merchant calls sitting the new smoking...if that doesn't scare you into your walking shoes, I don't know what will!

http://www.ted.com/talks/nilofer_merchant_got_a_meeting_take_a_walk?language=en

Stanford researchers found that 10 minutes in motion can ignite the creative juices!

<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/april/walking-vs-sitting-042414.html>

Everybody Walk is a campaign to get America walking. Powered by Kaiser Permanente. A company so sure of the benefits of walking meetings, that they built indoor tracks at some facilities! <http://everybodywalk.org/walking-meetings-make-work-healthier-happier/>