



Staples Survey Reveals Many Employees Feel Too Guilty to Take Breaks, Despite Spending Longer Hours at Work

Seventy-six per cent of employees said they could unwind and relieve stress at work with a well-stocked and comfortable breakroom

Toronto, ON, May 7, 2014 – More than a quarter of workers don't take a break other than lunch, according to a recent survey of office workers and managers released today by Staples, and one in five employee respondents cite guilt as the reason they don't step away from their workspaces. The survey shows that 66 per cent of employees spend more than eight hours a day at work, so taking a break is more important than ever.

“An alarming trend that's plaguing workers is job-related stress, which costs companies hundreds of billions of dollars each year,” says John Trougakos, Associate Professor of Management at the University of Toronto. “However, these costs can be reduced with regular work breaks, while improving employee effectiveness, satisfaction, and reducing strain and fatigue. Disconnecting from work can do wonders for people's energy and mindset.”

The survey shows that both employers and employees acknowledge the importance of breaks. In fact, 90 per cent of employers say they encourage breaks, and an overwhelming majority of workers (86 per cent) acknowledge that taking a break would make them more productive.

The survey also found that 41 per cent of employees feel burned out from working longer days, and 55 per cent don't feel they can leave their desk to take a break. However, the survey revealed that breaks can help, with respondents indicating regular breaks would improve work and personal happiness (59 per cent and 43 per cent respectively) and health (37 per cent).

“It's important that employees understand the value of taking a quality break,” said Tom Heisroth, Senior Vice President, Commercial and Enterprise Sales, Staples Advantage. “Disconnecting can increase their happiness, health and productivity. This survey indicates employers are encouraging employees to take a break, but they need to back that up by providing a well-stocked breakroom that encourages employees to step away and not feel tied to their work. Staples offers everything from beverages, snacks and furniture to provide a comfortable atmosphere for employees to take a break and for offices to create an inviting breakroom.”

So what can companies do to foster a break-friendly environment? The key may lie in breakrooms, as 58 per cent of respondents said a well-stocked/comfortable breakroom would encourage breaks, and 76 per cent said such breakrooms would allow them to unwind and relieve stress.

To help employers encourage breaks, Staples recommends the following:

- **Provide healthy snacks and beverages:** Employees want snacks, with respondents overwhelmingly looking for healthy snack options, such as nuts and granola bars (57 per cent), compared to chips, cookies or candy (10 per cent).
- **Think about comfort:** Furniture is an important consideration for the overall comfort and appeal of the breakroom. But 50 per cent of respondents don't have a properly furnished breakroom to allow for relaxation. Employers can provide furniture that allows employees to unwind with their snacks and beverages and socialize with colleagues.
- **Disconnect when taking a break:** Twenty-five per cent of respondents don't disconnect from work-related technology when taking regular breaks. Professor Trougakos says employees need to detach mentally from work to restore the energy it takes to work productively. Thinking about work doesn't relieve stress and employees won't fully recharge or maximize the usefulness of a break.

Professor Trougakos offers these additional suggestions for companies and employees to keep in mind regarding work breaks:

- **Maintain a break-encouraging workplace culture:** This helps reduce employee guilt from taking necessary breaks and makes breaks more effective. Ultimately, this will improve worker well-being and productivity.
- **The power of positivity:** Employees should do something during breaks to generate positive feelings, since these emotions are energizing, improve creativity, and can increase productivity.

Resources:

- **Infographic:** <http://blog.staples.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Breakroom-Infographic3.jpg>
- **Slideshare:** <http://www.slideshare.net/StaplesAdvantage/fun-facts-about-taking-a-break-from-staples>
- **Breakroom Solutions:** <http://www.staplesadvantage.ca/what-we-offer/breakroom/custom-breakroom-programs.page>

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About the Survey

Staples conducted an online survey of more than 200 office workers at organizations of all sizes across the U.S. and Canada. The survey, conducted in March 2014, asked a series of questions about people's work habits, taking breaks and office breakrooms.

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Staples Advantage, the business-to-business division of Staples, Inc. (Nasdaq: SPLS), serves organizations of 20 or more employees up to the Fortune 1000, helping them make more happen with more products, greater cost savings and improved ordering efficiencies. Staples Advantage provides its customers, including global businesses, local, state and federal government, healthcare organizations and educational institutions, with a one source solution featuring comprehensive products and services like office supplies, technology, printing, promotional products, furniture and facility supplies, along with a customized level of account support and best-in-class customer service. More information is available at www.staplesadvantage.com.

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