



## INTHEBLACK

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# Active staff walk the talk

IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT A RATHER old-fashioned index of workplace achievement, hours worked, is also one of the most popularly embraced by management. Yet the results of a new survey confirm what many employees under duress intuitively know: that if they spent less time at work and more exercising, they'd actually be able to log more days at the coalface.

A study by the Heart Disease and Diabetes Prevention (HDDP) Centre has found that physically active employees take almost half as many sick days as their more sedentary co-workers.

The report compared the absentee rates of 200 Australian employees taking part in the world's largest corporate health event, the 2007 Global Corporate Challenge (GCC), with 200 non-participating employees from the same organisations over a six-month period.

The study found that during the time period, the 200 GCC participants took a total of 666 sick days while their co-workers took 1128 sick days. Overall, the average absentee rate for GCC 07 participants was 3.3 days, compared to 5.6 days for non-GCC participants



during the same period.

David Cameron-Smith from HDDP, says the findings were exciting as this was the first time the organisation was involved in a study exploring the relationship between absenteeism and the health benefits of a corporate fitness event.

"Globally, absenteeism costs business big bucks," says Cameron-Smith. "It has been estimated that absenteeism costs UK companies £478 [per year] per employee, while in the US, the cost is estimated at between US\$602 and US\$789 [per year] per employee.

"This new study clearly links participation in the GCC event with a reduced rate of absenteeism. The average cost of an Australian sick day is estimated at \$230 per day. Based on this figure, this study suggests that by being significantly physically more active, the reduced absentee rate of the 200 GCC participants amounted to a total cost saving of \$106,260 [per year] or \$531.30 per GCC participant." ■