

# Lean machines

## Does your employer offer you healthy eating choices? If not it should, says Siobhan O'Neill - a balanced diet could make you significantly more productive

- Siobhan O'Neill
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In the spotlight: Healthier office options can boost performance. Photo: Linda Nyland

### Active stance

With a [government study](#) predicting that half of the population could be obese within 25 years, it may well be time for employers to take a more active stance in encouraging their workforce to be healthier. After all, VieLife, a consultancy advising on health, well-being and performance, suggests that employees who are healthier and happier could be between 10% and 20% more productive - with an estimated £6.19 annual return for every £1 spent on improving general well-being...

Food and beverage company Nestle UK also rose to the challenge of overhauling their staff catering facilities by providing healthier options for employees, but went a step further in also addressing staff exercise.

"We began to recognise in our people the same problems we see in the country as a whole - obesity, diabetes and heart problems," says Dr David Batman, head of occupational health, safety and employee wellness at the company. "The risk factors for those are smoking, nutrition and exercise."

Nestle launched an employee wellness programme focusing on three key areas - nutrition, exercise and mental resilience - and began to make changes across the company to transform attitudes from the boardroom down.

To help get employees moving they signed up to the [Global Corporate Challenge](#) (GCC) - an annual competition in which teams from various companies are challenged to "walk around the world" in 125 days. More than 20% of Nestle UK's staff signed up, wearing pedometers and clocking - in one case - more than 30,000 steps a day, burning an average 535 calories. Staff started walking to work and having walking meetings, and the firm noted 25% less car usage and a 48% decrease in trips in the lift. Some 50% of participants reported weight loss, with 62% losing more than 7lbs. By the end of the competition Nestle UK was named Most Active Business.