

# LET YOUR PEOPLE MOVE

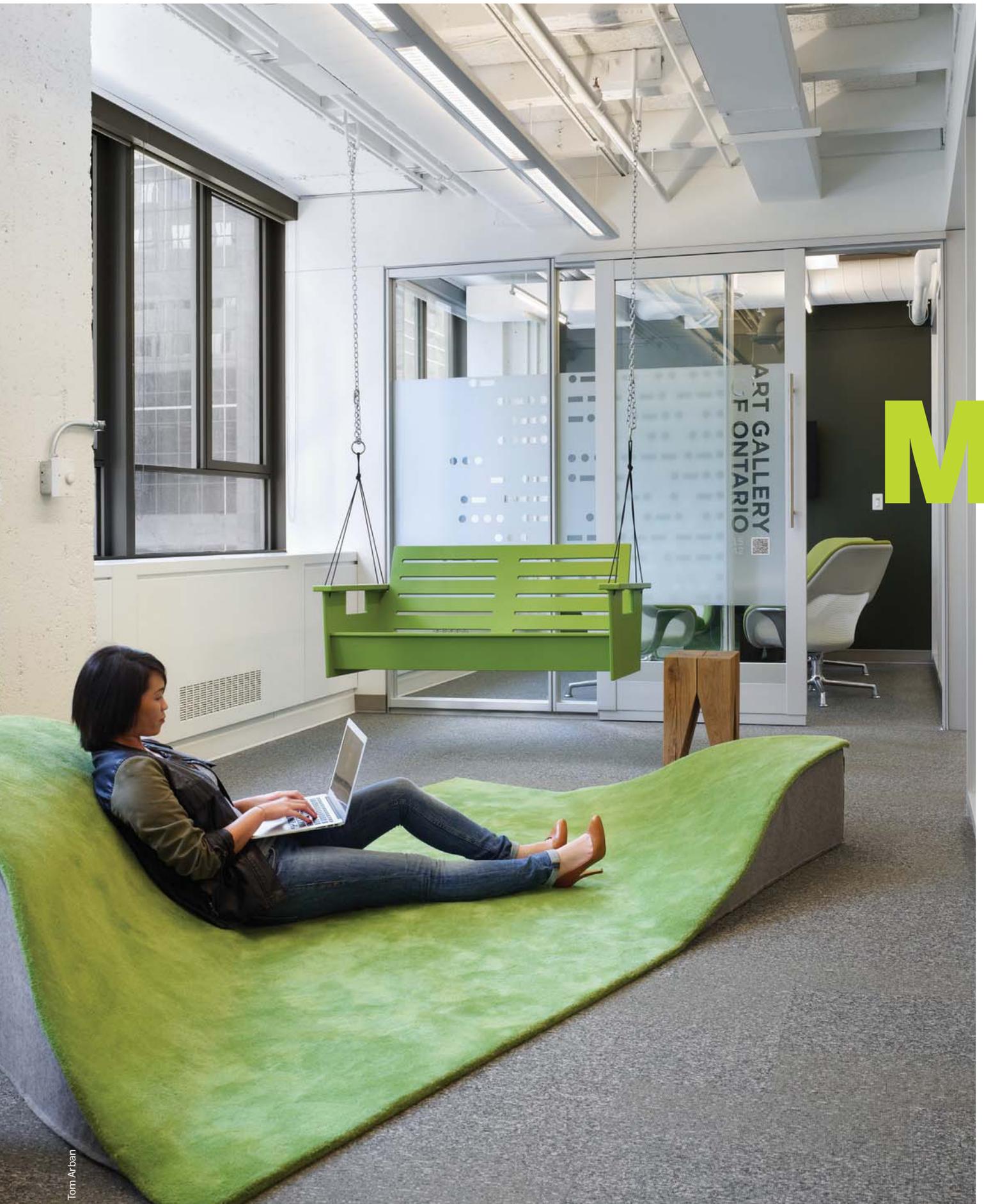
TAKE A STAND ON CREATING  
A HEALTHY WORKSPACE

*Incorporate daily  
movement to boost health  
and productivity*

By **Jane Langille**

Productive employees don't have to be chained to desks anymore.





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**SITTING IS THE NEW SMOKING.** Too much time chained to a chair leads to a host of health risks, including doubling the risk of heart disease, diabetes and death, even if you meet Canada's physical activity guidelines. Sadly, the average Canadian adult sits for 9.5 hours a day, about 70 per cent of his or her waking hours.

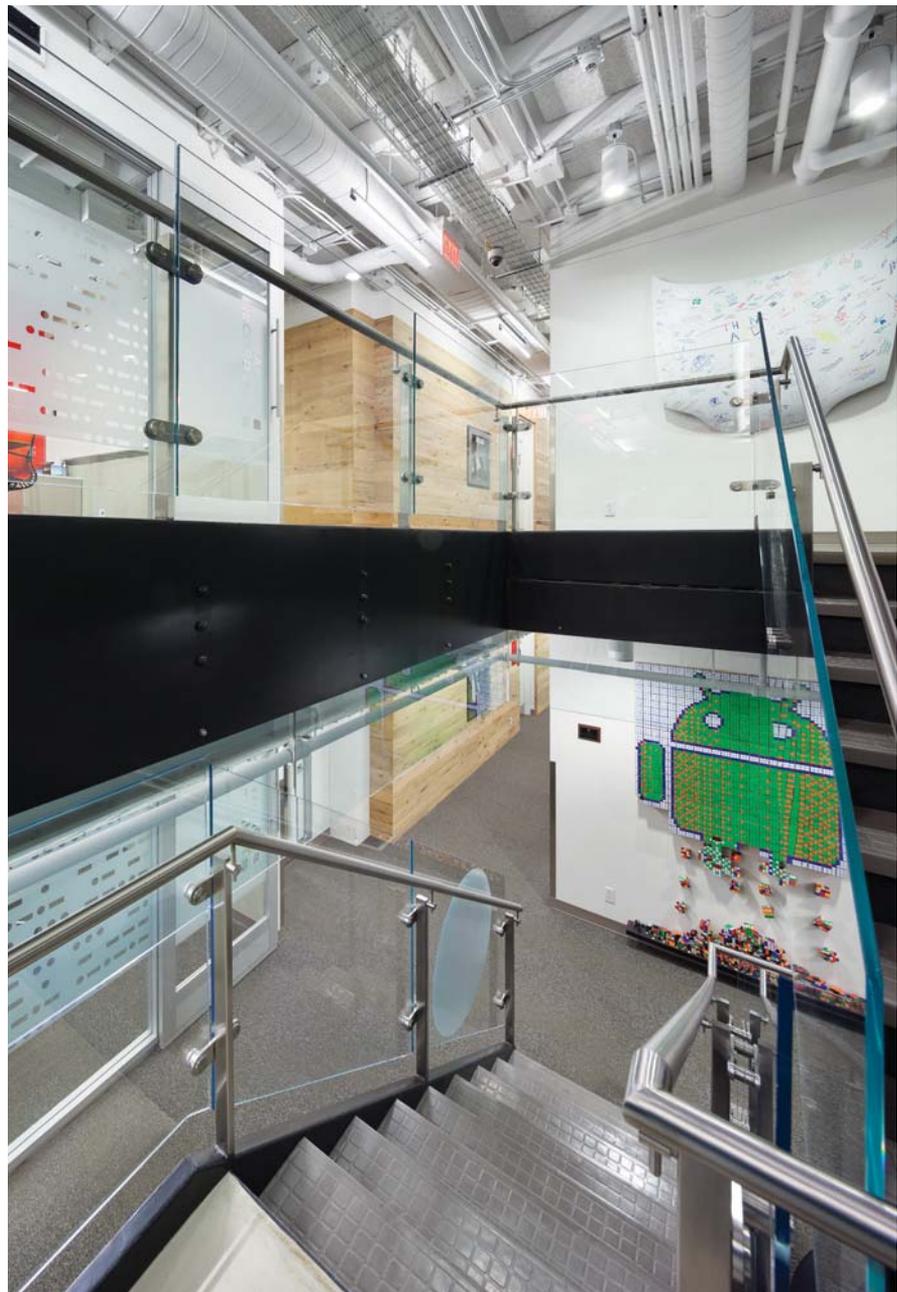
But savvy employers are waking up to the risks and making sure workplaces provide opportunities for people to get up and move. The obvious benefit is improved health and wellness. Even better, people who are more active throughout the day are more alert, focused and energetic, resulting in increased productivity and collaboration.

Take a visual tour of the ideal healthy office and read what our three experts have to say. Andrea Janus, facilities manager at Google Canada, Pat Jacklin, CMA, CFO, at GoodLife Fitness Canada and Kathy Smythe, workplace consultant at Steelcase Canada share their best tips about how smart office spaces can incorporate movement into daily work life.

Why wait for an elevator? Open staircases invite people to walk instead.

## Bypass the elevator.

“We worked really hard to incorporate interior staircases so that people don't have to use elevators to move between floors,” says Janus. The open staircase at Google's Toronto office lets people walk between six floors while they enjoy an expansive wall mural depicting travel throughout Canada. GoodLife Fitness also redesigned its office space to include open interior staircases connecting four floors.



## ADVISERS



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Facilities Manager  
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## Walk while you work.

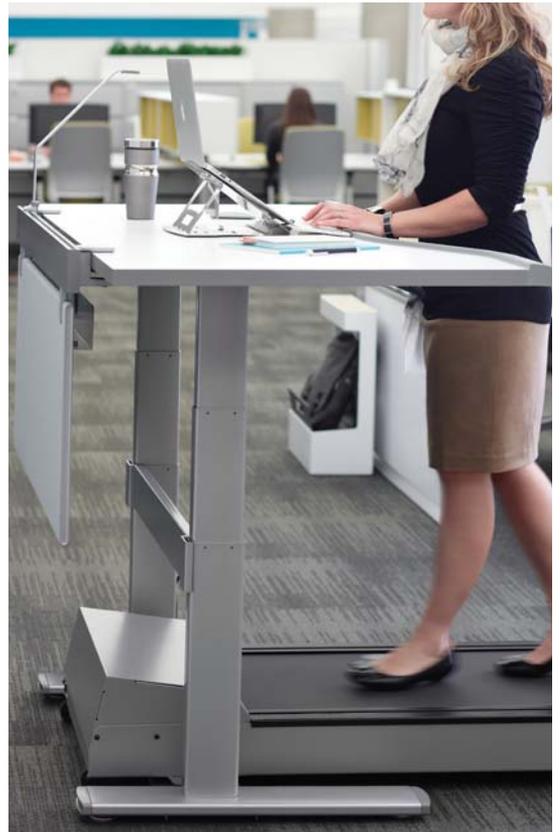
A walkstation or treadmill desk lets people walk slowly while working on a computer or taking phone calls. Invented by the Mayo Clinic's James A. Levine, MD, PhD, in collaboration with Steelcase, a walkstation can help burn up to 2,100 calories a week. It can also cut fatigue by two-thirds and improve mental clarity.

Steelcase Canada reports that sales of walkstations are up 50 per cent over last year. "What's so nice about the walkstation is that you only go 1.5 to 2.0 mph and can use it inside no matter the weather. That's why it has become such a hit," says Kathy Smythe.

Walkstations were such a hit with employees in a recent year-long pilot study by Niagara Region Public Health that the institution is leaving them where they are. An earlier study from Tel Aviv University found that treadmill desk walking provided both prevention and a possible cure for back pain at a much lower cost than physical therapy.

## Take a stand.

Standing burns three times as many calories as sitting. But standing all day is not healthy either. The best approach is to mix it up with a variety of movements and postures. An adjustable sit/stand desk lets people stand when they want to. About 70 per cent of "Googlers" in Toronto have adjustable sit/stand desks and anyone who wants one can order one, says Janus.



## Take microwalks.

Take advantage of mobile technology by walking during phone calls. A large Australian study found that people who alternated sitting for 20 minutes with two-minute breaks of light walking lowered their levels of glucose and insulin by 20 per cent compared to those who sat all day with no breaks.





*“If the meeting is an hour or less, my team knows we’ll be standing.”*

Mix it up with different design options for standing or sitting meeting spaces.

## Sit active.

Stability balls are better than standard chairs because they activate core muscles for balance, encouraging optimal posture. Jacklin switched to sitting on a stability ball seven years ago and hasn’t looked back. She also offers stability ball chairs in her office for visitors.



## Meet on the go.

“Having a meeting doesn’t necessarily mean sitting in a boardroom anymore,” says Janus, who suggests bringing a laptop to a stand-up counter to meet with a colleague. Jacklin has been conducting standing meetings with her team for years. “If the meeting is an hour or less, my team knows we’ll be standing. Certainly there are health benefits, but the meetings are also more productive. The act of standing keeps people energized and on task.”



## Bring activity in house.

Many employers offer discounted gym memberships, but it can be difficult to schedule gym time during the workday. Bring activity in house instead.

Google's Toronto office has a mini-putt golf course and the Montreal office has a climbing wall. "The golf course is great for holding meetings and getting some exercise and fresh air at the same time," says Janus.

If that's too leading edge for your workplace, consider bringing in a yoga instructor or holding boot-camp classes in a conference room.



## Place food smartly.

"We intentionally put our lunchroom in the basement, so people have to walk down rather than stay on their own floor," says Jacklin. Google takes another tack, but also encourages movement by intentionally placing different microkitchens on different floors. "If you want a particular snack or specialty coffee, you have to get up and go to a certain floor," says Janus.



## Remind yourself.

Get off your duff with reminder apps. Try [www.StandingClock.com](http://www.StandingClock.com) for any desktop, [www.BreakTimeApp.com](http://www.BreakTimeApp.com) or [www.Dejal.com/timeout](http://www.Dejal.com/timeout) for Macs, or [www.BreakTaker.en.softonic.com](http://www.BreakTaker.en.softonic.com) for PCs. ■

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