

15-min. workout (in work clothes) cuts excuses to skip exercise

The 280 employees at **Boland, Inc.**, a Rockville, Md., air conditioning company, have run out of excuses to do at least a minimum amount of exercise each day.

Reason: Two years ago, the company adopted Rick's Quick Fit, a 15-minute workout that employees can do in their work clothes. A 10-minute stroll on a treadmill, a three-minute workout with light hand weights, a minute of stretching and a minute of stomach crunches every day has helped some of the 200 participants lose weight or lower blood pressure.

Boland held training sessions on how to do the exercises safely. Now employees do the daily program either at home or in the office gym during breaks. The company pays \$10,000 a year to use the program, a cost Vice President Lou Boland says the organization recovers through better employee health, morale and motivation.

Contact: Lou Boland, VP of Boland, Inc., at (301) 984-2400, or Rick Bradley, owner of Rick's Quick Fit, at ricksquickfit@aol.com.

'Virtual officing' allows Forest Service to retain top staff

Some of the **National Forest Service's** star employees have considered turning down promotions rather than relocating to major Forest Service locations in cities. Many have said they'd quit rather than abandon their rural lifestyles.

That's why the U.S. Department of Agriculture agency started installing "virtual offices" in some employees' homes, allowing them to keep their positions without relocating.

Like telecommuting, virtual officing only works for employees with jobs that don't require face time, like computer or classifications specialists. A handful of the agency's 34,000 employees work in virtual offices, while many others participate in a traditional telework program that allows them to work up to four days a week

Free food! Boost morale, productivity by feeding the staff

Your organization may spring for pizza when everyone works late or buy a cake for employees' birthdays. But employer-provided food can do more than fill the bellies of hungry staff; it can boost morale and cut down on employees' out-of-office time, too. Here are some creative examples:

- Leo Burnett USA keeps a bowl of fresh, cold apples at the front desk and encourages employees to eat one a day.
- WTOP radio in Washington, D.C., serves up a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving for employees who have to miss family celebrations.
- Hitchcock Fleming & Associates advertising firm in Akron, Ohio, stocks an employee refrigerator with beer and sodas that workers may enjoy after 5 p.m., a practice that one manager says creates a collegial atmosphere.
- KIRO radio in Seattle occasionally springs for restaurant gift certificates for high performers. "You can't underestimate the power of food," advises news director Ursula Reutin.

Tip: If food is a frequent freebie, keep it healthy, at least most of the time. The boss of a baked goods company brags that most of his employees gain 10 pounds on the job.

from their homes. The agency saves about \$35,000 every time it doesn't have to relocate an employee.

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'Balanced hours' program helps recruit, retain lawyers

Law firms often eschew scheduling flexibility because their income is based on billable hours. But the loss of a few hours isn't as expensive as recruiting new lawyers.

That's why law firm **Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham** introduced its Balanced Hours program, allowing its busy lawyers — from entry-level to partners — to telework and flex their schedules. The program helped propel the firm to No. 1 among women lawyers in a Harvard Law School Women's Law Association survey.

"A lot of times people find themselves having to make a decision to leave or stay," says Roslyn Pitts, Balanced Hours coordinator. Now, they can telework, compress their hours or flex their starting and ending times.

Those who reduce their hours also get reduced benefits. They collaborate with other lawyers to ensure each case is fully staffed.

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Candy bars and \$100 bills help recognize work 'stars'

Since **San Joaquin Gardens**, a continuing care retirement community, began handing out candy bars and \$100 bills, employee turnover has dipped 6 percent.

"You'd be surprised how little it takes to increase the morale of employees," says Lois Manley, the Fresno, Calif., facility's HR director.

The handouts are part of a recognition program that pats employees on the back for exceptional service to residents, who live in independent or assisted-living units. The program also rewards employees for longtime service, perfect attendance, accident-free performance and participation in a wellness program. The effort began as a way to retain hard-to-keep health care employees and recruit new employees to the staff of 240.

The organization names an employee of the month from among employees who've been nominated by residents or residents' family members. Every nominee earns a candy bar. The one who becomes employee of the month is given a prime parking spot for a month and an extra \$100.

Once a year, the monthly winners vie for the Star of the Year award, which reaps the victor \$500 and a limousine ride to a black-tie banquet.

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