

UK businesses suffering from ‘presenteeism’ with over half of employees coming into work when sick

New research from Fellowes, based on responses from 4,000 employees and 500 business leaders across Europe, demonstrates that ‘presenteeism’ is one of the biggest threats to UK workplace productivity

28 April 2017, Doncaster, UK: To coincide with [World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#), global office solutions brand, [Fellowes](#), has today launched new research urging business leaders to tackle the growing problem of ‘presenteeism’ across Britain.

More than half (52%) of UK workers are currently going to work when their performance is negatively affected by work-related health issues – and a third (34%) of workers have admitted they have even considered moving jobs due to the negative impact of their work environment on their health – the highest percentage across Europe.

Presenteeism is the new absenteeism

Despite their best intentions, employees coming into work when sick are contributing to a rising trend of ‘presenteeism’ across the UK. When a worker is present but not able to perform their function properly, it compromises their productivity. With most employees continuing to work at sub-par levels rather than taking days off to recover, this also prolongs the effect of illness. Subsequently, businesses are experiencing a detrimental knock-on impact on the quality and volume of work produced, with a further impact on overall business performance.

Our research shows that Brits are amongst the worst affected in Europe, with UK employees suffering regularly from backache (34%), neck ache (25%) and headaches (23%) as a direct result of how they are working. In addition, as many as 1 in 5 (19%) UK workers highlighted weight problems, and 1 in 10 (8%) cited an increase in blood pressure as a result of poor wellbeing at work.

When analysing the cause of these health issues, the lack of awareness about good working practices in businesses becomes clear. The main bad habits UK employees admit to in the workplace include; poor posture when sitting at desks (55%), not drinking enough water during the day (42%), and sitting for too long without taking a break (42%). Worryingly, such health issues are reducing the daily volume of work employees are able to produce, leading to nearly a quarter (24%) of employees working extra hours or at the weekend on a regular basis to compensate – risking a reduction in employee engagement levels and further loss of focus in their work.

A preventative, rather than curative approach is needed by leadership



Presenteeism is an issue of growing concern for business leaders. In our research, senior managers in the UK identified improving morale (51%), productivity (50%) and creating a healthier workplace (39%) as their top priorities, yet, only 39% of employees are aware that their employers currently offer health and wellbeing initiatives to address these areas. What's more, almost half (44%) of the UK workforce don't think their employers are doing enough to look after their general wellbeing.

To tackle this growing problem, employers must start to implement a longer-term, more preventative approach to unhealthy working practices, rather than falling back on tactical 'quick-fixes'. With 57% of employees saying that they would stay in their jobs longer if more was done to look after their wellbeing, and 58% saying that their work would be of a better quality, the solution to the productivity puzzle is clear. We can see there is a huge incentive for employers to address the causes of current work-related health issues to pave the way for a much happier, more engaged and ultimately more productive workforce.

Louise Shipley, European Business Team Manager – Workspace Management at Fellowes, said: *“Our findings signal serious problems with how organisations are approaching wellbeing and productivity in the workplace. They show a clear lack of awareness around the causes and effects of a presenteeism culture in the office.*

With European businesses already losing a staggering €73 billion annually^[1] due to absenteeism, employers simply can't disregard the worsening problem of presenteeism taking effect. Happy and healthy employees do better work, and more of it, making the bottom-line impact simply too significant to ignore.”

Across Europe, 74% of senior managers believe that offering health and wellbeing initiatives would enable them to attract better staff. For example, by introducing ergonomic products to support employees' posture whilst they work, such as foot-rests, back supports, wrist-rests and screen risers. Almost two thirds (65%) of managers also believe that their teams would feel more motivated and engaged if their immediate work environment was improved by having Sit-Stand workstations. Moreover, they identified that these would reduce occurrences of absenteeism (58%), by allowing employees to add more movement to their working day and better their health.

“The tools are there for business leaders to tackle presenteeism and help to prevent the widespread workplace health issues that are dragging down productivity and work quality. It's time for leaders to take the reins and drive a potentially huge impact on their organisations,” concludes Shipley.

To find out more about how your business could benefit from Sit-Stand solutions, [click here](#).

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About the research

The research was commissioned by Fellowes and conducted by global research agency, Loudhouse. It was conducted in February 2017, with 4033 online interviews with employees and 526 online interviews with employers/ decision-makers in businesses across Europe. The respondents were based within five countries: the UK, Netherlands, France, Germany and Spain. 25 in-Depth telephone interviews were also conducted with buyers, influencers and experts for ergo products.



About Fellowes Brands™

Fellowes Brands™ offers an extensive range of products to equip the home and workspace, including paper shredders, air purifiers, binders, laminators, desktop accessories, mobile accessories and record storage solutions. Founded in 1917 by Harry Fellowes and headquartered in Itasca, Illinois, Fellowes Brands employs more than 1,200 people throughout the world and has operations in 20 countries. Fellowes products are now readily available in over 100 countries across the globe. For more information, visit www.fellowes.com. For further information on the Sit Stand Range visit the [website](#).

^[i] Fellowes Research: February 2016