



Need a **Power Nap?**

Businesses and consumers are discovering the importance of a good night's sleep.

Your new job comes with a BlackBerry, a laptop computer, and a non-stop travel schedule. But chances are your company—having equipped you to function in a 24/7 work environment—hasn't given much thought to your need for sleep.

That may be changing. A recent study by the Institute of Medicine found that sleep-related fatigue costs \$150 billion annually in absenteeism, workplace accidents, and lost productivity, a staggering sum that could prompt employers to sit up and take notice. Sleep loss is also associated with heart attack, obesity, hypertension, depression, and stroke.

According to the Better Sleep Council, studies show that nearly 40% of workers suffer from fatigue, and that lack of sleep makes many dislike their jobs. Research also shows that the impairment caused by 24 hours without sleep—or by a week of sleeping five hours a night—equates with an elevated blood-alcohol level.

Corporations have discovered that wellness programs on weight, exercise, and nutrition improve productivity and lower health-insurance costs. Now experts like Harvard Medical School professor Charles A. Czeisler are calling for corporate policies that limit the hours worked and

mandate sleep education programs.

"We are seeing the beginning of a trend where corporations are developing policies and guidelines," says Rick Anderson, executive vice president and North American president of Tempur-Pedic International, Inc., whose popular line of mattresses is based on a proprietary formula originally developed for NASA.

Emphasis on sleep quality is becoming more prevalent, and companies are taking notice of these trends. "We've long known the importance sleep has on productivity," says Anderson. "Our products provide solutions for many struggling to get a good night's sleep, and ensure a higher quality of sleep for anyone."

Consumers are waking up to the importance of sleep. One sure sign, Anderson says, is that people are now aware of their sleep surfaces. Annual Gallup polls show that in 2004 nearly 50% of people had no idea of the make of their mattress; that number dropped to just 27% in 2006.

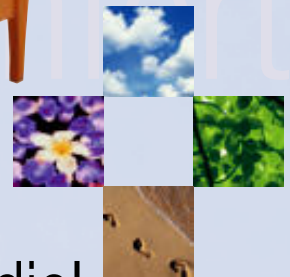
On another front, researchers at Oklahoma State University recently studied what happened when people replaced mattresses that were five years old or older with new ones. The benefits of the new bedding systems, says Dr. Bert Jacobson, co-author of the University's study, were "immediate and sustained." The study is the first to show the major role a new mattress can play in improving quality of sleep, and thus quality of life.

But while awareness is growing, it often isn't enough to get people to take action. According to Anderson, getting eight hours of sleep a night ranks just below losing weight on the list of things people know they should do but never get around to doing—which adds stress to their lives, further fueling sleeplessness.

Today's concern about sleep represents a major shift from the '80s and '90s, when the hard-charging corporate culture and the dot.com economy made sleeplessness a badge of honor. Back then, says Anderson, operating on three hours' sleep was applauded. Today, saying "I was able to take a nap" is proof of our more health-conscious culture. Says Anderson: "You've reached the ultimate lifestyle when you can disengage during the day long enough for a power nap." ■

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