

BACKGROUND ON BUSINESS

From 9-5 to 24/7: Tech Tips for the Overworked Force

(NAPSA)—According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Americans work more hours per week than people in other parts of the world. In fact, the ILO found Americans work an average of nine weeks more a year than their counterparts in Western Europe. This fact—combined with an unstable economy, shrinking workforce, technology improvements and global business efforts—is turning the American workforce into the American overworked force.

Employees increasingly are concerned about their companies' bottom line—and, ultimately, their jobs. Today's business leaders are reducing their workforce in an effort to improve productivity and reduce operating costs. With layoffs on the rise and employers frequently choosing not to fill positions left open when employees leave for other opportunities, corporate downsizing is the norm. As a result, the pressure to perform and employee stress levels are at an all-time high.

Today's "always on" technologies, including laptops, PDAs and cell phones, also contribute to the problem. Technology has created an ultraconnected workforce, effectively extending the workday and the workweek.

Consequently, businessmen and women need to discover ways to combat fatigue and other physical effects of working long, intense hours. Ironically, technology can also provide some of the best methods to help ease stress:

- Use break-reminder software. Longer workdays mean more hours at the computer and a greater risk of repetitive strain injuries. Research shows taking breaks can increase efficiency and fight off



For people who use computers, digital performance eyewear can help reduce eye fatigue.

fatigue. "Break reminder" software can encourage you—or even force you—to take a break. The software's functionality ranges from a simple pop-up to interactive elements like games, videos and exercises. Some of these programs are available free online.

- Schedule personal time electronically. Electronic calendar programs are how many of us stay organized at work, but they can also help you manage time away from the office. Schedule appointments for meals, gym workouts and family outings. This will not only help you stay organized, but also help you schedule time to relax and rejuvenate.

- Give your work space a technology makeover. Find ways to make your cubical or office more efficient and comfortable by evaluating chair position, computer setup and lighting. According to the University of Utah/NEC "Productivity and Multi-Screen Dis-

plays" study, people using multiple monitors are 10 percent more productive than single-monitor users.

- Simplify mobile technology. Instead of carrying a cell phone, PDA and MP3 player, consider adopting a smartphone. These all-in-one devices combine e-mail, Web browsing, custom business applications with a music player, digital camera and even built-in GPS through an intuitive user interface. They can help keep users on time, organized and having fun.

- Use visual ergonomic technology. According to the 2007 American Eye-Q survey, 82 percent of Americans frequently work with either a computer or a wireless handheld device. Gunnar Optiks has created digital performance eyewear to help reduce eye fatigue caused by digital data streams from computers, cell phones and PDAs. Many office environments are not equipped for visual performance and Gunnars can help ease stress placed on eyes from external light sources such as fluorescent lights and computer screen glare by relaxing the ocular muscles. This can help employees be more effective and productive throughout the day.

History shows when times are good, employers find ways of improving the work environment. Conversely, they do more with less during times of economic distress. A sluggish economy leads companies to lay off workers, resulting in fewer workers doing the same (or more work), which can affect overall quality and efficiency. These simple ideas, such as using multiple monitors, smartphones and Gunnars to improve productivity, can help employees achieve success, improve performance and achieve an edge in today's changing work environment.