



A Healthy Body is A Productive Body

The idea of productivity seldom conjures up thoughts of eating healthy and staying fit. The truth however, is that without a healthy body, one cannot be productive. Generally when we speak of productivity, reference is made to improving on time management, working efficiently, and making effective use of our scarce resources.

It is also critically important for the country's workforce to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Our people are an important endowment that Saint Lucia is blessed with and making productive use of our human resources is essential in promoting productivity as well as competitiveness. Therefore, we need a workforce that is well qualified and healthy.

In today's fast-paced world, the idea of eating a balanced diet and maintaining an exercise regimen can seem like a luxury rather than a necessity. However, in the long run, taking the time needed to eat well-balanced meals and to exercise regularly increases productivity.

Studies recently conducted at University of Los Angeles have found that many individuals employed within the business sector are falling sick due to poor diets and the lack of exercise. The result of this is ultimately a loss of productivity within organisations due to days lost as a result of persons being away from work.

Within the publication 'Smart Business', Dr. David Heber, professor of medicine and director of the UCLA Centre for Human Nutrition states,

'By not being active, many are losing muscle and putting on fat because they tend to eat the same amount of food that they ate before. Skipping meals doesn't really help (either) because your body tends to compensate later. Also, by skipping meals, you often don't get the vitamins, minerals and protein that you need. The end result is that you lose muscle and gain fat, usually around the middle. This leads to a lot of serious problems. An example of which is 'metabolic syndrome'. This is a form of high blood pressure, high blood fats and high blood sugar. It occurs in about 50 percent of people between the ages of 40 and 60. It can lead to heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and cancer.'

What can we do about this? Dr. Heber believes the solution is a simple one- eat a healthier diet, (which means a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables), and exercise about 30 minutes a day. He stresses that from a business perspective, an employee's health is vital to productivity. For this reason, people should not skip lunch due to a meeting, or ignore sleep with the intention of finishing a report.

'The brain requires blood glucose, or sugar from food and it also needs the protein that you find in foods. So when people don't eat, the number one thing that happens is that they become less energetic, less able to think clearly and less able to do their jobs. Productivity will go down when you're not eating properly. Nutrition is very important for mental activity, maintaining productivity.

For those employed within a profession that demands physical activity, it is even worse. Anyone employed in such a job requires very good nutrition, exercise and rest or they will lose the muscles needed and possibly suffer an injury'.

Although employers can play a major role in encouraging their employees to be healthier, the onus truly lies on the individual to recognise that performing at full potential requires attention being paid to one's health.

Recently in a post for **linkedin.com** called 'Productivity Hacks- It's All In The Eyes', entrepreneur Richard Branson discussed how his eye sight at one time limited his productivity. He found a solution through the use of reading lenses. Even with this being the case, Branson still practices certain measures that as a businessman enable him to function positively and productively throughout the day. He writes,

'As so many of us spend hours glued to our mobile, laptop or tablet screens, if you aren't careful you can damage your creativity as well as your eyes. By resting your eyes from the screen you can also relax your mind and create the space to come up with new ideas.

Look at your emails in bursts, don't constantly check them all day or you will never get anything done. Manage your mobile, don't let it manage you. And remember to look after your body – including your eyes! You'll soon see you get lots more done, feel healthier and can read all about it'.

About the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC)

Established in October 2013, The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) is responsible for the identification of key issues related to competitiveness and productivity in Saint Lucia.

The NCPC and its Technical Secretariat is committed to providing the necessary advocacy and research to produce timely and effective recommendations to policymakers on issues that affect both competitiveness and productivity on island. For more information about productivity or on the NCPC, visit www.stluciancpc.org; www.facebook.com/stluciancpc, call 468-5571/5576 or send an e-mail to tostluciancpc@gmail.com