

The Napping Company: Bringing Science to the Workplace

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Abstract: Increasing emphasis is currently being given to the importance of bringing knowledge gained from science into places where people live and work, in order to increase the impact science has on the general public's quality of life. Scientific findings about the positive impact of napping on mood and performance are an example of research generated knowledge that needs to be brought to the workplace. A major goal of the Napping Company (www.napping.com) is to bring the science of napping to the workers and the workplace so that employees and employers can act on this knowledge and change worker napping behavior and employer napping policies. The present paper overviews the challenges inherent in making scientific knowledge useful to how we live our lives. The Napping Company is guided by five principles of knowledge transfer in the company's attempts to disseminate and increase utilization of napping research. Examples are given to illustrate how the Napping Company has used these principles to bridge the gap between napping science and nap behavior and policies in the workplace.

Key words: Napping, Knowledge transfer, Dissemination, Utilization, Evidence-based messages

Introduction

The National Institutes of Health in the United States are emphasizing the importance of bringing knowledge gained from science into places where people live and work, in order to increase the impact science has on the general public's quality of life (<http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pdf/NIHRoadmap-ClinicalResearch.pdf>). The importance of bringing to the workplace the research on the mood and performance enhancing benefits of napping¹⁾ is one example of this attempt to bridge the gap between what we know from science and how we lead our lives. A major goal of the Napping Company (www.napping.com) is to bring the science of napping to the workers and the workplace, so that employees and employers can act on this knowledge and change worker napping behavior and employer napping policies.

The Challenge of Knowledge Transfer

The challenge of making research generated knowledge useful to how we live our lives has been increasingly noted²⁻⁵⁾. Efforts to bridge the gap between science and the "real world" of work and living situations have primarily focused on simple dissemination techniques to effect change. While scholars in medicine⁶⁾ and health care⁷⁾ have commented on the fact that research based knowledge usually does not reach beyond the scientific community, the scientific community has often showed little understanding or interest in the complexity of dissemination and utilization of scientifically generated knowledge. For the most part knowledge generated from research activities has been disseminated mainly through traditional formats, such as publishing articles in scientific journals, providing workshops and giving lectures at scientific meetings, with the result that research findings are rarely utilized by the non scientific community³⁾. Since the 1960's little progress has been made addressing the

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challenges of scientific knowledge transfer⁸⁾.

The Napping Company

The Napping Company is unique in its singular focus on increasing the dissemination and utilization of evidence-based messages about the positive effects of napping to the general public, including workers and their bosses. In its attempts at impacting the workplace through knowledge transfer, The Napping Company is guided by 5 principles.

Principle 1. Develop evidenced based messages that communicate the essence of a body of research

In contrast to dissemination of data from a single research study, evidence-based messages are the ideas that emerge out of a body of research knowledge. Furthermore, these messages are framed to influence decision makers, in this instance employers. Decision makers are not apt to be influenced by the size of regression coefficients or the significance levels in individual studies⁹⁾, but by ideas presented as a simple message that is designed to inform their decision-making.

Examples of the evidence-based messages constructed by the napping company are: “Napping at the workplace can improve worker productivity”, or, “napping is the no cost, no sweat way to improve worker performance”, or “napping can be good for you and good for your company”.

The essence of a body of research must be framed in a straight forward, succinct way for it to be potentially effective. It is ideas and knowledge that emerges from the data that decision makers need¹⁰⁾. Even then, however, the evidence based message will only be applied within the constraints and incentives of a decision maker’s environment⁹⁾.

Principle 2. Build credibility with decision makers as a legitimate developer of evidence based messages

Whether we as scientists like it or not, the credibility of the messenger effects the impact of the message. If an individual or an organization is to play a role in delivering evidence based messages, then it must be viewed as a credible source by decision makers. In the business world credibility is one of the hallmarks of leadership Credibility is earned over a period of time¹⁰⁾; earning this credibility over time explains in part why innovations take significant time to be accepted⁴⁾. In the research field we have a recognized and accepted way for meeting the criteria of capability and credibility, i.e., successful peer review of submitted articles and grant proposals and performing seminal reviews of selected topical areas. In contrast, The Napping Company’s

route to being seen as a credible source of information about napping included authorship of popular books (The Art of Napping¹¹⁾; The Art of Napping at the Workplace¹²⁾), generating media attention (hundreds of appearances on radio and TV, and interviews in magazines and newspapers) and an interactive web site (complete with quizzes and surveys). To build credibility an organization must also listen to the people one is trying to reach. Through focus groups and surveys of several thousand workers, the Napping Company quickly possessed a large pool of qualitative data with respect to what workers and employers thought about napping at the workplace.

Principle 3. Build knowledge transfer expertise within the Napping Company

We decided that an interactive web site is almost a requirement for an organization attempting to influence employers and employees. The web site is used to gather information about napping practices, present information to the public, engage the visitor in quizzes and surveys and serve as a resource for media personnel, who are a tremendous asset in getting scientific information out to the general public. The Napping Company’s website comes up number one on all the major search engines by simply typing in the word “napping” on the search engine. In addition, we tapped the expertise of the public relations departments of organizations who wished to be helpful to us, in particular Boston University.

A particularly effective knowledge transfer activity has been the Napping Company’s declaration of a yearly National Workplace Napping Day. In cooperation with the public relations personnel of Boston University, each year we send out a press release stating that the Monday after the return to daylight savings time (when workers experience one more hour of sleep deprivation) is to be celebrated as National Workplace Napping Day. Employers have celebrated this day in previous years by conducting fundraising “napathons” or “napcar” races, or late afternoon “naptime teas” (see www.napping.com). Employees celebrate by reveling in a workplace nap.

As a result of the communication from companies generated by these media activities, we have been able to identify the major concerns of employers about workplace napping. No doubt the major concern is exemplified by the following commonly heard remark from employers: “I don’t pay people to sleep at work”. Of course, this is an easily addressed misperception, as The Napping Company is promoting “napping at the break”, rather than “sleeping on the job”.

Principle 4. Convey evidence based messages to achieve targeted outcomes

In addition to identifying the evidence based messages one wants to communicate, and attempting to build organizational credibility and expertise, this principle indicates that an organization must specify the type of outcome that is expected by the communication of the evidence based message. To implement this principle, the Napping Company used a framework that clarifies the types of outcomes that organizations can expect from different types of knowledge transfer efforts³⁾, and which is designed to overcome the difficulties of knowledge transfer noted earlier. The Napping Company insures that the knowledge transfer strategy employed flows out of the type of knowledge transfer effect or outcome the organization is attempting to achieve. Certain dissemination strategies are designed to spread or promulgate new information to assure that individuals are knowledgeable about the benefits of napping. These strategies include activities such as the traditional, more passive methods of dissemination (e.g. journal or popular articles, conferences or lectures¹³⁾ as well as newer methods, such as web strategies, based on an active, information seeking paradigm¹⁴⁾. Napping researchers need to look for ways to increase the interactive nature of the communication about napping; that is, helping people to explore, learn, analyze and confirm napping information, rather than just reading about it. These interactive utilization strategies are especially important to use with employers, as most employers remain reluctant to implement nap policies in their workplaces. For example, one utilization strategy is to provide interested employers with the opportunity to discuss proposed worksite napping policies with other employers who have who have already adopted such napping policies. An experienced mentor can inculcate a sense of hopefulness about the possibility of change that is not present when users are simply provided with new information.

In contrast to dissemination strategies, utilization strategies are designed to translate the new evidence based messages about napping into organizational and personnel structures in such a way as to embed the practice in the workplace. In this context, The Napping Company has attempted to embed in the workplace either a napping policy and/or a new physical place for napping. A napping policy would simply be one that states that workers can nap at their break, without the danger of losing their job and/or their reputation. A napping structure would be the introduction of napping rooms at the place of employment (for examples see Anthony & Anthony¹¹⁾). The capacity to integrate knowledge into one's daily behavior has long been recognized

as one of the most difficult aspects of knowledge transfer and is indeed the lynchpin of bridging science to practice^{13, 15)}. In order to institutionalize the idea of napping in the workplace, technical assistance or consultation to employers may be needed. The Napping Company recommends that if a business needs technical assistance around napping issues, the business in need should contact consulting organizations with an expertise in sleep issues, such as Circadian Technologies.

In summary, short of providing on-site technical assistance at the workplace, The Napping Company has used multiple dissemination and utilization strategies toward multiple outcomes, depending on the targeted population and whether the goal is to change napping knowledge, attitudes or behaviors. We use the web, as well as presentations and workshops when we are trying to change workers' knowledge and attitudes about napping. We also attempt to collect and publicize through our books, real stories of the importance of workplace napping to individual workers. As opposed to attitude change, if the goal is simple knowledge dissemination to workers, we disseminate information to the media, which continues to find workplace napping an intriguing concept to publicize.

Principle 5. Routinely evaluate efforts at communicating the evidence based messages about napping

Changes brought about by knowledge generation and transfers are not regularly evaluated in most scientific studies, including napping research projects. Because the Napping Company's mission is to disseminate and facilitate knowledge about the benefits of napping, we try to track our impact in keeping alive interest in workplace napping. After each National Workplace Napping Day we obtain the number of media hits stimulated by the press release and whether the visits to The Napping Company's website have increased after the press release is sent out. We routinely note the number and types of companies that call us for information about napping, the ongoing media hits, unsolicited invitations to present at conferences, and keep track of new companies that are attempting to commercialize napping by selling napping related products or services (e.g., new napping devices, new napping places).

Conclusions

Based on the Napping Company's knowledge gained from our knowledge transfer activities, it has been our conclusion that as the economy has cooled off, the notion of workplace napping as an employee perk has declined. Offsetting this

trend, however, has been the notion of the benefits of napping to a worker's overall health, an idea consistent with many companies rising interest in employee wellness initiatives. Furthermore, napping facilities that are not tied to a single employer's worksite but serve workers from many companies are being developed (www.metronaps.com). Lastly, we believe we will see growth in the application of simple napping policies rather than the development of more elaborate napping rooms. Such a policy would state that employees napping at their break is an acceptable activity, similar to other sanctioned workplace break activities such as taking a walk, eating a snack, drinking coffee, etc.

In summary, there is a reason that the bridging of science to practice doesn't routinely occur—it is difficult to do and cannot be perceived as an afterthought to the research endeavor⁹. Knowledge transfer must be seen as an important part of the knowledge generation process, deliberately planned, and carried out by credible experts in knowledge transfer. For the seven years of its existence, The Napping Company has been unique in its efforts to bridge the gap between what we know and what we do, in order to transfer the scientific knowledge of napping into people's living and working situations. The Napping Company's experience and knowledge gained from these scientific bridging activities has resulted in the development of guiding principles and organizational know-how with respect to the knowledge transfer initiative, know-how that has implications for not only the science of napping but for all of sleep research.

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