

# Understanding Walking Meetings: Drivers and Barriers

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## ABSTRACT

There is increased interest in reducing sedentary behavior of office workers to combat the negative health effects of prolonged sitting. Walking meetings offer a promising solution to this problem as they facilitate a physically active way of working. To inform future development of technologies supporting these type of meetings, in-depth qualitative insights into people's experiences of walking meetings are needed. We conducted semi-structured walking interviews (N=16) to identify key drivers and barriers for walking meetings in a living lab setting by using the 'WorkWalk'. The 'WorkWalk' is a 1.8 km walking route indicated by a dotted blue line with outdoor meeting points, integrated into the room booking system. Our findings provide insights into how walking meetings are experienced and affect the set-up and social dynamics of meetings. We offer design recommendations for the development of future technologies and service design elements to support walking meetings and active ways of working.

## Author Keywords

Walking meetings; Physical activity; Sedentary behavior; Office workers; Field study; Design research

## CSS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing~Field studies** • Human-centered computing~HCI theory, concepts and models  
• Human-centered computing~Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms

## INTRODUCTION

Working while walking has a rich history, especially in philosophy. Well-known examples of philosophers with a habit of walking were Aristotle, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Emanuel Kant. Aristotle's nickname was 'peripatētikos', derived from the Greek 'Peripatein' or 'walking', which also translates as 'engage in dialogue while walking' [30]. To

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CHI '20, April 25–30, 2020, Honolulu, HI, USA

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<https://doi.org/10.1145/3313831.3376141>



Figure 1. Understanding walking meetings through the use of the WorkWalk (photo by Bart van Overbeeke)

Nietzsche, walking was how he worked best. When writing 'The Wanderer and His Shadow', he walked for up to eight hours a day while taking notes for his book [30]. Kant, on the other hand, walked to escape, as "a distraction from work". He described walking as a way to recover from sitting in the same place [30].

As illustrated by early philosophers, walking can be beneficial for a number of reasons. Through walking physical inactivity can be decreased, which has been proven to reduce the risks of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases [26,46] and all-cause mortality [57]. Furthermore, it can improve mental well-being [5,39], general well-being [12] and reduce fatigue and musculoskeletal discomfort [63].

Nowadays, up to 71% of working hours are spent sitting [19] and our increasingly sedentary lives have become a major public health risk [11]. Lee et al. (2012) even talk about a pandemic of physical inactivity, which is now considered the fourth leading cause of death worldwide [40]. The office environment is one of the places where sedentary behavior predominates [19], and research is needed to investigate how to increase physical activity within this setting [18,47].

While most interventions at the workplace are designed to reduce sedentary behavior by encouraging people to take more breaks and interrupt work [24], a strategic perspective