How to Make Your Business Bike Friendly
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Why Go Bike Friendly?

The Benefits of Making Your Business More Bike Friendly

Maybe you want to become a bike friendly business because you’re a passionate cyclist. Maybe you’re a business owner or employee who’s looking for ways to improve your workplace or reduce health care costs. No matter what your objective is, becoming a bike friendly business can help you get there. But making the decision to become a bike friendly business isn’t just about your love of cycling. It’s a business decision that can deliver measurable improvements and ROI. From healthier and more productive employees, to reduced absenteeism; a reduced carbon footprint and significant PR value, there are many ways that making your business bike friendly can pay dividends.
Physically active commuting is associated with a healthier level of most of the cardiovascular risk factors (e.g., HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol and triglycerides).

von Huth, Smith, L., et al., 2007 - Commuting physical activity is favourably associated with biological risk factors for cardiovascular disease, European Journal of Epidemiology, 22, 771-79

The health benefits of cycling outweigh the safety risks by a factor of 20 to one.


Quality Bicycle Products has found that cyclists save the company’s health insurance provider about $200,000 in reduced health care claims annually based on a comparison with their co-workers who decline to participate in the program. QBP’s insurer also estimates the company’s cycling program prevents about $300,000 in lost productivity per year. Between 2009 and 2011, QBP’s overall health care costs declined 4.4 percent.

http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/quality_bike_products_health_reward_program.pdf

82% OF BICYCLE COMMUTERS BELIEVE THEIR HEALTH HAS IMPROVED SINCE THEY STARTED BICYCLE COMMUTING

Moritz, W., 1997 - Survey of North American bicycle commuters: Design and aggregate results, Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, 1578, 91-101
Commuters to McGill University in Montreal were more satisfied with their commute if they cycled than if they drove or took transit – even in winter.


The mean total duration of absenteeism over the study year was more than 1 day shorter in cyclists than in non-cyclists.

The association between commuter cycling and sickness absence. Hendriksen IJ1, Simons M, Garre FG, Hildebrandt VH.

Improved Productivity

CYCLING RAISES PRODUCTIVITY: EXERCISING BEFORE WORK RAISES AN EMPLOYEE’S PRODUCTIVITY BY AN AVERAGE OF 15%.

Silicon Valley Bike Coalition
Corporate Responsibility

If 5% of New Yorkers commuting by private car or taxi switched to biking to work, they could save 150 million pounds of CO2 emissions per year, equivalent to the amount reduced by planting a forest 1.3 times the size of Manhattan.

Transportation Alternatives, 2008 Rolling Carbon: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Commuting in New York City

If 20% of short car trips were replaced by bicycle trips in Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin, it would prevent 57,405 tons of carbon dioxide from being emitted.

Grabow, M., et al., 2010 - Valuing Bicycling’s Economic and Health Impacts in Wisconsin, January 2010

OVER 1,100 BUSINESSES ARE NOW CERTIFIED AS BICYCLE FRIENDLY BUSINESSES BY ADVOCACY GROUP LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS, INCLUDING NATIONAL BANKS, UNIVERSITIES, INSURANCE COMPANIES, AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

http://www.bikeleague.org/business
What Is A Bike Friendly Business?

Bike Friendly Business is an effort to improve cycling integration in America by the advocacy group The League of American Bicyclists (LAB). A Bike Friendly Business is a business that makes the bicycle a fundamental part of their company culture. It’s about more than just riding, but encouraging a healthy lifestyle and creating a culture that embraces social responsibility. It might seem like this is a complicated or expensive process to undertake, but it doesn’t have to be.

At Performance Bicycle, we started the process of becoming a bike friendly business just over two years ago and found that it was actually surprisingly easy, and in many ways cost neutral.

You might think that just because we’re a bike company we already had a lot going for us, and in some ways that was true. But we found we faced many of the same challenges that most other companies do. While we had some of the big pieces in place, like high cycling participation, we also realized we were lacking in other ways we hadn’t even thought of until after we received our Bike Friendly Business assessment.

Based on our experience of becoming a Gold-Level Bike Friendly Business, we’ve created a How-To Guide.
ASSESSMENT

Taking the League of American Bicyclists self-assessment is an excellent way to find out where your company’s strengths are, as well as to identify some areas where you may need improvement. Once you’ve completed the assessment, step back and see where your company has scored well. These strengths, like high commuter participation, bike parking facilities, or other benefits give you a good core to start working from.

The self-assessment will also show you where you have some room for improvement. It’s possible the assessment will give you quite a few areas to improve in, but don’t get discouraged—even bike companies end up with what looks like a fairly comprehensive list. The best place to start is, like with any other project, finding steps that can be executed quickly and at little cost.

But let’s back up a half step here, and say that before you take the self-assessment, it’s a good idea to appoint either an HR representative, someone from Corporate Social Responsibility, or an executive who will sponsor the bike friendly efforts, and give senior-level support for taking the steps recommended by the self-assessment.

Take The Self-Assessment

Taking the League of American Bicyclists self-assessment is an excellent way to find out where your company’s strengths are, as well as to identify some areas where you may need improvement. Once you’ve completed the assessment, step back and see where your company has scored well. These strengths, like high commuter participation, bike parking facilities, or other benefits give you a good core to start working from.

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Implement First Steps

If you’ve taken the self-assessment but aren’t sure where to get started, here are five very easy steps you can take. When we were making our transition from silver-level to gold, these were the easiest steps for us to execute; they provided a solid foundation to get started.

• **Provide Parking** Providing bike parking can be an easy way to encourage people to ride to work…and will prevent your office from having a bike parking jam in the hallways or between cubes.

• **Provide Support** Your office probably has at least one employee who is more than willing to share what they know. Organize some time for them to give classes or answer questions about bike safety, commuter tips, bike maintenance, etc…

• **Reward Riding** Little known fact: the federal government has a pretty generous tax benefit for commuting by bike. But there’s also plenty you can do at the corporate level to reward riders. From cash incentives (remember, you may be saving some cash on health care claims), to pizza lunches for commuters, to product give aways or gift cards, there are plenty of creative ways to get people excited to ride.

• **Offer Facilities** We found that one of the biggest impediments to getting people to ride more was having a place for them to clean up and change when they get to work. You can try converting an old utility closet to a shower space, providing lockers, or other creative ideas to make commuting more comfortable.

• **Create an Employee Team** This doesn’t have to be a really formal thing, but an employee organization can provide input and help your business implement the steps above, ensure you’re on-track executing the recommendations from the self-assessment, and make recommendations for future goals and steps.
Now that you’ve implemented the list above, let’s look at some further steps you can take. These steps have a little more cost and planning involved, but can help significantly boost both PR value and participation.

- **Provide shared access to bicycles** Having even just two or three office bikes for employees to borrow to run errands, go to meetings, or check out to commute to work can make it easier for employees to take the first steps toward integrating the bicycle into their lives.

- **Participate in Local or National Events and Challenges** There’s nothing that can really get people excited and involved like some healthy competition. Consider signing up for and getting all your associates involved in the People for Bikes National Bike Challenge or a national charity ride event like a Bike MS event or Tour de Cure.

- **Host a Bike to Work Day or Week** Hosting a bike to work event is a great way to jump start your bike commuting program. To increase participation, consider hosting a bike-to-work day breakfast. And while you’re at it, why not organize one in the broader community, or become a partner in a local bike-to-work event? May is National Bike Month and it offers plenty of opportunities and ideas for involvement.

- **Partner with an advocacy organization** Partnering with an advocacy organization, either at the local or national level, can help increase your visibility in the broader community and lets potential customers, and prospective and current employees, know you are a bike friendly business.
Like we discussed earlier, committing to becoming a bike friendly business is a business decision, which means that it’s important to track key metrics so you can make improvements and changes based on data.

- **Mileage and Participation** This is the baseline metric to start with. How many of your employees are riding, how often, and how many miles per week?

- **Commuter Satisfaction** Are your changes positively impacting those who are commuting? What changes would they recommend? What recommendations do they have for the future?

- **Evaluate Your Goals** What are you hoping to get out of being a bike friendly business? Do you want to reduce health care costs? Improve employee satisfaction? Identifying your key success metrics and tracking them will help you know if you’re being successful in your implementation.

- **Engage Employees** Now is the time to mobilize your employee organization. Designate someone in that group to take charge of collecting the above metrics, and then action the findings to drive further improvements, or make corrections and recommendations when needed.
Make It Fun

Never lose sight of what this is really about at the end of the day: bikes are supposed to be fun. We’re of the opinion that all too often it’s easy to get too focused on the numbers, health care cost reduction and ensuring maximum participation. But we are definitely of the opinion that fun has plenty of hidden value. There are so many unquantifiable benefits to fun: employees who are happier, less stressed, and feel like they’re making a positive contribution to our society and environment. 

So keep it light. Keep it fun. That’s the best way to ensure your transition to a bike friendly business is a success.

WANT EVEN MORE INFO ON HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN BECOME BIKE FRIENDLY?

Click the link below and send us an email. We’ll follow up with more information you can use to make your business more bike friendly.

bikefriendly@performanceinc.com