

Stand your way to a healthy work life - The DeskStand method

 By [Cari Van Wyk](#)

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Have you recently heard the phrase 'standing is the new smoking'? Have your colleagues started to get up at random intervals of the day, propping up their keyboards and screens and then just stand there working? These are all symptoms of a new trend that has hit the working world.

Recent studies have shown that it is to your disadvantage to sit your nine-to-five day away. Those of us who have to sit the entire day, especially in front of a computer, will know that headaches, back pain and tense muscles is a common occurrence. Luckily, the solution is simple - get up! You won't regret it as the benefits are numerous. This new practice includes helping you burn more calories, greater attention span, higher productivity, higher energy levels, relieves back pain and headaches, improved posture and a longer life!



Aiding us in our quest for a healthier work style, there has been a massive surge in products to make standing and working much easier and comfortable; there are as many options as there are benefits to this. One such option is the DeskStand, created by local designer Ryan Roberts.

After watching my colleagues jump up every now then and trying it myself, I jumped at the opportunity to contact Ryan after the press release came in about his appearance on the Espresso Morning Show. He provided us with a DeskStand to try out and here's what he has to say about it himself:

 ***What inspired you to start the DeskStand Company?***

Last year my back was giving me problems. I had serious leg pain running down the left side of my leg. My chiropractor said I should try standing and working as it strengthens and activates various back, bottom, and leg muscles, which switch off while sitting and sleeping. I found out that standing improves posture, strengthens the body's core and even burns calories! I also read and heard a lot about the health benefits while standing and using standing desks, especially in the US, and found out the standing desk are not a new idea. I took advantage of my product design background and decided to build my very own standing desk last year, this is when I founded the company DeskStand and have been standing and working ever since.

My biggest discovery while standing and working is that my body generally feels stronger and can hold itself again. My leg pain has also disappeared and I can honestly say I can focus on my work for much longer. I am also twice as productive compared to sitting, I actually feel lazy when I sit down. Don't get me wrong, I don't advise anyone to stand all of the time, but I don't advise sitting all the time either. Life is a balance and I know that the DeskStand offers that balance the body needs, especially while working when you sit for more than six to seven hours a day.

▣ ***What kind of research went into the making of the DeskStand?***

I designed the DeskStand to suit my personal needs first and then started telling other people once it was refined enough. I wanted something that was lightweight, easily assembled and was super affordable to the general public. I didn't want a separate desk; I wanted something that sat on a desk and adapted to my needs, whether it was sitting or standing. I did some research on existing standing desk solutions but they were all very ugly looking, bulky and quite expensive. The US has quite a number of solutions, but again the shipping costs were very expensive and not worth my while investing.

▣ ***Do you have any other collaborators contributing to the project?***

Not really, I suppose you could say that I invented the DeskStand. I was inspired by other standing desk solutions and their ability to adjust and adapt to the user's needs. The design is truly unique and original and there is no other like it in the world, you can bet on that.

▣ ***Do you have any plans to expand into other products? What does the future hold for the DeskStand Company?***

We are indeed extending our range and already have orders from customers on designs that haven't been manufactured or even prototyped yet, which is very exciting for us! We have planned to launch a brand new DeskStand at this year's #DesignIndaba2015, but unfortunately cannot talk about it just yet, it's a surprise!

We plan to be the best standing/ sitting/ combo desk design company in the southern hemisphere and are currently building a kick-ass team to get us there. We will be supplying all of the accessories to go with your DeskStand including various standing seats, motions mats and analogue under-the-desk treadmills. We are currently recruiting the right dynamic, motivated and fitness fanatic people so if you know of anyone please drop us a mail at info@deskstand.co.za.

▣ ***What is the biggest market you cater to at the moment? Would you say it is mostly individuals who are interested in the DeskStand or have you been approached by corporates and companies who want to integrate products like yours into their offices and employee wellness projects?***

I would say all of the above. Although the market is still quite niche in South Africa, there is definitely a demand from working professionals, businessmen, CEOs, MDs, fitness fanatics and computer programmers. We have been approached by some retailers, online marketers and e-commerce companies. For other people, I think the concept of the standing desk is still quite new. A lot of people who have not tried or understand the benefits of standing and working are afraid of trying it; this is our challenge at the moment.

▣ ***How do you educate people who have a bad habit of sitting to converting to standing while working?***

'Sitting people' don't want to stand, but sitting for up to seven hours a day is no doubt very unhealthy. In fact, a growing body of research shows that people who spend many hours of the day glued to a seat die at an earlier age than those who sit less - even if those sitters exercise. We don't want people standing all of the time, but we don't want them sitting all of the time either. What we give people is a balance in the work place allowing them to sit and stand while they work.

■ ***Your site is rather educational in itself, but do you have any bigger plans to educate consumers and the public on the benefits of standing and using a product like the DeskStand?***

I was on the Espresso Morning Show in January, which was really great! The guys really helped build up my interview with some facts about the health benefits of standing while working. This was a really great educational platform that reached millions of viewers.

We also hope that each article, such as this one, and news publication, educates the 'sitting people' on how sitting is bad for your health. We are attending various trade shows, exhibitions and health talk conferences around SA and the globe this year to help inform people on the benefits to a balanced sitting/standing work station.

■ ***A considerable number of the studies that were done on the effects of standing vs sitting while working focused on students. Do you plan to approach schools/other educational institutions with regards to using the DeskStand?***

One of my personal passions and interests came about while I was reading an interesting article on how standing desks are benefitting the schools in the US. Students had a significant increase in activity, burned 15% more calories and maintained a longer attention span. We are planning to do some trials in schools here in the Western Cape and want to work with keen principals interested in changing the way learners stand and learn in the classroom. We don't want to focus entirely on providing the teachers with the DeskStands; we mainly want to give it to the students for their desks.

■ ***With regards to making the DeskStand; do you use locally procured materials, manpower, etc.?***

The wood is actually a custom laminated ply board that we get from a unique supplier. The wood is very strong and super lightweight, exactly what we were looking for. We love the fact that you can see the bare wood grain on the edges, but still maintain a smooth, solid surface to work upon, our customers like that too! Not much manpower is actually needed because the design is quite considered and refined.

■ ***How has the DeskStand been received by consumers?***

There has been a lot of interest in SA, I mainly think so because South Africans aspire to lead a healthy lifestyle and are used to change. There is definitely a trend in SA. I see a lot of blogs and articles being written about the 'standing while working revolution' and 'standing is the new smoking'.

There has been a lot of interest abroad, especially from the US. It seems to be a huge health trend over there. I really like reading about standing desks and how employees, companies and fitness enthusiasts are adopting this 'new' type of standing workstation. There are endless case studies and research that has been done in the US that prove that standing is better for your health compared to sitting.

I have also had interest from the UK, Australia and Europe and plan to expand and supply the demand over there soon. We want to share the DeskStand with the world and hopefully change people lives for good, the problem is that many people have got into the bad habit of sitting and working. These people may see sitting as their 'comfort zone' and don't like change, which is a challenge. These are the people we want to reach and educate on how standing and sitting while working is not all that bad.

■ ***The DeskStand is still, to most, a luxury and not a necessity. How do you plan to market your product and encourage consumers to buy it?***

The DeskStand is by far the most affordable and ergonomic standing DeskStand on the market. Generally, consumers

already know what they need is standing. Some consumers actually can't live without standing due to back problems and various other issues. We rely on word-of-mouth, social media and testimonials from customers to get our cause out there. We are definitely not a commercial product and don't plan to hit the masses with another half-made product.

The DeskStand is a necessity in all of our customers' lives and we plan to keep the DeskStand just that: personal. Each DeskStand is hand stamped with a unique number, which we keep track of on our online cloud database. If customers have a query or would like to ask a question, we already know who they are, where they work and which DeskStand they chose.

You will be participating in the Design Indaba this year. Can you tell me more about the design of the product and process involved? What can we expect to see at the Design Indaba?

Yes indeed, #DesignIndaba2015 has accepted our application and we will be exhibiting there so keep an eye out for The DeskStand. We plan to exhibit The Original #DeskStand - plus we are revealing a new secret product that we have been developing behind closed doors and launching at our stand on the 26 February, so don't miss out! In terms of the design, I would be happy to chat about how I reach the final design profiling to anyone who visits our stand at the Indaba. You may also view our official [Design Indaba online profile](#), which has just become active.

There you have it! We no longer have to wait for our employers to create a healthier workplace; we can take control of our own working environment and customise it to our needs. Remember everything in moderation; find a healthy balance between sitting and standing. Don't throw your desk chair away just yet!

For more info, go to www.deskstand.co.

ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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