

Bella Yoga's Maue carves out a corporate niche

From the St. Louis Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/stories/2010/02/08/story13.html>



What's Your Routine?

Michelle Maue, founder of Bella Yoga

Michelle Maue is helping people find their “om” at the office.

The founder of Bella Yoga is taking her classes to the workplace for clients, including Fleishman-Hillard, Towers Watson, Gallop Johnson & Neuman, and soon, Enterprise Holdings.

Robert Droney, an attorney with Gallop Johnson & Neuman, helped spearhead the effort to bring yoga classes to the law firm. Droney said six employees have committed to an eight-week package, which costs \$120.

Droney said taking a yoga class over lunch once a week gives him an energy boost and helps him clear his mind. “It is encouraging to have a wellness-minded employer. We pay out of pocket, but the firm is supporting the classes by providing conference rooms,” he said. “It is the convenience of having it at work that is most appreciated.”

Droney started doing yoga 10 years ago to help resolve lower back and neck pain, on the advice of his chiropractor. “In addition to flexibility, it has helped with my balance and posture, and it has helped develop more core strength in my abdominal and back muscles than what I have experienced with running, biking and swimming,” he said.

A standard yoga class is 60 minutes, Maue said, and starts with gentle diaphoretic breathing to help prep the muscles. Then, Maue takes students through gentle movements to begin opening up the hips, like cobbler’s poses, bringing both feet to meet in the center, with both knees falling outward to each side. She then moves to the more simple poses, like cat pose, where you place both knees and both hands on the ground and roll the back upwards toward the ceiling, and downward facing dog, where you place both feet and both hands on the floor with hips raised, creating a V shape with your body, keeping the head in line with the spine. All throughout, Maue makes sure students stay focused on deep breathing. After the muscles are warm, Maue then increases the difficulty level. More challenging exercises include poses that focus on balance and core strength, like various plank poses.

“There is probably a 12-minute to 14-minute window when the class should be extremely challenging,” Maue said. “Then it is important from there to cool the body down so it can assimilate.”

The workout ends with Shavasana, with the student laying flat on the yoga mat for five to 10 minutes, working on complete relaxation.

Maue said a student can burn between 300 and 400 calories in a 60-minute yoga class, and that yoga should be used as one component in a fitness regimen. “I definitely encourage a cardio program in conjunction with yoga,” she said. “A great yoga teacher can help students who are runners or rock climbers enhance and promote their performance.”

She said yoga is good for athletes and nonathletes alike since it’s been proven to lower blood pressure, improve sleep and alleviate stress.