

STARTUP

WALKING THE TALK

Stepathlon has one mission: to make corporate India fitter. It is already seeing results

By Abraham C. Mathews

RAVI KRISHNAN DOESN'T SIT DOWN with potential clients for meetings; he takes them for a walk around their campuses. This is, perhaps, an unusual way to conduct business; not so if the aim is to sell the idea of walking to corporate India.

Before you dismiss Krishnan's idea as amateurish, consider this: He is the same man who achieved rockstar status in India's sports management business, helping global sports and media group IMG find a foothold in the country back in 1995. He now runs Stepathlon, a company he founded with exercise expert and nutrition author Shane Billsborough in April 2012. Its mission is to get corporate India walking its way back to health.

On his walks with prospective clients, Krishnan uses the carrot and stick approach. He tells them that 65 per cent of India's young adults have blood pressure in the pre-hypertension or hypertension range, 60 million suffer from diabetes while 155 million are obese primarily due to a sedentary lifestyle, aggravated by personal transport and technology. "This leads not only to absenteeism, but also 'presenteeism' — a condition in which people turn up for work in a state that doesn't allow them to function effectively," says Krishnan. "A *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) study states that a company's lost productivity due to 'presenteeism' is two to three times higher than its medical and pharmacy costs."

