



Managing Risk Through Ergonomics

Ergonomics reduces absenteeism and improves employee welfare



KOS Ergonomic Solutions

- Specialists in equipment, furniture and other solutions to:
 - Create an ergonomic, productive environment
 - Manage and prevent back pain, neck pain, and other musculoskeletal disorders
 - Improve productivity and reduce absenteeism



What is ergonomics?



Evolution???



Most common environmental problems

- Incorrect desk height
- Unsuitable chair
- Incorrect positioning of equipment
- Feet can't touch ground
- Job does not incorporate movement
- Insufficient lighting
- Trip hazards



IBEC and SFA Report

- Absence levels: Average 2.58%. In companies employing over 500 employees rise to 3.58%
- 8 million workdays are lost each year due to absenteeism.
- Back pain/injury and stress are the most commonly cited problems on medical certs
- Cost of absence annually: €900m

IBEC, 'Employee Absenteeism - A Guide to Managing Absence' 2010
SFA National Absenteeism Report 2010

What does absence cost your company?



- Loss of output of injured employee
- Loss of output employee covering
- Overtime cost for cover
- Loss of potential income due to delayed work
- Temporary staff

Presenteeism



Early intervention

- Increases productivity and
- improves individuals moral and confidence
- Reduces stress levels



Importance of Movement



- We can spend up to 95% of our working day sitting

• We need to move!!!

- Movement keeps the spine healthy, improves circulation & reduces muscle fatigue



How does ergonomic furniture minimise risks for MSDs?



- An ergonomic workstation will:
 - Place joints in a neutral position
 - Avoid continuously bending forward
 - Minimise Repetitive movements
 - Avoid a twisted spine that strains the back
 - Allows you to alternate posture as well as movements
 - Avoid excessive reaches



The Safety, Health and Welfare at work (General Application) Regulations 2007



- Ensure general use of equipment is not source of risk
- To comply you must:
 - Carry out risk assessment
 - Provide training on safe use of VDU
 - Inform of entitlement to eyesight test
 - Perform further assessment if new workstation or using new equipment/technology

VDU Assessment: Employers duties



- Competent person with necessary skills, training and experience
- Physical risk assessment of each individuals' workstation
- Can't use software packages to self assess
- Appropriate steps must be taken to control risks identified
- Periodic breaks/changes of routine
- Written copy and shared with employee

VDU Assessments an opportunity



- to listen to employees
- to catch problem early
- to react early

Proactive vs Reactive Approaches



- Proactive Ergonomics
 - Preventing work related MSDs by recognising, anticipating and reducing risk factors in the planning stages of workplaces or new systems of work.
 - Include health and safety / risk management staff in purchase of furniture and equipment.
 - Proper selection and use of equipment, job methods, workstation layouts and materials
 - Design for as many people as possible and understand ergonomic principles of posture and movement

Proactive Ergonomics Case Studies



Big Four Accountancy Firm



- Many employees use laptops in the office and externally.
- Neck and shoulder pain is common complaint.
- Solution: Laptop pack – a laptop stand and mini keyboard.
- Research using laptop packs
 - 32% decrease in mechanical load placed on the neck
 - 21% increase in comfort
 - 17% increase in productivity

The effect of using a laptopstation compared to using a standard laptop PC on the cervical spine torque, perceived strain and productivity
Anna Lindblad, Karin Hendriksson-Larsén, Paulen Bongers, 2002, Umeå University.

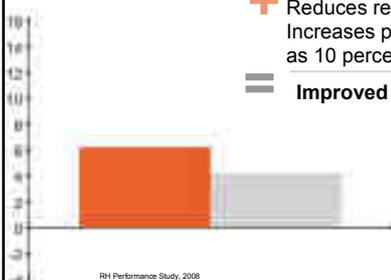
AA

Study in AA Call Centre, Newcastle, England



■ Year 2006
■ Year 2007

- Better chairs. Better business.**
- + Reduces absenteeism by 2 percent.
 - + Reduces rehabilitation costs.
 - + Increases productivity by as much as 10 percent.
- == Improved profitability



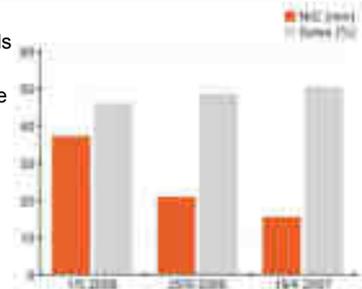
RH Performance Study, 2008

AA

Study in AA Call Centre, Newcastle, England



- Response time for incoming calls fell by 58%
- Sales factor rose by 9.4%



RH Performance Study, 2008

Reactive Approaches



- Dealing with problem cases
- Manage the injury before it worsens
- Adapt a Stay at Work program and a Return to Work Program
- More cost effective to reduce risk factors at the design stage
 - Additional costs are incurred in redesigning or modifying work processes

Reactive Ergonomics Case Studies



Multi-National Medical Devices Manufacturer



- Employee suffered severe recurring back pain
 - Pain killers needed. Attended pain specialist and Occupational Therapist
- Poor posture in the work area identified as a contributing factor.
- **Solution:**
- Chair provided to support user and adapted to suit the high work bench and tasks necessary
 - Chair training and ergonomic guidance was given to employee
- User is off pain killers, pain decreased significantly and overall comfort levels improved.
- Her posture has improved greatly and no longer slouches

Busy Currency Trader



- History of stress
- Back and neck pain
- Regular short term absence from work

Solution:

- Height Adjustable Workstation
- Dynamic Moving chair
- Adjustable Multiple Monitor Arm with logical Screen Arrangement
- Posture guidance and follow up
- Full return to work after one month

Returning to Work



Health and Productivity RTW Model



- Proactive RTW programs reduce lost time, costs, increase employee satisfaction and benefit the employer.
- Employees who are satisfied with their employer's response to injury or illness return to work 50% faster with 54% lower cost.
- Supportive work environments are highly predictive of successful RTW. Workers in highly supportive organizations are 4 times more likely to successfully function at work after returning to work.
- When opportunities for transitional work or light duty assignments are available, disabled individuals are twice as likely to successfully resume work following an injury



Kenneth Mitchell, Ph.D. The Return to Work Dividend: Protecting Productivity 2012

What Increases the likelihood of going back to work?

- The worker's belief in a high probability of returning to work
- Flexible employee benefits that support continued work with an impairment
- Non hostile work environment
- Timely application (within the first 30 days of an injury or illness) of return to work programs
- Correct ergonomic environment – a workplace that is suitable to this particular individuals needs.

Key Strategies for RTW

- Ergonomic assessments ensuring work environment is not cause of aggravating injury
- Transitional work – incremental resumption of work tasks during a well defined time frame
- Limited light duty assignments to maintain safe work function during periods of impairment
- Written RTW policies that define the RTW process with specific guidelines and accountabilities

Take away points

- Intervene early
- Involve the employee in the solution
- Focus on capacity not incapacity
- Set up the work place to suit the individuals needs

Take away points

- Don't wait for the problem
 - Put a Stay at Work Program and Return to Work Program into place
- Work on improving employee welfare
- Undertake workplace health promotion

Appendix 1: VDU Regulations (from HSA's website)

- **Who is covered by the Display Screen Equipment Regulation 2007?**
 - If the employee has no choice but to use the VDU to carry out her/his work
 - If the employee normally uses the VDU for continuous periods of more than one hour
 - If the VDU is generally used by the employee on a daily basis
- **What constitutes a workstation under the Display Screen Equipment Regulation 2007?**
 - "workstation" means an assembly comprising display screen equipment, which may be provided with a keyboard or input device or software, or a combination of the foregoing, determining the operator and machine interface, and includes—
 - (a) a work chair and work desk or work surface,
 - (b) any optional accessories and peripherals, and
 - (c) the immediate work environment of the display screen equipment.

VDU Regulations continued

- **How should a workstation analysis or risk assessment be carried out?**
- *Stage 1: Initial consultation with the employee*
- *Stage 2: Observation of the employee working at the computer workstation*
- *Stage 3: Identify the issues that need to be addressed*
- *Stage 4: Review the implementation of the action plan*
- **Please note:** Schedule 4 details **minimum requirements** for all Display Screen Equipment that should be in place for Display Screen Equipment workstations.
- **For complete information, please see:**
http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Display_Screen_Equipment/Display_Screen_Equipment.html#dselaw

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