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OFFICE TECHNOLOGY & EQUIPMENT

Custom ergonomics solutions can save you time & money

As we grew up with parents and teachers telling us to stand up straight, little did we know how right they were. It turns out that giving the body the right support is critical.

As offices have become drastically more computer-oriented over the past 30 years, the problems of repetitive stress have emerged.



DESIGN

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Thankfully, technology is helping to provide the solutions as well. A cohesive combination of two sciences can help to provide the ultimate ergonomics solution. First, an investment in equipment specifically engineered to maximize productivity and reduce stress is critical. The other half of the equation is giving employees the opportunity

for custom ergonomic assessments by skilled professionals as well as the training to use their equipment properly.

Business owners invest in all sorts of maintenance from painting to cleaning to the heating and ventilation system in their buildings. Designing a welcoming office where employees want to come to the office is just as important.

A preventative philosophy of investing in ergonomics is much more economical than reacting to employee discomfort and the benefits are enormous. This combination of products, people and process improves productivity and creates happier, healthier workers.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

People spend dramatically more time at their jobs than they do at home. Shouldn't they be given the best tools to do their work?

The basic components of an office environment are

important and they should work together. Properly designed workstations positively impact every aspect of the work environment from decreasing time spent on tasks, to improving space utilization, to reducing risk factors for work-related injuries.

Several ingredients of a good desk setting have been improved significantly with innovative and well-researched inventions. Adjustability is the key factor in choosing office equipment.

As monitors have evolved from the bulky components of the past, several manufacturers have developed articulating arms for the new flat-panel monitors. Their strong, durable and lightweight design allows employees to easily adjust, pivot and swivel their computer screens to an appropriate recommended position.

Another improvement is adjustable task lighting. Gone are the days of harsh overhead florescent lighting. Designers today know that solutions exist to put the light where people need it in order to do their jobs. Proper lighting illuminates constantly changing work areas and versatile solutions are available.

Probably the most important combination for office work is the mixture of an ergonomic chair, an articulated keyboard and an adjustable mouse tray. Flexible platforms can accommodate both left and right-handed individuals and adapt to a wide variety of workstation configurations.

Meanwhile, a chair is a good example of equipment that should be carefully selected. Too many businesses simply buy the cheapest one they can find. But they can cause more problems than they solve

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

There are two important considerations in finding the right fit between your employees and their equipment.

The first is selecting an appropriate vendor for your

continued: Custom Ergonomics

office needs. A big-box office supply store is fine for pencils and paper, but workspace design is just as critical as writing a business plan or choosing a location. A good workplace services provider should not simply provide a catalog of furniture, but offer fully integrated solutions to your needs. Certified installation of modular architectural components and other products should be accompanied by product training and maintenance service.

The second issue is making sure that each employee fits his or her environment. Professionals such as Denver Physical Therapy provide a full range of therapeutic solutions as well as seminars in ergonomic education and ergonomic assessments. During an assessment, licensed physical therapists observe employees and make specific recommendations on the set up of the office environment.

Guidelines for ergonomic positions are complex and different for every individual. An ergonomic assessment will generally include training in adjusting your chair, placing your monitor, the appropriate level for your keyboard, and desk exercises to keep your body flexible. Be aware that it may not always be easy at first for employees to adjust after years of "sitting and typing improperly."

"Comfort is important, but it is not always ideal," says Erica Jacob, physical therapist and vice president of clinical services for Denver Physical Therapy. "A new working position may feel awkward at first but your body gets used to it and on the whole you will feel better once you are used to the new position and using the muscles more effectively."

Changing habits can be as important as changing

spaces. Not only should employees work in the right positions but they should also take a break every 30 to 45 minutes from their computer-oriented tasks.

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

Today, ergonomics is as much about engineering as it is about safety and health. Ergonomics, defined as the science of work and creating improvements is about making the work process better and improving performance. The health benefits alone are worth a fortune in more contented workers, according to Denver Physical Therapy.

"When your body is supported properly, your lung capacity is better. Your overall range of motion is better. Your muscles don't get as fatigued at the end of the day. It really does improve productivity and businesses are now investing the time and money to help people before they have a problem," Jacob says.

Creating a super-efficient workspace provides the ultimate ergonomic solution. The positive results incurred from a collaborative effort in this area between employers and employees are astonishing. Morale and quality of work goes up and the rates of absenteeism and illness go down. Every employee is different, but combining flexible technology and ergonomics expertise creates a unique solution that fits every individual.

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