

## Ergonomics in the workplace makes good business sense

**BRIAN BOYLE** Solutions at Work

If you are a business owner or manager and haven't considered how the health and safety of your employees can affect your bottom line, you may be missing something.

The practice of ergonomics is basically about fitting a workspace and the required equipment to an individual and not the other way around.

Repetitive strains and musculoskeletal injuries that create lost time and decreased productivity can easily be prevented with some forethought and planning.

Return on investment for prevention of injuries in the workplace is estimated to be as high as 3 to 1.

With that in mind, think about all of the areas of your business where repetition of activity occurs. Consider the office personnel who use a computer.

Typing this article alone required over 2,000 keystrokes, and it is not very long. Imagine the number of keystrokes of an employee who spends the majority of a work day typing.

Look at all of your employees, not just those in clerical positions, and see where else repetition occurs. You may be surprised at what you find.

One approach that has been successful in this endeavor is the "Six Sigma" methodology. The steps in this process are: Measurement, Analyze, Improve and Control (or MAIC).

Measuring areas of concern can be as easy as documenting daily time performing an activity, the posture during the activity, and the force needed to perform the activity.

Analysis might involve performing employee surveys and conducting surveys of the workstations/work areas themselves.

Elevating or lowering workstations, adding well-designed equipment or changing layout and gaining employee support for change may produce improvement.

Control means revising procedures and holding employees accountable for following the new procedures.

A well-designed ergonomics program for your business can improve your bottom line. It may also help you with recruiting and retention by making your workplace more desirable.

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