



## *How Does Your Office Support Total Worker Health?*

It's no secret that productivity feels good.

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When we accomplish something that we care about, it lifts our mood, self-confidence, and sense of self-worth. That's why many organizations embrace strategies such as ergonomic office design and workplace wellness programs to keep employees feeling great. Did you know that it's possible to take that idea a step further? The idea of total worker health helps you do that. Stop thinking of the workplace as somewhere you go every day to do work and nothing else. Start thinking of it as an ecosystem that contributes to your overall wellbeing.

### **What is Total Worker Health?**

Total Worker Health® is an initiative launched in 2011 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The program sought to change the way that employers approached the concept of employee health and wellbeing.

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Before the Total Worker Health® Program (TWHP), the traditional attitude towards occupational safety and employee wellness programs focused on keeping the workplace safe and workers protected from harm at work. It emphasized physical hazards and took steps to address on-the-job stressors. Beyond that, it assumed that there were no other impacts of the job on an employee’s safety or wellbeing.

Research generally shows that employment represents a social determinant of health – a factor in a person’s environment that can positively or negatively affect their health. Both social assumptions about work and early research around the health effects of work have generally found that employment leads to better health overall. However, that wasn’t the full picture.

The concept of total worker health as defined in the initiative encourages employers to consider other ways that a job might affect people’s physical or mental health. This promotes an integrated approach to workplace health that considers things like:

- Workplace safety and hazard management
- Ergonomic solutions
- Wages and hours
- Workload and stress reduction
- Interpersonal relations between coworkers and supervisors
- Access to PTO or other forms of leave
- Employee wellness programs

We’ve known for a long time that health involves more than simply the physical parts of our being. Total Worker Health® modernizes the view of health in the workplace.

## **Workplace Safety and Work-Life Balance: The Link**

There’s a reason “what do you do?” reigns among the first questions we ask when meeting someone new. For the last hundred years, our work has more or less defined us.

The term “work-life balance” was only coined in the 1970s. It refers to the balance between work and other aspects of a person’s life, and a lot of evidence exists that underscores the importance of work-life balance on business success.



Research shows that maintaining a work-life balance is imperative for employees to represent a positive social determinant of health. Another study also found that employed people only had better overall health than unemployed people when they also engaged in high-quality work.

Further research shows that a well-balanced work and life positively influences things like workplace safety and hazard management. A solid work-life balance:



#### **Supports employee attentiveness:**

Employees working regular or consistent hours are less likely to be tired or mentally unprepared for the workplace.



**Reduces occupational accidents:** Work-life balance is associated with better concentration.



#### **Reduces absenteeism:**

When everyone shows up for work, teams experience less stress because they aren't working extra to cover a missing person.



#### **Promotes healthier coping methods:**

Interpersonal relationships at work benefit from employees handling stress and disagreements better.

# Total Worker Health: How to Take the Holistic Approach

Total worker health shifts our longstanding ideas about what an office is for – it's no longer just a place where employees go to work for the company. Rather, it's an ecosystem where all parts work together to enhance productivity and prosperity across the board.

Viewing the office as an ecosystem:

- Redefines employees from resources to active members within the environment
- Underscores the interconnectedness of processes and departments
- Encourages holistic approaches to challenges, optimization and collaboration

To create an ecosystem that promotes and benefits from total worker health:

## 1. Invest in the Physical Comfort of Employees at Work

We've said it here plenty of times before: Comfortable employees are happy, productive employees.

Invest in head to toe physical comfort of your team while at work with ergonomic solutions. Consider acquiring feedback from employees about what their biggest physical pain points are at work. Then, deploy ergonomic desk accessories such as footrests, backrests, or monitor stands to make sure that everyone stays comfortable throughout the day.

## 2. Reduce Work-Related Stress While at Work

Is the workload itself stressing everyone out? Certain industries may prove more prone to this challenge than others but there are still plenty of options for you to take.

First, consider solutions that promote physical activities like movement and stretching throughout the day. Our SmartFit® system empowers employees to customize their workspace even with hot-desking or the use of flexible workspaces.

Second, post visual reminders around your newly designed work ecosystem. Consider informative guides on stretching or quick breathing exercises that employees can do on the fly.

## 3. Embrace Processes and Solutions that Promote Collaboration

Prosperity is a team effort and strong teams represent the cornerstone of sustainable growth. Make sure your team has what it needs to stay connected and innovative.

Whether choosing wireless control devices to make presentations easier or the right peripherals to keep everyone plugged in and connected, your productivity ecosystem should reflect employee collaboration. This supports relationship building and helps motivate employees by making them feel like a part of something greater.



#### 4. Support a Work-Life Balance That Keeps Everyone at Their Best

Finally, support your team's work-life balance to help them feel better about coming to work. While ergonomic solutions often focus on the physical benefits, remember that they also support work-life balance on a whole. For example, ergonomic solutions:

- Boost productivity so team members avoid taking work home, staying late, or coming in early
- Reduce the chance of injuries or pain leading to missed work
- Maintain healthy habits such as exercise or physical activity both at work and at home
- Support mental health, making it easier to enjoy an active lifestyle outside of work

### Build Your Ecosystem with Kensington

NIOSH launched Total Worker Health® in 2011, but since then it's become a concept embraced by many organizations around the world. By approaching employee health and wellbeing holistically, you can create a thriving ecosystem that boosts productivity, engagement, and long-term company prosperity.

Get started building your ecosystem with Kensington's full line of ergonomic solutions. We'll help your team members stay comfortable, productive, and feeling like a valued part of your company.

**Learn more about our workplace ergonomics and wellness solutions now.**



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