



Ergonomics and Productivity: Why a Workplace Wellness Program Is Important

Have you had a chance to stretch today?

Do so now. Lift those arms over your head and stretch out your upper back. Take a deep breath. Sit up straight, roll your shoulders back, and appreciate the feeling of your straighter spine with your sharper mind.

Feel better?

You just increased circulation, gave your mood a boost, and increased the likelihood of solving the next challenge you encounter creatively – in about 20 seconds. Imagine if you did it every morning for five minutes instead?

That's one thing that a workplace wellness program aims to do.

It's becoming more common for organizations to develop wellness programs for staff. These programs aim to introduce healthy behaviors into the workplace through a combination of resources, activities, and incentives. They also include things like ergonomic design and attention to employee posture to promote a health-conscious company culture. According to the CDC, about 50 percent of employers have a wellness program in place.

Office design is a great place to start when developing a wellness program. Here's a closer look at how ergonomics relates to a wellness program to improve employee health outcomes.

Posture Affects Wellness in the Body and Mind

Remember when power poses were a big deal and everyone (okay, not quite everyone) obsessively posed like superheroes before their next big meeting? In hindsight, it was a little hilarious, but Amy Cuddy was spot on with the intuition that your posture affects your mind, body, and work quality.

Posture is often unconscious, but scientists have known for a while that it tends to reflect our mental and emotional states. Power poses aside, emerging evidence suggests that consciously practicing good posture does positively impact our confidence, energy levels, productivity, and even memory. Some studies show that simply sitting up properly can alleviate fatigue and mild to moderate depressive symptoms.



At the core, good posture promotes proper alignment within the body, helping to prevent pain or discomfort. It also reduces the chances of additional injuries and alleviates a whole range of chronic diseases that, while aren't caused by poor posture, intensify due to poor circulation or breathing.

The mental and physical effects of posture make it a key concern in the workplace, where employees frequently spend hours at a time in the same or repetitive positions. That's why more organizations have chosen to embrace ergonomics to keep employees comfortable.

Ergonomics, Wellness, and The Workplace

Although the word ergonomics first appeared in 1857, it wasn't until the 1990s that it gained popularity in offices and organizations. Today, it's a hot topic that continues to be a growing trend. Many understand ergonomics to involve only the physical elements of a workspace – that is, having the right chairs or adjustable computer monitors. However, the original definition of ergonomics included much more than simply the way a person sat or stood. It divided the workplace into four elements:

- **Work demands:** the demands on a worker's skill, time, and safety
- **Psychosocial:** the social and cultural elements of a workplace
- **Physical:** the climate, chemical agents, or biological risks an employee encountered
- **Technology:** office products, hardware, and software design

Today, the best ergonomic solutions address all four of these elements. When properly applied, ergonomics improves employee performance and increases comfort. This is true across numerous industries from manufacturing to corporate offices. Across these studies, employee performance increased with:

- Anti-fatigue floor mats
- Chairs with neck and back support
- Adjustable monitor stands, height-adjustable desks, and trackball mice
- Natural light
- Improved software interfaces and smart scheduling
- Positive company culture
- Visual reminders about posture and stretch breaks
- Temperature-controlled environments

The organizations studied involved workspaces specifically designed to promote the physical, mental, and psychosocial wellbeing of their employees. In other words, they all had varying degrees of workplace wellness programs in place that embraced ergonomics.

The Impacts of a Good Workplace Wellness Program

A wellness program is an organizational policy designed to promote healthy behaviors. Often, these programs focus on reducing operational risk factors by promoting employee safety, physical wellbeing, or mental health. However, they also sometimes emphasize common health challenges like weight management or smoking cessation to help reduce health care costs for employees.

Ergonomics represents one part of a workplace wellness program, but typically the most visible part. As the examples above show, ergonomics considers more than the physical elements. Nonetheless, the physical elements form a strong foundation that affects other parts of the organization, such as its culture.

Thinking of developing a workplace wellness program? Office ergonomics is a good place to start. It can:

1. Improve Employee Engagement

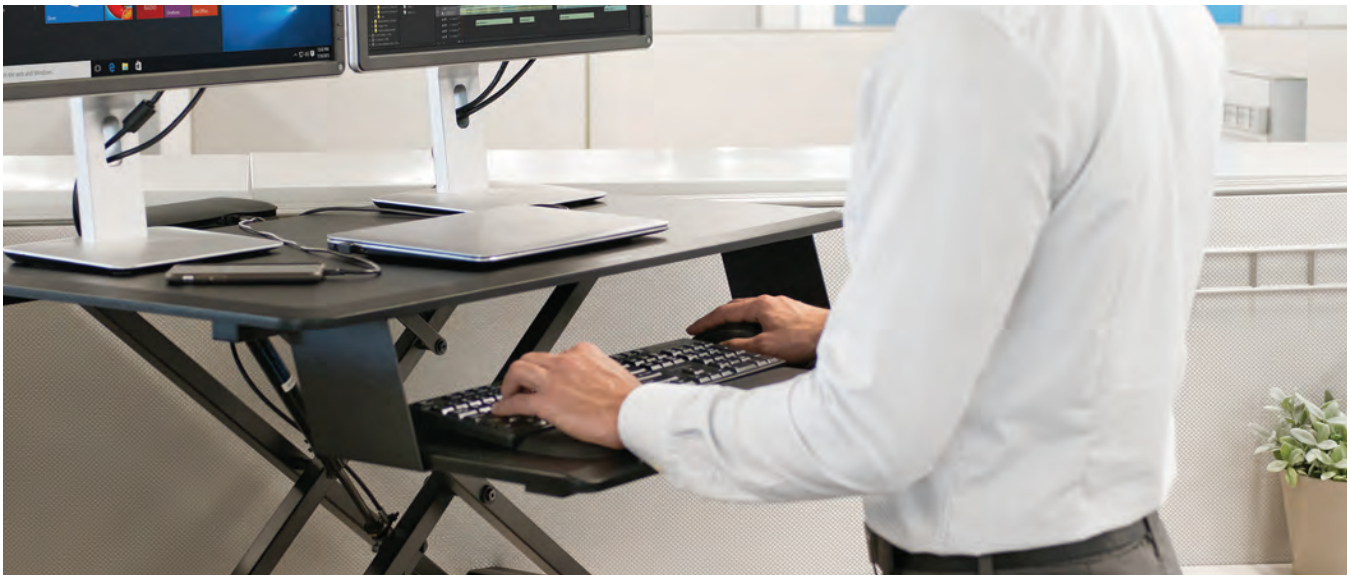
Recent studies suggest that ergonomics improves employee engagement by helping employees feel valued. Providing solutions like adjustable monitor arms or ergonomic keyboards sends the message that a company feels like its workers are worth the investment. Such solutions also make it physically easier to accomplish tasks, improving the level of productivity in an office.

2. Promote a Health-Conscious Attitude

Visual reminders for healthy behaviors promote a health-conscious attitude amongst employees. Ergonomic footrests can help focus attention on posture, while visual reminders about posture around the office reinforce good habits. Likewise, a good ergonomic office set-up can help improve connectivity and decrease employee stress.

3. Increase Employee Attendance (and Retention)

Healthy, comfortable employees make productive workers who miss fewer days of work. Introduce ergonomics that support physical activity such as a standing desk. Take things a step further and follow this up with walking meetings, group stretching, or other physical fitness programs. One study found that such measures reduced absenteeism by 22 percent and improved employee retention by 15 percent.



4. Support Safety Culture

The link between ergonomic workstations and safety was first made in manufacturing before being observed in offices, too. Managers noticed that employees sometimes engaged in unsafe practices to be more physically comfortable while they worked. Make it easy to be safe. User-friendly workstations are one of the best ways to promote a safety culture and encourage employees to do things the right way.

Promote Posture and Productivity with Solutions by Kensington

Happy employees show up for work, get more done, and stay with the company longer. Help keep your employees happy by eliminating physical discomfort and emphasizing health.

Health benefits from a holistic approach. As it turns out, productivity does, too. A workplace wellness program is one strategy that many companies use to invest in the wellbeing of their workers by creating a health-oriented environment. By giving your workers what they need to remain comfortable on the job, you're ensuring a productive, stress-free, safe environment. Ergonomics, therefore, isn't just great for your employees – it's great for your company, too.

Ready to get started emphasizing health and safety in your office? Check out our ergonomic office accessories to empower your employees and keep them comfortable at work.



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