

# Ergonomic review of workstations



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In examining the work environment of the Executive Assistants of this company several considerations come to mind. One of the most obvious concerns is that of postural inconsistency. This can be very important in that Executive Assistants [by virtue of their jobs]

Spend a great deal of time in the seated and sedentary position. When in this position, there is a tendency for fatigue to set in. In so doing, the Executive Assistant may become less alert and even sleepy. In attempting to ergonomically adapt the workspace of the Executive Assistant to accommodate the need for postural flexibility, it is prudent that the workspace be designed in such a manner as to promote an optimal range of comfortable position [from sitting in different positions to standing]. This can be done by making the following adjustments to the work environment:

1. Using ergonomically designed furniture which allows for the adjustment of both the chairs and the desk on which the typing console is placed. The furniture should be adaptable for multiple users of varying body types.
2. Using ergonomically designed pointing devices for the computers. These devices include trackball mice and joysticks.
3. Using ergonomically designed keyboards to prevent the placement of fingers in awkward positions which facilitate the development of carpal tunnel syndrome.
4. Strategically placing the keyboard in positions which facilitate ease in reach as well as to restrict range of motion in order to prevent awkward movement which can result in harm (Legg, Mackie & Milicich, 2002).

In addition to examining postural flexibility, I would examine whether the Executive Assistants are visually comfortable. In so doing, I would ensure that the monitors are placed in an optimal position to facilitate ease in

seeing the computer monitors. This would go a long way in preventing eye strain. In this vein, I would also make accommodations for the height of the monitors which are utilized for most of the day. In so doing, they should be placed at eye level as a means of relieving the pressure which may be placed on the neck muscles and ensuring that the head is held flat. Another component of visual comfort is the distance between the eyes and the screen. It is very important for the distance between the Executive Assistant's eye and the monitor is optimal. This is done by establishing a distance of approximately 80 centimeters between the eyes of the individual and the monitor. This is the average distance at which the eye can focus adequately on an object without resulting in blurred images or eyestrain as a direct result of the increased use of the eye muscle in order to focus (Sheedy, Smith & Hayes, 2005). .

Thirdly, I would examine environmental factors that influence whether the Executive Assistant is in control of his/her work space. In examining this it is prudent to zone in on the fact that there is a need for between three to six feet of personal space around the individual. This can be vital in ensuring that the level of stress experienced as a direct result of work is kept to a minimum. This is important as the perception of being cramped into a space that is way too small can add to work-related stress. In addition to the space concern, there is a need to consider the noise level of the area in which the Executive Assistant works as noise can also add to the stress level (De Croon, Sluiter, Kuijer & Frings-Dresen, 2005). .

The level of luminescence in the room would be another ergonomic concern. It has been determined that the level of light in a room can have effects on both the physiology of the individual as his/her performance. Additionally,

the level of light in a room can be effective in the psychological health of an individual in that an adjustment of light conditions can prove effective in improving the symptomology of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) wherein some individuals can become depressed in the darker months of the year. In taking this into consideration, it is prudent to point out that adjusting the lighting to a range of 300 to 750 lux can prove to be optimal for ergonomically designed areas. In fact, the optimal luminescence level is approximately 600 lux (McCabe, 2004, pp 149 - 154).

Finally, I would undertake an examination utilizing optimal acoustic design. In so doing, I would incorporate very distinctive alarms which make the alarm source very distinguishable. This acoustic design can serve as a means of reducing chaos when the need for alarms is apparent. In lieu of the alarms, one may consider noise reduction initiatives by utilizing flashing lights for less urgent notice and reserving audible alarms for more pressing matters such as the indication of fire or smoke (De Croon, Sluiter, Kuijer & Frings-Dresen, 2005).

Most importantly is the fact that ergonomic design is a matter of safety. The safety of the employee should be first and foremost. The need for safety has to outweigh the immediate cost. It is a matter of long-term fiscal responsibility. It is true that the immediate rewards of ergonomic design are very few but when one thinks about it in terms of the long-term profitability, one can see an end result in the deduction of health care cost, employee absenteeism and the general health of employee. When placed in this context, one can clearly see that a proactive approach is necessary.

#### References:

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