

The Productive Workplace

Pelletier & Associates, Inc. is proud to introduce the revised version of our newsletter, formerly known as *Ergonomics on the Job*. Our new title, *The Productive Workplace*, reflects the progressive and efficient nature of our company, as well as captures the full scope of our services.

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Diana Pelletier to Speak at the National Ergonomics Conference & Exposition

Diana Pelletier

As one of our largest clients, the University of California, Irvine has played a large role in the development and standardization of our company procedures. Working with UC Irvine has been a catalyst for growth and learning for us, which has helped us improve our techniques and procedures for ensuring the ergonomic comfort and safety of our clients.

As President of Pelletier & Associates, Inc., I will be speaking about our experience with the UC Irvine Ergonomics Program at the National Ergonomics Conference and Exposition in Las Vegas on November 30, 2007. I am thrilled to represent our company at the nation's largest ergonomics event, which will bring together experts in the field to provide professional development sessions highlighting cutting edge strategies to improve safety and productivity in the workplace. Under the title, "Maximizing Ergonomics Program Efficiency and Effectiveness," I will discuss how the program at UC Irvine has made a positive impact on health and wellness at the University. The results of our partnership with UC



Irvine, under the direction of Safety Manager Sandra Conrad and Safety Specialist Belinda Manalac, have shown a significant reduction in risk factors for repetitive motion injuries. In addition, the creative strategies that were employed have been deemed worthy of being presented on a national level. As a business, Pelletier & Associates, Inc. is honored to be recognized at such an important ergonomics event, and we believe that this recognition establishes a positive and progressive direction for the future of our company.

FYI *A Background on Back Pain*

90% of us are going to have a disabling episode of back pain at some point in our lives.

An upright posture with a ninety-degree hip position is actually unhealthy, from the perspective of the intervertebral discs.

For a number of reasons, the discs experience more pressure – and the pressure is more lopsided – than while standing. So it's a good idea to sit with the hip joints somewhat straightened. Yes, this resembles a slouch, with your rear end scooted forward in the seat.

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT CHAIR ADJUSTMENTS

Seat height from the floor

1

The feet should be able to rest flat on the floor, although they shouldn't always stay there. Legs should be free to move in different positions.

Depth from the front to the back of the seat

2

Sitters should be able to use the backrest without any pressure behind the knees.

Lumbar support height

3

For the simple reason that everyone is shaped differently, and thus require different heights.



I have been in the field of Information Technology for 24 years now, and I can tell you that although technologies and capabilities have evolved, the path to successful implementation of most, if not all, automation is still fundamentally rooted in human dynamics, understanding processes, and being able to quantifiably measure the effectiveness of automation. These three tenants address all the pertinent concerns you should have if you are considering deploying any level of technology to bolster your ergonomics program:

- Does the culture of your organization support such an initiative?
- Do you have the knowledge, staffing, and budget to deploy and maintain new systems?
- Do you understand your manual processes and desired metrics well enough to know a suitable solution when you see it?
- If a system is deployed, do you have a clear understanding of what portions of your current processes will be orphaned?
- Are you clear about the specific roles your personnel play in executing your process?

The Use of Technology in Ergonomics: *Policy and Human Dynamics*

Dan Pelletier

Honestly, I have seen numerous implementations (in industries both inside and outside the field of ergonomics) fall far short of their expectations, or flat out fail, because these basic questions were not addressed. Almost invariably, this leads to a syndrome I like to call “technology solutions in search of a problem,” and it always wastes times, money, and human resource. But that’s not the worst of it. Generally, an organization moves toward a solution because it feels some form of pain. In the case of ergonomics and worker discomfort, that may be taken literally... then financially. Having experienced one or more technology failures can quickly sour an organization’s appetite to integrate technology into real solutions that solve their problems and make them more efficient.

But this is not a story about failure; it is one of perspective, and of understanding that technology does have its appropriate place in a comprehensive ergonomics program, *but never without first blueprinting your program from start to finish.* At Pelletier and Associates, we believe that technology should *follow* human interaction, not the other way around. This article is the first in a multi-part series designed to get you pointed in the right direction when it comes to effectively integrating technology into your ergonomics program.

Setting Ergonomic Policy

Does your organization have a policy clearly communicating its ergonomic intentions and goals? Have thresholds been set at which certain levels of ergonomic interventions will occur? Compliance with California’s ergonomic standard (section 5110 of the labor code) is mandatory; however, many organizations have gone well beyond this to include recurring training (both in-person and online), preventative and post injury ergonomic assessment, lucrative budgets and incentives for the purchase of ergonomic equipment, and integration into wellness, safety, workers’ compensation, and return-to-work programs.

Each portion of an ergonomics program will have a unique process and a unique way to measure its success. Implementing systems that attempt to exceed the stated goals of the organization will likely meet resistance at some point. Further, such systems will encounter a difficult road in obtaining executive sponsorship. If your organization has not created and published its policies with regards to ergonomics, you would be well-advised to defer



any major ergonomic technology initiatives until it has.

What Pain is the Organization Feeling?

Is the organization experiencing a high workers' compensation rating and paying the associated penalties? Is there excessive absenteeism or low productivity? Has there been a decrease in morale or innovation?

Are there certain positions that experience high turnover rates? Is the organization purchasing a myriad of "ergonomic" equipment that does not appear to be addressing any discomfort?

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The answers to all of these questions, and others, are major indicators you can use to gain insight into the true ergonomic needs of your organization. These types of questions also help to specifically address any skepticism that might be encountered along the way. If you don't address the organization's pain points, in the end the perception will be that nothing significant will have been accomplished. Technology cannot compensate for these oversights.

History

Has your organization undertaken an ergonomic (or another) technology initiative that has failed? If so, listen to the people with the strongest opinions about why, and document what they say. They may seem to be the biggest stumbling blocks to progress, but they can also become your greatest sponsors as they are typically the most heavily invested in success or failure.

Is your organization taking on this technology initiative for the first time? If so, and technical solutions are being considered *prior* to having done due diligence with regard to people, processes and metrics, STOP, unhitch the horse, and reattach it to the FRONT of the carriage. This is

the precursor to "technology solutions in search of a problem." Re-harness that much needed enthusiasm into first performing a thorough needs assessment.

Staffing

Ergonomics can affect many areas of an organization: EH&S, HR, Facilities, Procurement, IT, and various levels of management... not to mention all the employees that will go through the process. Critical to the success of any automation is understanding the role that each person plays in facilitation, and understanding exactly how they are currently achieving their objectives. An effective ergonomics technology initiative will not only increase their ability to perform direct person-to-person outreach, but also to easily track data without undue administrative burden.

It is unreasonable to assume that anybody already burdened with more work than they can service can deliver more productivity unless current processes are streamlined, objectives are refocused, and administrative work load is reduced. Documenting in detail how people are performing their role in the ergonomic process is critical to identifying opportunities for automation. Approached in reverse, a person will generally not release their current responsibilities in favor of automation which is *in addition* to their current workload.

In our upcoming newsletters, I will discuss the following topics:

- Defining meaningful and sustainable metrics
- Determining ergonomic program components
- Establishing streamlined ergonomic processes
- Defining targeted roles and responsibilities
- Determining appropriate use of technology





RollerMouse Pro



RollerWave Wrist Rest



Kensington Comfort Type
USB Keyboard

What It Is

This input device replaces your traditional mouse. Place it in front of your keyboard, and you now have a mouse that is in an ergonomically correct position, and it doubles as a wrist rest.

The RollerWave is a deeper wrist support designed to replace the standard wrist pads on the RollerMouse Pro. It provides greater wrist support and helps to minimize wrist extension.

This ergonomic keyboard has an angled key structure that encourages a relaxed wrist position while maintaining the standard key locations. Works great with the RollerMouse Pro.

Why It Will Help

It eliminates repeated reaching and gripping of a traditional mouse and can take away the pain associated with excessive computer mouse utilization. It is designed to keep hands close to the body, improving comfort and efficiency.

The RollerWave provides maximum comfort and wrist support and helps to minimize the potential for wrist extension.

The angled keys and light key action helps to increase comfort without relearning how to type on a split keyboard.

How Much It Costs

MSRP: \$199.95. For resources, feel free to contact us....

MSRP: \$39.95. For resources, feel free to contact us...

MSRP \$19.95. For resources, feel free to contact us....

Product Spotlight

For Your Ergonomic Well-Being... *A Few Helpful Hints to Improve Your Comfort*

Jaula Saatchi

Sitting forward in your chair

1

If you find yourself sitting forward in your chair, it may be a warning sign that either your chair is not properly adjusted for you, or it is not a good fit for your body type. Sitting forward creates a risk of awkward upper extremity postures such as a forward lean or slouching. While typing and mousing for extended periods of time, sit all the way back in your chair with your hips and neck.

Placing your monitor on the CPU

2

Although this height may be appropriate, often times it is not. In order to avoid awkward neck postures such as looking up at your monitor or gazing downward, it is important that the height of your monitor is correct. A correctly positioned monitor allows your natural line of vision to fall towards the top third of the screen.

Holding the telephone receiver between your shoulder and neck

3

Cradling the telephone in this way can encourage non-neutral head and neck postures and place an unnecessary strain on your neck. To avoid this exposure, hold the telephone receiver in your hand or consider using a headset. Another option is to use your speakerphone.

Placing your feet on the base of your chair

4

Although it is important to change your position frequently throughout the workday, placing your feet on the base of your chair for too long can put pressure on your lower back. In order to achieve adequate back support, your feet should be placed in front of you and not underneath you. If you find yourself resting your feet on the base of your chair frequently, consider using a footrest.

Resting your wrists on the keyboard or mouse wrist rests while typing

5

Keyboard and mouse wrist rests are important tools that provide extra support for your wrists, but if used incorrectly, they can also put users at risk of awkward hand and wrist postures. Wrist rests should be used only during periods of inactivity. Instead of planting your wrists while typing, let them float freely over the keyboard. If you find yourself placing pressure in between your wrist and the mouse wrist rest, consider finding a mouse that fits the natural contours of your hand. There are many new, ergonomic mice that promote natural hand positioning.