



What is a good, first step with Ergonomics?

There are many ways to drive an effective ergonomics process, each has its' own set of pros/cons depending on your work culture, management commitment and corporate support.

Each is briefly summarized below:

Lead with Risk Assessment

- It's hard to solve a problem, unless you know exactly where the problem is located. Leading an ergonomics program with risk assessment will clearly identify what the frequency, severity and magnitude of ergo risk exists in your facility. By conducting a "wall to wall" assessment, you will know exactly the problem areas, trends, and improvement strategies. The biggest obstacle is that this approach is that you still need an effort to fix the identified issues.

Lead with Training

- Training is important to internalize an ergonomics initiative, with various groups receiving various training to address specific issues. For example, management needs to understand the basics of ergonomics and how to support the process, while engineers need information about ergonomics design criteria, and ergo teams need information and skills on how to conduct ergo risk assessments. Overall, training is part of an effective process that needs to happen at some point. My biggest observation over the years is that companies that engage in training as a first core activity generates limited ergo success. Students are prepared with information, but often falter when trying to solve problems on their own (there is no previous road map to follow).

Lead with Engineering

- Engineering solves problems. An experienced Ergonomist and engineer can thoroughly understand ergo risk exposure and develop a range of improvements (and costs) to mitigate ergonomic risk exposure. This is a necessary activity; however when leading with the Engineering approach, it will address the top few risky jobs, but may neglect to look at other problem jobs that may be exposed through proper risk assessment.

Lead with Kaizen Events

- Kaizen Events are an excellent blend of finding and fixing issues. Using a simple, less quantitative risk assessment, teams find issues throughout the facility and propose simple fixes targeted to address about 70% of the problem. These Events are very powerful to drive momentum, instant improvements, cultural enhancement and financial impact. The obstacle leading with Kaizen Events is that they are problem solving events and you still need a plan for sustainability.

There is no right or wrong approach to an effective ergonomics process. The best method is one that fits within your work culture, management commitment, and corporate support. Contact Risk Management Group at 615.289.4479 to discuss an approach that will work best for your company.