Creating an Engaging Workforce Through Thoughtful Office Space

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Sheila referred to the workplace where she did medical billing as “the pit.” It was on the bottom floor of an office building. Workspaces were cramped despite the open floor plan, noise was abundant, and because of the tight workspaces, there was a prevalence of comfort complaints. It wasn’t unusual to have multiple absences in a day causing others to have to add on to their workload.

Eventually, an outside assessment was performed, and some changes were made to improve the overall environment. The desks were switched out for comparable models that could be adjusted for height. This helped reduce any of the head and neck injuries. The floor plan was also updated. Barriers were added to increase privacy and reduce ambient noise, and furniture was added where supplies and paperwork could be stored easily. Things were no longer in the way and were instead kept in places that were easy and comfortable to access. They also added more sustainable woods and chairs with hypoallergenic fabrics to help improve the quality of the air and reduce pathogens. By making these simple changes, Shelia’s office became a more comfortable place to do her job each day. Cases of illness went down, and overall morale and productivity improved.

It’s easy to assume that desk jobs are not physically demanding positions, and that the furniture used within an office only serves a functional purpose. After all, there is

very little movement or stamina required at a desk job. The truth, however, is that though they may seem innocuous, desk jobs can have a substantial and continuous effect on the body. If the positions our bodies take on all day are not thoughtfully designed, it could mean aches, pain and more serious issues down the road. This is why it’s so important to prioritize thoughtful workspaces when building your business.

For this reason, when it comes to designing office spaces for our teams, it’s vital to consider the comfort of our team and how that plays a larger role in job satisfaction and innovation in the workplace. A business is only as strong as its employees. When their health is compromised, nothing is functioning at its peak level. In addition, you are losing out on an opportunity to increase innovation and resilience at work.

The positions we keep our bodies in all day truly makes an impact from the inside out. Whether the job is physically demanding or something less obvious, like sitting at a desk or driving a car, the effects of time add up. By putting thought into the tools, furniture and environments we create, we make a better workplace and improve people’s health and happiness. It always pays to have a healthy and happy team.

Sit less

Sitting is considered the new smoking. We’ve all heard of the dangers of smoking. How a cigarette is an addictive product that can cause illness and death. It has been estimated that half of all smokers will die as a result of their addiction. But have you heard about the dangers of sitting?

Sitting for long periods is extremely bad for your health, but it’s a habit many people are stuck in due to the nature of our jobs and the design of our workplaces. Sitting for long periods can lead to heart disease, diabetes and cancer. It can cause back problems, carpal tunnel syndrome and other

repetitive strain injuries that make your workday difficult – and even painful!

Luckily, there are many ways you can reduce the amount you sit at work each day and improve your health at the same time!

It's all about posture. According to the American Chiropractic Association, sitting with good posture can help prevent back pain and other health problems. Good posture can improve your mood and energy levels. Proper posture can also affect breathing, mood and energy levels.

Sedentary lifestyles are hard on your back

As the saying goes, we spend a third of our lives working. It is therefore vital to ensure that our workdays are as enjoyable (and pain-free) as possible. Unfortunately, for many of us, sitting at a desk all day does a number on our backs.

Back pain is cited by the National Institutes of Health as one of the leading causes of disability worldwide. There are several ways to combat this problem and make your work environment more enjoyable, including:

- **Good posture:** Practice sitting up straight with your head up, shoulders back, and feet flat on the floor (or footrest if you have one). If those around you can't see your face from behind, it's time to sit up straighter!
- **Physical activity breaks:** Stand up and stretch throughout the day. Also consider taking short walking breaks in between tasks or during lunch; this is an especially good idea if you're chronically late to meetings, because it will give you a buffer so you're not jogging down the hall at top speed right before every meeting starts!

- **A better chair than your current one (which may be causing chronic back pain)**: You can also try replacing it entirely with an exercise ball – this helps strengthen core muscles and improve balance while providing excellent lumbar support!

We're designed to move

Humans are designed to move. In fact, humans have been moving constantly for most of our evolutionary history.

You're not just designed to move. You're designed to be active and mobile. For example, the human spine is meant to move in all kinds of directions – it wasn't made for sitting still in an office chair every day. When you don't move, it can lead to all sorts of health problems. That's why we need to keep moving as much as possible throughout the day.

Research shows that having a standing desk can help with weight loss, reduce lower back pain, alleviate circulatory disorders, and increase overall health and well-being. In the office environment, we spend a majority of our time sitting in front of computers. Most people forget how much time they spend at their desk, because it feels like second nature. The fact is, however, that for health reasons, we should be getting up and moving often throughout the day. So, while standing desks can be beneficial, it's not necessarily healthier than sitting if there's an absence of moving.

Consider creating an environment that is blissful, productive, and innovative. No more dungeons or "pits," as Sally liked to call it. When was the last time your work spaces were evaluated?

Employees are looking for an environment that's designed to naturally elevate them – and the business. The workplace of the future is here, and it's better than you could have ever

imagined: a space that’s designed to create a feeling of wellness that trickles down into increased productivity, quality of work product, innovation,and employee satisfaction. And it doesn’t have to cost the earth. In fact, many businesses are finding that the investment pays for itself through futuristic spaces, geared towards employee satisfaction and product quality.

So yes, you can have it all! It just takes a bit of research to find the furniture and design that will bring it all together for your business. Study after study has shown that well-designed spaces lead to more innovative ideas and better productivity. This, of course, makes sense – there’s a certain energy that’s created when people are in comfortable surroundings. So, if your office is feeling a bit stale, and with the massive “return to the office” time that we are in, you might want to consider some changes today.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/425568