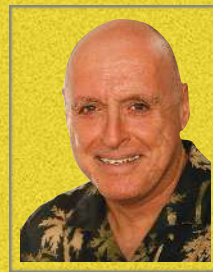


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



483 Study Shows We're Losing at Workplace Health

How is your job impacting your health? I'm Jerry Roberts and today we'll reveal a study that some people feel is answering that question. We'll also talk about some changes we'd like to see as a result.

Occasionally we talk about toxic workplaces and this generally refers to the organizational culture, with negative factors like gossip, micromanagement, and fear.

The term "toxic" can also mean places that actually make us physically and psychologically ill. Is your health in danger where you work? One company made it their business to find it.

British office equipment manufacturer Fellowes commissioned a study known as *The Work Colleague of the Future*, building a lifelike, full-size model named Emma, which would display the effect of 20 years in the average workplace as we know it.

Health experts were recruited for the project, unpacking survey data submitted by over 3,000 office workers. Nine out of 10 British workers felt their poor health was a result of their employer's environment. The study claimed that six hours spent at a desk daily contribute to strained eyes, back soreness, and headaches.

Our girl Emma didn't fare too well. She has poor posture, a reminder that she spends most of the day hunched over a computer screen, and that can't be good for her spine.

Emma is overweight, probably not eating right and rarely getting enough exercise. Her dry, red eyes indicate too much time in front of the computer. Varicose veins in her legs warn of poor circulation, as do her swollen limbs and sinuses. As mentioned, she's been on the job for 20 years and her health is declining.

The study funded by Fellowes is designed to

bring these findings to the working public, generate conversation, and meaningful change if more of us want to avoid the ailments Emma suffers from.

Workers need to be encouraged to eat better, move more, improve their posture, and set up their workstation to assist in better health. For their part, employers should buy better chairs, ensure that computer monitors are at the prescribed eye level, monitor air quality, provide good water, and you can go online for a ton of other suggestions.

Company-sponsored exercise is a great way to add to health while doing some team building. HR departments can provide health information through managers and supervisors. Health insurance providers can be brought in to counsel workers. All of these factors encourage better health performance.

Poor health leads to absenteeism, mediocre performance, higher insurance premiums, and nobody wins. On the other hand, organizations that embrace this problem and make progress should be rewarded by their insurers, with some of those financial benefits passed along to workers.

Emma is a warning for all of us. If we take our eyes off the ball and strike out when it comes to workplace health, there is an enormous price to pay down the road. Everybody has to play in this game and we can't afford to lose it.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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