

Oil and Gas Co. Uses Web-Based Training to Reduce RSIs

A global oil and gas company is implementing an aggressive ergonomic training and tracking program as part of its corporate-wide commitment to reducing the occurrence of RSIs (Repetitive Stress Injuries). This multinational company uses the WorkWell™ application designed by Remedy Interactive.

One year ago, this large oil and gas company (called Oil/Gas client) was struggling to address a major safety threat to its office-based employees -- in many groups, computer-related MSDs (Muscular Skeletal Disorders) accounted for most of the OSHA-recordable injuries. The Oil/Gas company implemented an aggressive process to change its work culture to one where MSD risks are identified early on and mitigated.

The first step in the process was to identify and implement a web-based risk assessment and education tool to be completed by all employees who use a computer. Just eleven months ago, the first Oil/Gas employee used WorkWell as their web-based ergonomic solution, or tool. Now, over 12,000 employees have completed the process and over 25% of the workstation setup and other identified issues have already been resolved by employees themselves or by their supervisors. Although the tool is just the first step in a comprehensive intervention process, the client is working to get even more benefit from this web-based tool.

Web-based assessment and training applications were originally conceived as faster, more consistent, and more economical ways to "do what we've always done." Initially, web-based tools were designed to achieve important but often limited functions -- the assessment portion of the early web-based tools replaced the initial workstation and task survey which had formerly been provided by a trained evaluator, while the "training" piece of the web-based tool provided "Ergo 101" information previously covered in employee training sessions.

Another benefit, derived from the data and reports generated by the application, flows to the ergonomics program manager and also potentially to supervisors and managers. For example, the data identify the high, moderate, and low risk individuals so that additional preventive measures can be targeted to the right individuals while avoiding the "one size fits all" approach that may alienate lower risk employees who are already busy. WorkWell also allows an ergonomic program manager or a supervisor to see the status of open items for each employee in a format that is convenient for use in developing action plans.

The client is currently deploying the WorkWell web-based tool and recognizes the value of the tool in streamlining its ergonomic processes by allowing rapid "cycling back" to update employee risk profiles and other records as conditions change. Remedy Interactive calls the process *iteration*. Iteration means "repetition; the process of repeating a set of steps until a specific result is achieved."

The web-based ergonomic program used by the Oil/Gas client facilitates easy and effective iteration of assessment, analysis, and action. Using iteration, employers can continually gather data through web-based assessments and reassessments; they can analyze the data and draw conclusions (for example, determining that an employee is at high risk of

injury); and they can take specific action (locally and/or globally) — all literally at the push of a button.

At the Oil/Gas client, employees will engage in the following process:

STEP 1: Complete the Web-based assessment.

STEP 2: Complete the Web-based training (workstations can be adjusted during the training).

STEP 3: Receive e-mail feedback with advice on mitigating the issues that exist.

STEP 4: Receive an e-mail with guidelines of the next steps for reducing risk. (Specifically, 24 hours after completing the program, employees who are high or moderate risk, and who also have significant workstation setup issues, will be notified of the possibility to reduce their risk simply through workstation setup modifications).

STEP 5: Arrange for a workstation evaluation (if needed) to resolve easy-to-fix workstation set-up issues.

STEP 6: Complete a reassessment related to workstation setup, not behavioral, issues. The reassessment will be automatically sent by the Web-based system, via E-mail.

STEP 7: If risk is reduced to no one within the client company gets further involved; if risk remains high or moderate, behavior should be analyzed.

STEP 8: Key individuals will be notified and additional individuals within the client company will assist the employees with their issues.

While organizations today are often able to implement steps 1-3 (with or without use of a Web-based application), steps 4-8 are possible only through use of the Internet.

The increased understanding by the Oil/Gas client's project manager of the benefits of this web-based tool led to a formal change to its Repetitive Stress Injury Prevention Plan, the plan used globally by this client to reduce RSIs. The amended Plan now takes advantage of the web-based application's iterative feature to streamline follow-up so employees receive an immediate workstation evaluation if needed to reduce risk. Originally the plan required supervisors to meet with moderate and high risk category individuals to determine preventive steps such as added training, work hardening, or other steps. The web-based tool now helps people with easy-to-resolve workstation set-up issues to help themselves.

Brett Weiss, MPT, is vice president of sales at Remedy Interactive. He received his master's degree in physical therapy from the University of California at San Francisco. His bachelor degree is in political science from the University of California, Berkeley. Kimberly Lopez, MBA is CEO of Remedy Interactive. She is a graduate of the Kellogg Graduate School of Business, Northwestern University. he received her bachelor degree with dual majors in English and biological psychology from the University of California, Berkeley.

For more information on Remedy Interactive and its WorkWell program that assesses risks, trains employees and collects company-wide data visit www.remedyiinteractive.com or call (415)332-6433.