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Mini-Guides

5 areas where your team wastes too much energy every day.

Identify the most common physical strains in everyday work and reduce them systematically.

Physical strain rarely comes from one major exertion. Usually, it is the small movements repeated every day: bending, reaching, carrying and walking. What barely gets noticed still adds up. This mini-guide shows five typical energy drains – and what you can do about them.

01 Energy drain no. 1: Working too low.

Every movement towards the floor takes effort.

Boxes on pallets, containers under shelving or workpieces on the floor force employees to bend down repeatedly. The more often this movement is repeated, the greater the strain on the back and knees.

Measures:

- ☑ **Store frequently used materials between knee and shoulder height.**
  Anything needed several times a day should be reachable without deep bending.
- ☑ **Avoid permanent floor storage.**
  Use stands, pallet collars or lifting tables to bring materials to an ergonomic working height.
- ☑ **Position containers slightly raised.**
  Even a few centimetres make reaching easier and reduce strain on the lower back.
- ☑ **Check regularly which materials are picked up from the floor each day.**
  These workstations often offer the greatest potential for improvement.
- ☑ **Observe everyday work.**
  If employees repeatedly have to bend down low, the problem is usually not their behaviour but the workstation design.

Practical tip: If it is easy, it gets done.

- ☑ Choose workstations that can be adjusted without tools
- ☑ Use monitor arms for different users
- ☑ Provide anti-fatigue mats and footrests where they are needed

Quick check: Where is work carried out too low?

Look at a typical workstation and the daily processes.

- **Material from the floor:** Which materials or containers are regularly picked up directly from the floor?
- **Frequency:** How often do employees have to bend down low for this? ☐ rarely ☐ regularly ☐ often
- **Repetition:** During which task does deep bending occur particularly often?
- **Key issue:** Which materials are picked up from the floor most often over the course of a working day?
- **Improvement potential:** Where could presentation be changed so less deep bending is required?

Your assessment:

Few critical points: There is currently little need for action. Keep an eye on the workstation nonetheless.

Some critical points: Check first the tasks that regularly involve deep bending.

Several critical points: It is worth taking action here. Start with the materials that are picked up from the floor most often.

02 Energy drain no. 2: Reaching too far.

Every unnecessary reach costs time and effort.

Tools are behind material bins, frequently used parts are outside the reach zone or have to be taken from above shoulder height. Each movement uses very little effort on its own. Added up over the day, however, they strain the shoulders, neck and back, cause fatigue more quickly and waste valuable working time.

Measures:

- ☑ **Arrange tools by frequency of use.**
  Everything used constantly belongs within direct reach.
- ☑ **Avoid overhead work.**
  Store frequently used materials so they can be reached without raising the arms.
- ☑ **Position bins closer to employees.**
  Shorter reaches relieve the shoulders and back.
- ☑ **Use angled presentation bins.**
  They make items easier to reach and reduce bending forwards.
- ☑ **Review workstations together with employees.**
  Small changes are often enough to eliminate many unnecessary movements for good.

Quick check: Where is the reach too far?

Look at a typical workstation and the daily processes.

- **Reach zone:** Which tools or materials are most often taken from outside the direct reach zone?
- **Frequency:** How often do employees have to reach above shoulder height? ☐ rarely ☐ regularly ☐ often
- **Repetition:** During which task do employees have to stretch or twist particularly often?
- **Key issue:** Which tools or materials cause the most long reaches?
- **Improvement potential:** What could be positioned closer to the workstation or better within reach?

Your assessment:

Few critical points: There is currently little need for action. Keep an eye on the workstation nonetheless.

Some critical points: Check first the tasks that regularly require long reaches or reaching above shoulder height.

Several critical points: It is worth taking action here. Start with the tools and materials that are needed most often.

03 Energy drain no. 3: Moving loads that are too heavy.

Not every load needs to be moved by hand.

Heavy loads are part of everyday work in many businesses. It becomes critical when employees regularly have to lift, carry, pull or push them – especially over longer distances or in awkward postures. Often the problem is not a lack of strength, but the lack of suitable support.

Measures:

- ☑ **Identify the greatest strains.**
  Observe which loads are moved every day. The highest weight is not what matters; how often loads are moved is decisive.
- ☑ **Use lifting and transport aids consistently.**
  Pallet trucks, lifting tables, trolleys or lifting aids should be used as standard – not only for exceptionally heavy loads.
- ☑ **Split loads into smaller units.**
  Where possible, reduce the weight of individual packages. Smaller loads are safer and more ergonomic to move.
- ☑ **Avoid unnecessary carrying.**
  Where materials can be rolled or transported on wheels, no one should have to carry them.
- ☑ **Provide regular training in safe lifting.**
  Keep loads close to the body, lift with the legs and avoid twisting – simple techniques significantly reduce the risk of injury.

Quick check: Where are loads too heavy to move?

Look at a typical workstation and the daily processes.

- **Loads:** Which loads are lifted, carried, pulled or pushed every day?
- **Frequency:** How often are these loads moved by hand? ☐ rarely ☐ regularly ☐ often
- **Repetition:** During which task do loads have to be moved manually particularly often?
- **Key issue:** Which load causes the greatest physical strain in everyday work?
- **Improvement potential:** Which load could be moved more easily with a lifting or transport aid?

Your assessment:

Few critical points: There is currently little need for action. Keep an eye on the workstation nonetheless.

Some critical points: Check first the tasks in which loads are moved manually on a regular basis.

Several critical points: It is worth taking action here. Start with the loads that are moved particularly often or require a great deal of effort.

04 Energy drain no. 4: Too much walking.

Every unnecessary metre costs time and energy.

Tools are missing from the workstation, packaging material is at the other end of the warehouse, or components have to be moved several times. Each journey may seem insignificant – but over the day they add up to a substantial physical strain and waste valuable working time.

Measures:

- ☑ **Observe typical work processes.**
  Walk the route with your employees. Where do unnecessary walking routes or repeated material movements occur?
- ☑ **Store materials where they are needed.**
  Frequently used materials belong at or immediately next to the workstation.
- ☑ **Arrange workstations along the material flow.**
  The less often materials have to be relocated, the more ergonomic and efficient the process.
- ☑ **Avoid moving materials twice.**
  Every extra move costs effort and increases the risk of damage or errors.
- ☑ **Review your processes regularly.**
  New products or changed processes often make routes that once made sense unnecessarily long.

Quick check: Where is too much walking involved?

Look at a typical workstation and the daily processes.

- **Routes:** Which route is covered particularly often during the work process?
- **Distance:** How far is the most frequently needed material from the workstation? _____ m
- **Repetition:** Which material is moved or relocated several times in the process?
- **Key issue:** Where do unnecessary journeys or empty runs occur most often?
- **Improvement potential:** Which material could be positioned closer to where it is used?

Your assessment:

Few critical points: There is currently little need for action. Keep an eye on the walking routes nonetheless.

Some critical points: Check first the routes that are covered regularly or several times.

Several critical points: It is worth taking action here. Start with the route that is covered most often or is unnecessarily long.

05 Energy drain no. 5: Too much repetition.

Heavy work is not the only strain on the body.

Even light tasks can cause discomfort when they are performed for hours in the same posture. Repetitive movements, prolonged standing or monotonous work processes often put more strain on muscles and joints than expected.

Measures:

- ☑ **Enable changes of posture.**
  Workstations should support switching between sitting, standing and walking.
- ☑ **Alternate demanding tasks.**
  Combine physically demanding work with less strenuous tasks.
- ☑ **Plan short recovery periods.**
  Even brief movement breaks help relieve muscles and joints.
- ☑ **Involve your employees.**
  They are often the first to spot which movements consume unnecessary effort.
- ☑ **Review workstations regularly.**
  Changed processes or new products often change physical demands too.

Quick check: Where is work too repetitive?

Look at a typical workstation and the daily processes.

- **Task:** Which task is performed in the same posture for particularly long periods?
- **Duration:** How long is this task typically performed without a break? _____ minutes
- **Repetition:** Which movement is repeated particularly often?
- **Key issue:** During which task is repetitive strain most noticeable in everyday work?
- **Improvement potential:** Where in the process would it be easiest to introduce more variety?

Your assessment:

Few critical points: There is currently little need for action. Keep an eye on long or repetitive tasks nonetheless.

Some critical points: Check first which tasks make it easier to vary the posture or activity during the process.

Several critical points: It is worth taking action here. Start by checking where the posture or activity can be varied during the process.

Expertise: Five things you can improve today.

- ☑ **1. Bring materials closer.**
  Take one material you use frequently and move it closer to where it is used.
- ☑ **2. Remove one detour.**
  Follow a typical work process: Which route can be avoided completely?
- ☑ **3. Tackle one energy drain.**
  Find the movement that is repeated particularly often – and make your first change there.
- ☑ **4. Keep one aid within reach.**
  Check where a lifting or transport aid is needed – and place it right there.
- ☑ **5. Ask an employee.**
  Ask someone who uses the workstation every day: **“What costs you unnecessary effort here every day?”**

Conclusion

The greatest physical strain rarely comes from individual heavy tasks. What matters are the movements repeated day after day: deep bending, long reaches, heavy lifting, long walking distances and repetitive tasks.

This is also where the greatest potential for improvement lies. Systematically reducing these five energy drains not only eases the strain on employees. It also improves work processes, prevents errors and makes processes more efficient.

Start where the strain is greatest. Every unnecessary movement avoided is a step towards healthier workstations and more efficient processes.

Where kaiserkraft can support you.
Solutions for ergonomic workstations.

- Ergonomic workstation systems for production, warehouses and workshops
- Height-adjustable work and assembly tables
- Lifting and transport aids
- Material presentation and container systems
- Solutions for material flow and workstation organisation

Request advice

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