

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



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Short Description

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case study

Description

Case 6 :-

OSHO and Unions versus Manufactures: Is Workplace Ergonomics a Problem?

During the Industrial Revolution a century ago, workplace injuries were so commonplace that they were simply considered one of the hazards of having a job. Children and adults were often maimed or disfigured in factory accidents. Today strict regulations cover safety in the workplace, guided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health administration (OSHO).

During the past couple of decades, as industry itself has changed, a different type of injury has emerged; musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). MSDs are injuries resulting from overexertion and repetitive motion, such as constantly lifting heavy loads or grabbing and twisting a piece of machinery. People who sit at computer workstations all day are susceptible to MSDs as well, particularly carpal tunnel syndrome, which affects the nerves of the hand, wrist, and arm. According to OSHO, about one third of repetitive stress injuries, or 600,000, are serious enough to require time off the job, which means that businesses pay for these injuries not only in medical costs but in lost productivity. They can also contribute to high

employee turnover. No one disputes that these injuries occur. But various experts, industry leaders, and politicians argue about how severe the injuries are, who should pay for them, what should be done about them, and who takes ultimate responsibility for the safety of workers.

One aspect of the whole issue of workplace injuries is ergonomics: “The applied science of equipment design, intended to reduce operator fatigue and discomfort, or as OSHO puts it, the science of fitting the job to the worker.” Ergonomics involves everything from developing new equipment, including desk chairs that support the back properly and flexible splints to support the wrist while typing, to designing better ways to use the equipment, such as the proper way to hold a computer mouse.

OSHO has proposed new guidelines for better ergonomic standards, targeting jobs where workers perform repetitive tasks, whether they are in processing poultry or delivering packages. The proposal required employers that received reports from workers who were suffering from MSDs to respond promptly with an evaluation and follow-up health care. Workers who needed time off could receive 90 percent of their pay and 100 percent of their benefits. Not surprisingly, arguments for and against the proposal broke out. OSHO spokesperson Charles Jeffers claimed that the guidelines “will save employers \$9 billion every year from what they’ve currently been spending on these problems.” Peg Seminario of the AFL-CIO noted that the guidelines did not go far enough because they did not cover “workers in construction, agriculture, or maritime, who have very serious problems.” Pat Cleary of the national Association of Manufacturers argued that “there’s a central flaw here and that is that there is no . . . consensus in the scientific or medical community about the causes of ergonomics injuries.” Debates over the proposed rules’ merit were further clouded by the Small Business Administration’s prediction that implementing the standards would cost industries \$18 billion. OSHO had forecast a mere \$4.2 billion.

Just before he left office, President Bill Clinton signed the bill into law which was overturned by incoming President George Bush and the new Congress. Calling the workplace safety regulations “unduly burdensome and overly broad,” Bush signed a measure to roll back the new rules.

Where do these actions leave workers and businesses in regard to workplace injuries? Legally, businesses are not required to redesign work systems or continue full pay and benefits for an extended period after work-related injury. But if the goal of a company is to find and keep the best employees, perhaps developing good ergonomic practices makes good business sense. The high cost of treatment and turnover, not to mention lowered productivity, points toward prevention as a competitive strategy. “Good ergonomics in the office should not be a big burden in a

company and may be a way to retain good employees.”

Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree that ergonomics in the workplace should be covered by federal regulations? Explain your answers.

1. Choose a job with which you are familiar and discuss the possibilities for repetitive stress injuries that could occur on this job and ways they could be prevented.

1. Imagine that you are the human resources manager for a company that hires workers for the selected in question 2. What steps might you encourage company officials to take to identify and prevent MSDs?

Details

1. Case study solved answers

2. pdf/word

3. Fully Solved with answers