

FIT FOR LIFE, FIT FOR WORK

There is no denying – a good worker is a happy worker but more importantly a healthy worker is a productive worker. Studies have shown significant associations between moderate physical activity and the quality of work performance.



Interestingly, cardiorespiratory fitness has now been linked to quantity of work performance, in a recent study it was noted that higher levels of cardiovascular fitness reflect a reduction of decrement in job performance *while* at work.

As well as the increased efficiency of performing daily work tasks, individuals participating in regular physical activity, have better interpersonal relationships with their co-workers and boss's, the cornerstone of a productive and happy work environment.

Many organisations perform employee health evaluation surveys and they use the answers provided to give each employee a health rating out of 100, with 100 being supreme health and 0 being close to death. Employees with a score over 70 are deemed to be 'healthy' and those with a score of 30 or under are deemed 'unhealthy'. Those in the middle fall into a grey area. The results of a recent Medibank employee research survey, such as this one, showed that healthy employees are nearly three times more productive than unhealthy employees. They also took *nine times* more sick leave than their healthy counterparts. A scary statistic for any CFO!

Until recently most employee health studies only looked at overall fitness and the cost saving derived from implementing an employee health and fitness program. A study, published in the *Journal of Exercise Physiology*, examined the relationship between various components of health-related fitness (i.e., body composition, cardio respiratory endurance, flexibility, muscular strength) and employees perceived productivity, job satisfaction and absenteeism. Employees' overall rating of fitness was assessed independently against productivity and job satisfaction. Correlations among fitness levels and absenteeism were measured over a one year period. The main reason for this study was that very few studies on exercise and employee job performance have actually measured employee fitness levels and compared them to productivity, job satisfaction, and absenteeism. This study was unique in the fact that it determined the subjects' level of fitness and related it to their perceived productivity, job satisfaction, and absenteeism.

The results showed some interesting findings relating to muscular strength and work productivity. The more repetitions the employees performed on their bench press test, the more productive they felt at work. The results showed that the maintenance or improvement of muscular strength enabled individuals to perform tasks with less physiological stress and this may be one reason why muscular strength plays a role in the employees' productivity. Employees who have more muscular strength would not be as physically taxed as employees with lower strength levels. This makes the employees' physical work feel less demanding and is likely to have contributed to their feelings of increased productivity. The findings of this research indicate the importance of developing muscular strength as well as cardiovascular fitness. As well as improving your performance on the field or in the gym you will be likely to increase your work performance and feel more satisfied while you're there. It's win – win!