

# Move It or Lose It: The Hidden Costs of an Uncomfortable Workspace

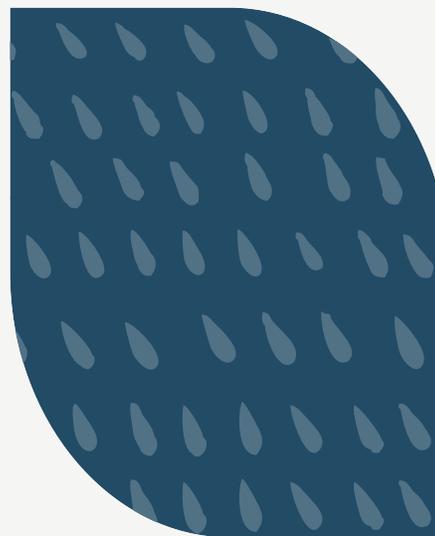
## Why Human-Centered, Ergonomic Design Is the Future of Work

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& SARAH TRAVERS

*CEO of Workbar*



## Work evolved. The human body didn't.

When hybrid and remote work became the default option during COVID, people made do with what they had. Coffee tables, kitchen islands, Amazon boxes — you get the gist. Maybe you even remember having to improvise an impromptu desk situation of your own.

### Is this really how we're working all the time?

For nearly two years, remote workers became 25 little heads on Zoom, in the exact same position day after day. Five years later, Jen notices that workers are holding on to unhealthy habits from their makeshift offices and first forays into remote work.

HEALTHY WORKPLACE DESIGN  
STARTS WITH THE HUMANS  
THAT ARE USING THE SPACE.



### Uncovering health risks of remote work

Jen's caseload reveals a new challenge for remote and hybrid workers: **Home offices are now a major source of musculoskeletal issues.**

Most remote workers don't even realize they're cutting corners or causing long-term damage to their bodies. They think they're being flexible — just like their work situations. But what's actually happening is that muscles built to hold posture for minutes are forced to hold it for hours. Core and postural muscles weaken, and then one small activity — carrying groceries, playing pickleball, reaching for your iced coffee — turns into a debilitating injury.

#### SIDE EFFECTS OF WORKING FROM FURNITURE NEVER INTENDED FOR 6–10 HOUR DAYS

- ✗ Straining the same muscles, day in and day out
- ✗ Static, prolonged postures
- ✗ Awkward neck and shoulder positions

## The economics behind ergonomics

Ergonomics addresses risk factors that can cause musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) or musculoskeletal injuries. These risk factors include repetitive use, static, prolonged postures, and awkward postures.

Preventative ergonomics can feel abstract, but it should matter to employers because it directly impacts business. By ignoring the preventative benefits of ergonomics, employers are setting themselves (and their employees) up to incur higher costs down the road.

### STRATEGIC BENEFITS OF GOOD ERGONOMICS

- ✓ Increased productivity
- ✓ Improved employee retention
- ✓ More successful return to office mandates
- ✓ Better employer reputation
- ✓ Reduced costs on workers' compensation claims

*“Ergonomics is the science of fitting the workplace to the worker, not just taking the employee and plopping them into a space. You want to have a workspace that’s customizable for each employee.”*

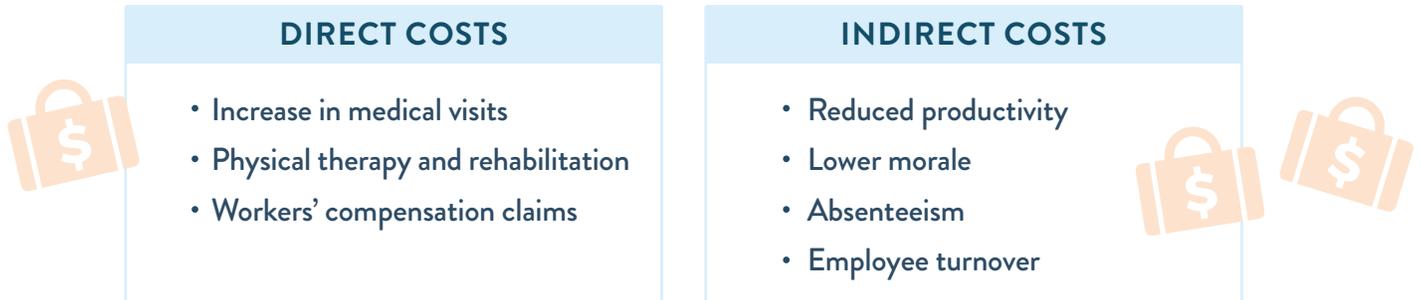
- JEN GRAHAM



Employers with hybrid/remote teams have a responsibility to their employees to support healthy work environments inside and outside of the office. If your people are working from home half the week, you still owe them an ergonomically safe way to do that.

WORK SHOULD ALWAYS  
BE DESIGNED TO FIT  
THE HUMAN BODY  
AND ITS NATURAL  
MOVEMENTS, NOT THE  
OTHER WAY AROUND.

## The costs of ignoring workplace ergonomics



People (and companies) act when they're in pain, not before. But by the time an employee feels the effects of a poorly-designed office, the costs have already started to add up. **Ergonomics is beneficial for the employer and employees. Comfortable employees are happier, more productive, and more efficient in their workday.**

## ERGONOMIC INTERVENTIONS CAN RETURN \$3-\$17 FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED

### Movement is the best ergonomic solution

Ergonomics isn't only about comfort when you sit still; it's also about encouraging movement. More than furniture or your office set-up, movement is an important consideration for healthy workplaces. Most people won't initially recognize how much more productive they are, and how much better they feel, when movement is incorporated into their workdays.

### The golden ratio of movement throughout the workday



*Based on recommendations from Alan Hedge, Professor Emeritus of Human Centered Design at Cornell University*

*"If I could wave a magic wand, I would just emphasize that everyone could inject more movement throughout their day."*

- JEN GRAHAM

**Pro-tip: Set a timer for 20 minutes. When your timer goes off, get up and move!**

Don't worry about keeping a perfect schedule. No matter how you work, the principle behind this ratio stands — workers should change positions often.

## A good chair is hard to find

Our muscles are not designed to hold us upright for six to ten hours at a desk. That's what we're asking employees to do if they're sitting in a straight back chair that isn't able to be adjusted to the individual.

One of the most tangible examples of bringing ergonomics into the workplace: chairs.



## WHY CHAIRS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

- ✓ Universal component of the office
- ✓ Everyone requires different settings
- ✓ Comfort impacts performance
- ✓ Supports healthy bodies

*“Adjustable chairs show that you care about the employees who are in the space. But in workplaces that do not address that aspect of their workspace, it’s also immediately recognizable to the employees.” - JEN GRAHAM*

## Checklist for healthier workplaces

### EMPLOYERS

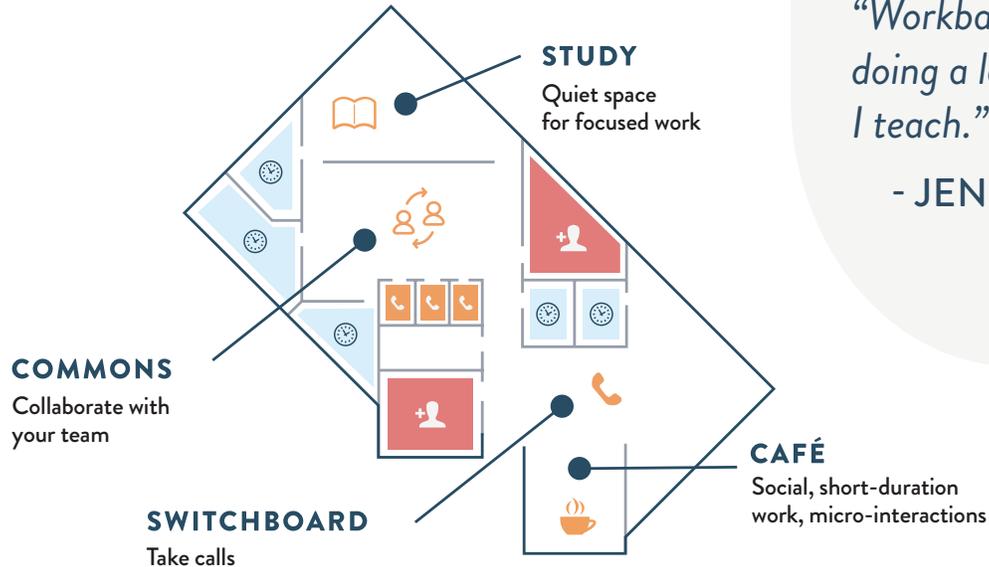
- Audit workspaces (office and home) to identify bad ergonomics
- Invest in adjustable seating and surfaces
- Build in movement with work policies that encourage healthier behavior
- Offer educational workshops and resources for setting up ergonomic workspaces
- Provide coworking memberships, especially for hybrid and remote workers
- Offer stipends for proper equipment and work setups

### EMPLOYEES

- Set automated “ergo break” reminders to change position every 20–30 minutes
- Add simple stretch breaks for wrists, shoulders, and chest
- Raise your screen(s) to eye level
- Ensure your work setup supports the forearms
- Stop working from your couch, bed, or other locations that force you into awkward postures
- Add variety to your day, different room, different seat, different background

## Workbar creates workspaces that work

Employees and employers deserve workspaces built for them. This means they shouldn't just provide comfortable chairs or standing desks, but an environment that's conducive to healthy, sustainable productivity.



*“Workbar is already doing a lot of what I teach.”*

- JEN GRAHAM

*“I don't even want you sitting in the world's best chair for eight hours straight. I want you to move.”*

- SARAH TRAVERS

Every Workbar layout is built for activity-based working, with different neighborhoods designated for different tasks. This encourages employees to move around, change positions, and keep variety in their workdays.

## Keep spaces human-centric

At the end of the day, the most important factor of healthy workplaces is human-centricity. Is the space built around how humans are supposed to work?

For companies struggling with getting people to return to the office, remember this: You don't just need people “back in the office.” You need them in an environment that makes them feel healthier and more productive than working from home.

When companies design spaces that move with people, not against them, performance, health, and retention naturally follow. These are the companies that will win the future of work.



**ERGONOMICS ISN'T AN EXTRA BENEFIT.  
IT'S THE FOUNDATION OF HOW MODERN WORK GETS DONE.**