

PRESS RELEASE

Ergonomic workplaces in industrial environment: The success factor for efficiency and health

Bad Mergentheim/Main-Tauber-Kreis. Ergonomics is not just crucial in the office environment; it is also essential in production, logistics and assembly. Well-thought-out workplaces ensure improved productivity and motivation as well as good health. But what characterises an ergonomic workplace in an industrial environment? And what is the most effective way to align prevention, efficiency, and quality? Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG, a leading specialist in holistic procurement and logistics solutions that are used in production, materials management as well as directly at the workplace, provides the answer to these questions.

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31.07.2025

Foundation for healthy working – prevention instead of strain

The demands placed on employees working in production, logistics and assembly are varied and require a high level of physical resilience. Goods are moved, components are assembled and processes are carried out repetitively – often while standing for extended periods, lifting heavy and one-sided loads and in uncomfortable positions and constrained postures. The solution is simple: Ergonomically optimised workplace. But what does it mean in an environment characterised by short cycle times, standardised processes and physically demanding tasks? After all, ergonomics encompasses far more than just a comfortable posture – it stands for the harmonised interaction of people, workplace and workflows. A fundamental change in perspective is crucial: The workplace should be adapted to people and their physical and cognitive needs – not the other way round. If this adaptation is missing, it often causes long-term health problems. Muscle fatigue, back and joint problems as well as chronic musculoskeletal disorders are among the main causes of sickness-related absences in the industrial workers. For companies, this not only results in a loss of productivity, but also incurs considerable costs due to downtime, reduced working days, quality issues, additional rework and rising attrition among qualified staff. In the wake of the demographic change and the increasingly ageing workforce, it has become all the more important to take preventive action at an early stage and anchor ergonomics as an integral part of a sustainable health strategy.

The customised workplace: Modular solutions instead of rigid systems

Productivity and efficiency begin directly at the workplace, which is customised according to the requirements of the employees. But what exactly is important when selecting and setting up the ideal workplace? Flexible, well-organised workstations that create a tidy working environment and are customised as per the respective activity form the basis for optimal working. The option to be able to adjust the working height to a specific setting – whether manually or electrically – makes complete sense from an ergonomic point of view. The ability to adjust the height allows the employees to flexibly switch their working position between sitting and standing. Short distances, optimised handles and a well-thought-out arrangement of tools and auxiliary materials are also essential for lean production – especially in highly standardised industrial environments. Swivel arms, pull-outs and foldable bins bring work equipment directly within the optimal reach and one-hand zones, which saves space and fulfils requirements. Objects can be easily reached by hand without any major changes in posture. This reduces unnecessary movements, accelerates workflows and decreases physical strain significantly. Even right lighting plays a central role in controlling the “internal clock” as a subconscious biological influencing factor: It prevents fatigue, improves concentration and enhances the visibility of work processes – a decisive factor for precision and quality. After all, one can only work properly in an environment where work surfaces are evenly illuminated, glare is avoided and the lighting is adapted to the individual visual requirements of employees.

Würth Industrie Service shows how to combine all these aspects with its workplace solutions “CPS@IWS – Innovative Workplace Solutions”, which are ideal for implementing the tried and tested 5S rules – sort, set in order, shine, standardise and sustain. Würth Aluminium Profile Systems (WAPS®) with their various parts and components are an essential part of this. They can be combined flexibly to customise the design of storage spaces, workplaces and assembly workstations. Whether connectors and profiles as individual components (WAPS®Components), customised assembly kits for self-installation (WAPS®Kit) or customised holistic concepts for mobile and stationary use (WAPS®Workplace): More than 150 profile variants and over 500 connector variants provide diverse options for tailor-made concepts – everything in its place, perfectly organised, tidy as well as ergonomic. The storage aids CLIP-O-FLEX® function as flexible attachment systems, keeping different work materials always handy. The combination of rails and portable attachment profiles can be expanded with trays, bins, storage shelves and a variety of holders as required.

Additionally, the well-structured placement of work equipment leads to shorter walking routes and set-up times and thus increases productivity sustainably. In line with the motto – Create mobility and save valuable time – the WKLT®Clip ensures more efficiency. The attachment profile for Würth small load carrier (W-KLT®) enables easy retrieval directly at the workstation. The tilt angles of 0°, 15° and 25° help in attaching the bins to any workstation with the bin clip and hence foster an ergonomic way of working. Moreover, the customisable OPT-I-STORE® hard foam inserts ensure organisation and safety. They hold tools and sensitive small parts in their place reliably and create a tidy and well-organised workplace.

Dynamic working with intelligent support – be it while sitting or standing

Employee health is prioritised where ergonomics and preventive measures align. Alongside a well-thought-out workplace design, proper posture also plays an important role. In production, work is often done while standing – on hard concrete floors, often for hours on end. If appropriate measures are not taken, this can lead to adverse effects on health in the long run. This has to be addressed proactively. Anti-fatigue mats make an invaluable contribution here: They reduce strain on the spine and joints, improve circulation in the legs and prevent early exhaustion. When one combines these with high-quality safety shoes – also available with customised inserts – an ergonomic standing workstation system is formed. It is equally important to switch between sitting and standing regularly to distribute load equally and avoid one-sided strain. The company encourages this approach with customisable seating solutions, standing aids and height-adjustable workstations that promote dynamic working and provide the employees with the necessary flexibility. Additionally, the experts of Würth Industrie Service, together with partners like Ottobock, rely on sustainable occupational safety with a wide range of exoskeletons. Be it for the neck, knee, arm, wrist or back, using external support and assistance systems offers a boost in ergonomics for more comfortable working. Exoskeletons are highly recommended, especially for employees in logistics, manufacturing and production or assembly and repair work. Mechanical operating principles like springs or elastic bands that are used here, support movements during lifting, carrying and overhead work. They provide relief to the musculoskeletal system, facilitate healthy posture, reduce muscle fatigue and the risk of injuries.

Suitable work environment

Along with the workstation, optimal arrangement of the entire work environment plays a very important role. With the 3D planning tool GEMINI, Würth Industrie

Service offers a suitable solution for the visualisation and planning of workplace equipment – from workshops to storage areas and offices. The goal is a space-saving and functional arrangement of all operating materials in close vicinity of the workstation. As a result, walking routes are reduced, processes are expedited, and the ergonomics of the entire work environment is improved sustainably.

Designed along the line

Ergonomic workplace design does not end at the individual workstation – it also includes the connected workstations along the entire assembly line. Height-adjustable workstations are suitable for different working heights and physiques and enable a consistently optimised production flow. Here, flexible and well-coordinated transitions between the stations are required in order to implement the essential lean principles effectively.

“Ergonomic workplace design is not an option, but a fundamental requirement to ensure good health of the employees and the resilience of the company. More efficiency, less strain, and most importantly, satisfied employees in a future-ready and sustainable production environment”, says Matthias Mayer, Head of Innovative Workplace Solutions division at Würth Industrie Service. The C-Parts expert relies on a holistic approach: from analysis of requirements and implementation of customised workplace concepts to designing entire production and assembly lines.

Images

Captions:



Image 1: Smart Workplace.jpg

Caption 1: The workplace of the future can be customised flexibly according to the individual requirements of the employees to achieve highest level of ergonomics and efficiency.

Image source 1: Hans Neukircher, Scanner GmbH



Image 2: OPT-I-STORE® hard foam inserts.jpg

Caption 2: The individually configurable OPT-I-STORE® hard foam inserts are made of high-quality, robust hard foam and offer improved organisation at the workplace when used either separately or in combination with workshop equipment.

Image source 2: Robin Landwehr, Straight Media



Image 3: CLIP-O-FLEX®.jpg

Caption 3: The CLIP-O-FLEX® attachment system consists of an ingenious rail and attachment profiles combined with trays, bins, storage shelves and a wide range of holders for the workplace equipment. The workplace is individually developed with these components and the space is optimally utilised.

Image source 3: Robin Landwehr, Straight Media



Image 4: Exoskeletons.jpg

Caption 4: Together with experienced partners, Würth Industrie Service provides a variety of exoskeletons which include external support and assistance systems that can be worn for providing support and relief to specific body parts during lifting or carrying.

Image source 4: Robin Landwehr, Straight Media

Brief profile of Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG

Within the Würth Group, Würth Industrie Service GmbH & Co. KG is responsible for supplying to the industrial sector. Since its foundation in the year 1999, the company is located at Würth Industrial Park in Bad Mergentheim, Germany with over 1,800 employees.

As a one-stop C-Parts provider, the company offers its customers a specialised product range with over 1,400,000 items: from screws and tools to connection and fastening technology, technical chemicals as well as occupational safety solutions. Aside from the extensive standard product range, the strength of the company lies in its customer-specific, logistical and dispositive supply and service concepts as well as special parts. Under the service brand "CPS® - C-Product Service", the company offers modular solutions customised as per the customer's requirements. These consumption-based and demand-based systems streamline the processes for Purchase, Logistics and Quality assurance while enabling the procurement of small parts in a cost-optimised manner. Logistic and dispositive services such as shelving systems that use scanners or a just-in-time supply using Kanban bin systems play a significant role in increasing productivity.