

Hu-Tech Newsletter no. 15: November 2004

Once again we would like to welcome to the Hu-Tech Ergonomics newsletter. In this edition we discuss the HSE health and safety report on homeworking and provide you with an overview of our design ergonomics service. We also examine the impact on productivity of human error, introduce the 'best practice in case management' research contract recently awarded to Hu-Tech by HSE and finally inform you about our continuing programme of training.

Hu-Tech's Design Ergonomic services

Hu-Tech has been working in the banking and retail sector for some 12 years and has built up considerable experience and a reputation in the field of design ergonomics. We have worked with many leading companies across a diverse range of projects. Typically our work has included; scoping studies, design input or design authority from concept to installation, proof of concept, usability testing, risk assessments, and design for all (disabled and able-bodied).

Of late we have been working in these capacities with a leading high street Bank and a major Building Society. This has required us to work closely with internal departments/partners and other industry partners and suppliers. The result of this involvement means that we are at the forefront of design, operation, security, and sales practices in the sector. We are hoping to be able to publish a paper on some of this work in the near future, and will feature this in a forthcoming Newsletter.

HSE publishes health and safety report on Homeworking

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published a report on homeworking to help employers ensure they have fulfilled their health and safety obligations, and to help staff avoid hazards at home.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA), employers have the same obligations to protect the health, safety and welfare of homeworkers who are employees, as they do for employees on-site.

The report, which has been developed in partnership with companies employing homeworkers, illustrates good health and safety practice through a selection of case studies developed in the four industry sectors of textiles; packing, assembling, finishing; electrical and electronic; and business services and computing.

Copies of the report can be downloaded from the HSE website at: www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr262.htm

The examples of good practice show how employers and homeworkers can identify work-related hazards and take appropriate measures to reduce the risks associated with homeworking. Hu-Tech has assisted a number of companies develop programmes to assess and manage the risks to their staff when working at home, particularly for staff working in business services. If you would like any support in this, please contact us to discuss your needs.

Improving Quality and Productivity by cutting the cost of Human Error

In October Hu-Tech carried out two human error analysis (HEA) workshops with one of our clients in the pharmaceutical sector. Unusually for an exercise in HEA the emphasis was not on safety but on production and quality processes, with the aim of minimising costly mistakes which had been put down to 'human error'. To err is human and nothing much can be done about that, but by methodically describing the tasks, identifying where errors could occur and classifying those errors, we were able together with our client to come up with low cost error prevention and recovery strategies that look likely to save tens of thousands of pounds a year in lost time and lost product.

Speaking about the workshops, Hu-Tech's Ian Randle said 'By combining our client's knowledge of their manufacturing and QA process and our understanding of human behaviour and HEA techniques, we quickly established several ways in which opportunities for error can be closed off. The workshops were designed so that our client could use the same technique for any of their other processes without the need for us to be there.'

By using a systematic procedure to record the outcomes, the spill-over benefits of prevention or recovery steps could easily be seen – helping to demonstrate the wider cost benefits. Before the HEA, almost all human errors linked to the process were thought to be due to lack of attention and carelessness. The class

of error most commonly found however was 'mistakes' which are essentially actions that the individual thought were right at the time but were actually wrong. If errors are due to incomplete knowledge of the process and the outcome of decisions and actions, the most effective intervention strategies would probably involve training, task design and interface design. Error prevention and recovery strategies that simply tackled lack of attention may well have missed the mark. For further information this topic please contact: calum@hu-tech.co.uk

Identifying best practice in active case management and rehabilitation for those suffering MSDs

Hu-Tech was delighted recently to be awarded another 18 month research contract with HSE. This high profile study aims to identify best practices in active case management and rehabilitation for those suffering musculoskeletal disorders. This will include considering the costs and benefits of these programmes, and will take account of different industries and sizes of organisation. Hu-Tech have compiled a prestigious team to work with on the project, including Prof Kim Burton of Huddersfield University, Dr Adele Pilkington of WellWork, Dr Nick Kendall and Rebecca Lancaster (both occupational psychologists and consultants), who all come with extensive experience of research in the area of occupational health and rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation is a topical issue for many organisations as they realise the costs associated with sickness absence, recruitment and training. Margaret Hanson, project leader for the work said 'We are pleased to be working with such a team of experts, and look forward to helping HSE provide models and guidance on the best ways to manage those who suffer aches and pains. Not only will this help organisations reduce their costs, but also individuals who may then be able to return to the jobs for which they are skilled.'

Part of the work will involve consultation with employers concerning their experiences of active case management and rehabilitation programmes, particularly their attitudes towards and expectations of these programmes and the costs and benefits of these. If you would like to take part in this consultation, (by questionnaire or focus group), please let us know, and we will send you more information. Please contact Margaret@hu-tech.co.uk or tel: 0131 718 4232. We look forward to bringing you more news of the study and its findings as it progresses.

IOSH Approved DSE Assessors Training

The November **IOSH 'Assessing risks for computer users'** course is full, but will be run again in London on 22nd and 23rd February 2005 1st and 2nd June 2005. The course will enable delegates to become competent in undertaking DSE risk assessments as required by the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (amended 2002). It will also include a session by Bill Fine of **AbilityNet** giving delegates familiarity and confidence in making recommendations for computer adaptations and alternative equipment for colleagues who may experience discomfort at work.

Further details and a booking form are available on our website: http://www.hu-tech.co.uk/training-workstation_assessors.html Alternatively, please contact margaret@hu-tech.co.uk (0131 718 4232).

BOHS Ergonomics Essentials course

Once again we are running the 5 day **Ergonomics Essentials (including DSE and Manual Handling)** course on 7th – 11th March 2005 in Edinburgh. This course follows the British Occupational Hygiene Society's (BOHS) syllabus and gives delegates confidence and practical skills in tackling ergonomics issues in their workplace. It provides a good grounding for health and safety professionals who want to know more about how to reduce ergonomics risks in their workplace. There is an optional 2 hour exam, successful completion of which leads to a module certificate from BOHS.

Further details and a booking form are available on our website http://www.hu-tech.co.uk/training-ergonomics_essentials.html Alternatively, please contact margaret@hu-tech.co.uk (0131 718 4232).

If you would like any further information on any of these news items, please contact us on:

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