Workspace Observation

Objective

The objective of this assignment was to observe my co-worker, Lucy, as she worked in our office and note factors that contributed to workspace usability.

Method

I set up an appointment with Lucy, asking that I watch her during her normal routine at work for about an hour. As Lucy completed her work, I noted what I observed on the checklist provided by www.office-ergo.com/a.htm. Though it was obvious that she was a little self-conscious about being watched, I did my best to remain quiet and out of the way, in hopes that she would forget I was there.

Results

In my observations during the hour, I noted that Lucy’s workstation set-up contributed to poor usability. While her monitor was at an appropriate level, the keyboard and mouse were position too high, making for uncomfortable wrist position and long reach. Also, Lucy’s CPU was set up on the floor as a footrest. While this seemed to be a comfortable and preferred position for her, the poor posture led to other problems, such as hunched shoulders and a tendency to rest her hands on the keyboard. The lack of lumbar support was also evident. The lighting in the office seemed to be appropriate and Lucy was provided with a glare screen.
As a programmer, Lucy spends long hours on the computer. During my hour with Lucy, she rarely took a break from the screen to re-adjust her focus, which could lead to eyestrain. The resolution on her screen was also set very high, making the screen text small and hard to read.

**Discussion**

As a programmer myself, working in the same office, the results of my observations really did not surprise me. I found that myself falling into the same bad habits of staring at the screen for long periods of time, resting my hands on the keyboard, and changing to higher screen resolution so that I could fit all my resources onto the screen. While a few of the problems were due to the workstation set-up, I feel that most of the issues were with bad habits. I think if Lucy were made aware of the proper practices and I conducted the observation again, fewer workspace ergonomic issues would have been violated.

**Conclusion**

After observing Lucy in a workspace situation that is very similar to mine, it is obvious that I need to make changes in my own office setting. Since the class presentation on office ergonomics, I have moved my monitor and ordered a keyboard and mouse tray. I’ve also become more aware of my body position and every ache in my shoulders, back, and wrists. Hopefully, by applying the principles of workspace ergonomics, I can prevent any long-term damage.