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Help I'm an office worker get me out of here!

- 67% of office workers are more tied to their desks now than they were two years ago Technology and our laziness has created a new problem for the 21st century office worker – IDS – Irritable Desk Syndrome
New Deskology Guide points to simple solutions for a less stressful desk-life

London, March 29, 2004 - Far from becoming a more mobile workforce, technology such as email and the Internet has meant that 67% of us are more tied to our desks today than we were two years ago. This extra desk-time coupled with more paper and clutter, poor desk set-up, bad eating habits and fewer breaks is creating a new threat to productive office-life in the form of Irritable Desk Syndrome (IDS), according to research commissioned by NEC-Mitsubishi.

The survey of over 2000 people* shows that the 21st century office environment is more stressful, less productive and for many of us a source of daily irritation because sufficient time is not being spent making sure that offices have desk areas that are conducive to longer working hours.

According to the survey IDS is being caused by a general apathy to changing our desk behaviour despite being forced to spend more time in front of our computer screens. Many respondents admitted that there are several work habits that they could easily change but currently choose to put up with on a daily basis – despite the fact that they could be doing them harm. Worryingly this lethargy is far more prevalent amongst some of the newest members of Britain's workforce (18-24 year olds).

In two recent office worker desk case studies** Nigel Robertson, Deskologist and senior consultant at Open Ergonomics, found a series of desk horrors that individuals had been putting up with for months and yet could be fixed within minutes.

Robertson states: "What most individuals fail to realise is that desk symptoms typically escalate very quickly, from persistent discomfort to chronic pain which can end a person's career and reduce their quality of life in a wide range of ways. The two essentials for less stressful, more productive desk management are 'don't endure' – act today, and 'do it yourself' – don't wait for someone else to fix it for you."

Much of the back and neck pain experienced at work is because individuals don't consider their desk set up from what should be the focal point – their computer monitor. 35% of the sample admitted that it would be fairly easy to move their computer equipment into a place that enables them to sit more comfortably. According to Backcare***, bad work posture is a major contributor to back-pain which costs the UK over £5billion each year in lost production.

Similarly 45% said that it would be simple to remove much of the desk clutter that accelerates their stress levels at work.

Other desk-life aspects that respondents admit would be easy to improve include taking more regular breaks away from their desks, especially for lunch (53%) and walking round the office to speak to a colleague rather than sending them an email (52%). Health issues such as Repetitive Strain Injury, experienced by 27% of the sample, can also be helped by a better and more ergonomically friendly desk set-up.

NEC-Mitsubishi managing director, John McGrath, states: "NEC-Mitsubishi constantly visits different organisations' premises to analyse their desk-top monitor needs. In any organisation that I walk into I can guarantee that at least 50% of the desks will be set up incorrectly or be consumed by clutter. The challenge is that while we can provide these businesses with a more compact, height adjustable monitor solution, it will not remove the stress and irritation if the space that the new monitor saves is immediately replaced by clutter or if it is positioned incorrectly."

To help educate the UK Workforce about the small steps that they can take today to overcome hidden desk dangers that lead to stress, poor health and low productivity, NEC-Mitsubishi and Open Ergonomics have teamed up to create a new simple guide called 'Deskology'. The guide focuses around seven easy solutions designed to make desk areas more conducive to longer working hours:-

1. Setting up – paying more attention to the way you set up your desk to reduce stress and health risks.
2. Sitting pretty - adjusting the way you sit to improve back posture.
3. Taking 'five' to stretch – desk stretching to reduce injury from routine activities and increase circulation.
4. Changing your scenery – taking regular breaks away from your desk to improve concentration, overall health and colleague interaction.
5. Expressing yourself - giving your desk individuality to remind you of life outside work.
6. Keeping your cool - preventing dehydration and over-heating at work to promote higher energy levels.
7. Being clutter free – organising your desk to reduce stress and increase productivity.

The Deskology Guide is available at www.nec-mitsubishi.com/tplus

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*Populus Research conducted the omnibus survey incorporating a representative sample of 2,028 UK adults during March 2004 on behalf of NEC-Mitsubishi.

**Open Ergonomics – Open Ergonomics was formed in 1992, providing ergonomics data and recommendations to major organisations. Director Nigel Robertson has provided workstation assessments, assessor training and office ergonomics services to many organisations, in particular to Loughborough University, since 1996, and is author of the Safe Office Practice website (www.openerg.com/dse). Nigel has recently undertaken case studies with typical individual workers to put Deskology into practice. These findings are available on request.

***Backcare is a UK charity for healthier backs that provides a source of independent, evidence based-information about the causes, treatments and management of back pain and promotes best practice in the diagnosis, treatment and management of disorders of the spine.

NEC-Mitsubishi Electronics Display-Europe GmbH

NEC-Mitsubishi Electronics Display-Europe GmbH with its headquarters in Munich, Germany, is a 100 percent subsidiary of NEC-Mitsubishi Electric Visual Systems Corp. (NMV), Tokyo. The joint venture between NEC and Mitsubishi Electric in the monitor sector was established on 18th January 2000 in Tokyo, Japan, with effect from 01 April 2000. The new company also commenced activities in Europe and the USA on 1st July 2000. In Europe, NEC-Mitsubishi Electronics Display-Europe GmbH has subsidiaries in Germany for Central Europe, France and the United Kingdom as well as sales offices in Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Poland. By means of the joint venture between NEC and Mitsubishi Electric, the company combines the know-how and the technological edge of both companies in the monitor sector. NEC-Mitsubishi Electronics Display with its own Research and Development is one of the world's leading manufacturers of desktop monitors, large-format LCDs - so-called public displays - and special displays for the medical field. The management of NEC-Mitsubishi Electric Visual Systems Corp. is shared equally between both partners. President and CEO is Hirotoishi Matsuda. NMV employs more than 1,900 staff worldwide. Managing Director of the European headquarters is Katsuhiko Koike. You will find more information at www.nec-mitsubishi.com

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