

PeRSoNaLised Ergonomics by Workrite

Lumo Lift app coaches
sit strong & stand tall

Last week **Workrite Ergonomics** based in Petaluma (CA) launched key new initiatives at its annual sales meeting including expansion of its sit/stand desking line and a new perfect posture coaching app from **BodyTech**, We met with CEO **Charlie Lawrence** to discuss...complete

Workrite provides perfect posture

Workrite Ergonomics last week announced the addition of **Lumo Bodytech's Lift** (video) product to its already expansive offering of ergonomic products and solutions for the workplace.

Lift is a smart, connected posture coach and activity tracker, designed to motivate the wearer to sit tall and stand strong by providing discreet vibrations and real-time feedback when slouching. Lift encourages the wearer to stay active by tracking steps, distance traveled and calories burned. It can be paired with iOS devices, select Android devices and Windows PCs so users can track their progress over time.



“We are excited by Lift because it is the first connected, wearable device that addresses the crisis of poor posture. It fits perfectly with our focus on wellness and adds a whole new dimension to our ergonomic solutions.” said **Charlie Lawrence**, president (pic below right).



“The foundation of good ergonomics is proper posture so Lift naturally fits with what we do – helping people be healthier and more productive in the workplace. The wonderful thing is, by helping people work healthier and improve productivity, we can enhance their lives outside of the office.”

Lift is the first product that can objectively track posture on a large scale and helps provide deeper insight into posture behavior trends. In a recent study of user data, Bodytech found that during an average workday people typically spend only 36% of their time in good

posture. This translates to as much as 38 minutes of slouching per hour.

Lift was created after one of the founders, **Andrew Chang**, battled back pain for many years. “I was only able to find relief after a series of posture classes and I realized the significant impact that posture

can have on back pain,” said Chang. “After that, we knew we were on to something big. The benefits of good posture go beyond improving physical health by reducing stress on the back, it can also boost confidence and enhance appearance.”

Interview with Charlie Lawrence

Charlie was interviewed recently by **Innovation & Tech Today's Melissa Hirsch**. We highlight the areas of relevance

Medtech Sitting Ourselves To Death

Many Americans have assumed that healthful eating or regular exercise, long celebrated by everyone from the White House to your local gym membership sales rep, could save us from obesity, diabetes, and in some cases, early death. However, even exercise doesn't undo the negative effects of sitting all day.

That's right. You can run for 10 miles after work, but if you're sitting for more than three hours straight during the day, your risk for obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and early death increase dramatically. Extended sitting is common practice in many U.S. workplaces, so nearly everyone should feel cause for alarm over this fact.

It's tempting to jump into conclusions about the best way to handle 'sitting' disease. What is it? How does it work? Isn't that important to understand before we start standing for eight hours straight?

Ryan Feeley is the CTO at **Ergodrive**, developer of an innovative mat for standing workers, the design of which is informed by the science of sitting disease. Like a select few in the ergo workspace market, he believes it's critical that office workers have healthy alternatives to sitting.

“Scientists have recently discovered the danger of prolonged periods of very low energy expenditure while we're awake,” he said. “For example, when sitting still, our bodies enter a new operational mode which our ancestors probably never experienced, that scientists have termed **sedentary physiology.**”

It's the 'sedentary physiology' we want to minimize. Does standing accomplish this? Since we've only just learned about the negative consequences of long-term sitting, there is very little experimental data directly comparing the long-term consequences of sitting versus standing.





But according to the office furniture marketplace, currently flooded with standing desks, being on our feet seems to be the way to go. What does the science say? Is standing the best way to avoid ‘sedentary physiology’? The short answer: No.

Standing alone isn’t the Holy Grail for beating sitting disease. While standing does help burn more calories, increase metabolism, and exercise stabilizer muscles like your abs, “the key to unlocking the big benefits of standing desks is to move frequently, to occupy many postures throughout the day,” Feeley said, “and never stay static for too long.”

“If we can somehow tie our sit-stand workstations into a wellness program, then it becomes a more holistic solution and, I believe, more powerful,” agrees **Charlie Lawrence** of Workrite Ergonomics. “If we can transition to making our products not just about the work day but connect it to your life after work. That’s our goal.”

For the consumer, the sit-stand movement is best viewed as a paradigm shift, which embraces healthier and more active working. For the developers of ergonomic office furniture, the paradigm shift has to do with staying aware of the latest science — and, in some cases, creating their own.

Lawrence’s team at Workrite conducts its own laser-focused studies on the practical use of their products. Not only are they committed to understanding how using the ergonomic workstations help office workers, but they’re also making sure people actually are using them. In one 30-day study with **Sony Pictures**, each participant lost about a pound, registered healthier cholesterol levels, and reported better sleep and less back pain. No one wanted his or her old desk back.

Additionally, they provided software that creates pop-up reminders on the user’s computer to stand for a few minutes or take a seat, based on self-prescribed goals for sitting and standing, weight loss, etc. There were a couple of issues. The study wasn’t conducted in the traditional framework – double blind procedural. But that’s on the horizon.



In addition to extending the study, Lawrence and the folks at Workrite are adding wearable tech (See Lift story above) to provide even more analytics and encourage movement between sitting and standing to help overcome another problem with the study. The wearable will provide more insight if, for example, someone leaves their desk while standing up, but then sits in a meeting for two hours.

“If we can start collecting this data that proves that people who use ergonomic workstations are healthier and prove they’re actually using them and have a control group — another company that doesn’t use them — we have a dream our customers who use our workstations and wearable devices can then go to their insurance companies and say, ‘I think we deserve lower rates because our work force is healthier.’”

Lawrence pointed out. Insurance breaks would certainly be welcome from business owners. But, if sitting is the new smoking, and it's illegal to smoke in some bars and restaurants because of the harm it could cause employees, will there one day be legislation to protect office workers from the danger of sitting?

Lawrence shared the reasoning a fellow ergonomist once presented to him. "In a factory, we make people wear steel-toed shoes and safety glasses to protect themselves. We have devices that help them lift things properly so they don't injure their backs. We don't have anything like that for office workers."

As for Lawrence, "Politically, I'm not a big fan of that kind of legislation, but it's possible."

If the sit-stand movement is really a paradigm shift, then the ergonomic mindset should extend beyond sitting and standing. The setup of standard keyboards falls between uncomfortable and dangerous, possibly causing carpal tunnel syndrome and resulting in an average 28 days away from work (which is bad).

Beyond the desk- Ergonomics for your hands

Kinesis Corporation has produced comfortable yet productive keyboards for more than 20 years, and is continually adapting. As industry trailblazers, Kinesis relies on practical science for its designs. What works? What feels good for users?

Case in point: after **Microsoft** introduced its Natural keyboard in 1994 for \$80, Kinesis had to find a way to bring down its price point for its pioneering Contoured keyboard from \$700 while maintaining a high quality product. They succeeded, and over the years have introduced several innovative split keyboards offering adjustability and complete separation.



In a 2009 study of the Freestyle separable, tentable keyboard, 96% of users preferred the Freestyle over their current keyboard and 84% separated it more than the MS Natural keyboard. The Freestyle2 currently sells for \$99.

Today, things are different. "Back then, no one wanted to talk about ergonomic considerations for fear of jeopardizing the computer industry," said President **Will Hargreaves**, "but now, we are not living in that environment of fear."

This is great, in a way. We're freed up to actually problem solve and improve the lives of frequent computer users. On the other hand, "The term 'ergonomic' gets thrown around too often in the workplace, and the meaning gets standardized."

The moral of the story? Research ergonomic keyboards. Check out reviews online, and educate yourself about the brands in the marketplace. Also consider digging a little deeper to invest in a quality keyboard that will keep you healthy, comfortable, and productive.



Editor's Comment

Workrite is the original and most experienced ergonomic furniture maker with expertise on manufacturing quality and customer satisfaction in the corporate world e.g. contracts with progressives like Apple, Fidelity, MFS and Liberty via the dealer channel.

Lawrence confirmed the above developments plus new entry level sit/stand furniture for the SMB market. Last year Workrite experienced its fair share of supply reliability issues affected badly by the West Coast port strikes. Notwithstanding, it still increased sales by 20% to \$75m.

Plans are to reach \$100m over the next 2 years with the addition of more personalised ergonomic devices/software that monitors personal activity not just the furniture. "Wellness is our objective both at work, socially and at home".

Our sales people are excited and highly motivated after a quiet year for innovation. Now we're set to step up innovation and drive demand directly with users, to create demand through our channel partners. It's very exciting!" Lawrence enthused.

