On the Technical Side… ***Positioning In The Chair***

Karl J. Marion, MS, CIE, CPE

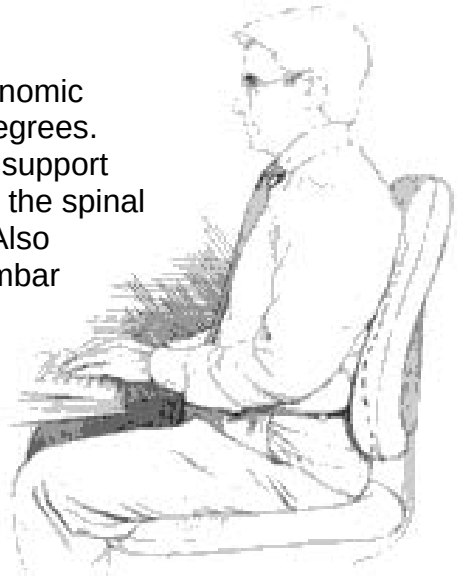
One of the most important aspects of our jobs is to fit a chair to a person – the emphasis should be to give them the best chair with the best combination of options considering their body type… but once we've figured out what chair to let them try, how do we position them in the chair? What's the best position to try to place the person in when fitting the chair to the person?

When positioning the person in the chair, I usually pull them back away from the workstation, as the workstation most often serves to confuse the issue of positioning in the chair. That way you can focus on the chair and conforming the chair to the comfort of the individual.

I start from the feet up. Ideally, you want to position the chair so that the person's feet are on the floor and then adjust the seat pan height so that the person's knee angle is at about 90 degrees. This often will give you an indication of which cylinder to specify for the chair.

Then move to the seat pan depth, as there should be at least two to three finger width's worth of space between the front of the seat pan and the back of the person's knee. That spacing helps to prevent any pressure against the back of the leg that would cut off or restrict circulation to the lower extremities and cause varicose veins. This is also a good point to discuss the passive ergonomic feature of *the waterfall front of the seat pan*, which is designed to also prevent pressure on the back of the leg. This then presents the opportunity to discuss two active ergonomic options for the chair, the back depth adjuster and the seat slider. Explain that either option will help adjust the relationship between the seat back and the seat pan, and define the depth of the seat relative to the back.

We can then discuss two other passive ergonomic features of the chair, the contour of the seat pan and the pommel. The *contour of the seat pan* helps increase the amount of contact surface the seat has with our body to better distribute the weight of the body on the seat pan, thus reducing seated pressure and reducing the potential of having pressure points in sensitive areas such as the ischial tuberosities (the sitting bones). The *pommel*, as one rep has coined it, serves as an "ergonomic speed bump" - it reminds the person gently that they need to sit back in the seat and take advantage of not only the contours of the seat but also the back support of the chair.



The seat back is next. It should be adjusted (an active ergonomic feature) so that the person's torso-thigh angle is about 90 degrees. The seat back height should be adjusted so that the lumbar support (here discuss the benefits of complementing and preserving the spinal curves to maintain a healthy back) is at about belt height. Also discuss the options available for lumbar support – the air lumbar or the s'port lumbar.

If the person has a neckroll on the chair, adjust that next. See the On the Technical Side for the positioning of the fixed neckroll vs. positioning of the fore-aft neckroll vs. the positioning of a headrest. The neckroll should gently cradle and support the neck and lower portion of the back of the head.

Arms are next. Arms should be adjusted so that they support the person's upper extremities at elbow height. They should not feel like they're shrugging, nor should they feel like they have to lean from one side to the other to get support. Show the person the adjustable features of the arms – the articulation, the angle, and the height. The arms should also be close to the side of the person so they aren't splaying their elbows out – a good time to talk about pivot arms.

There you have it – the person should be positioned in their seat comfortably. This is a good time to introduce them to the open posture, or zero gravity posture, where the knee angle and torso-thigh angles are greater than 90 degrees. The benefits of open posture include better circulation, better digestion, and easier transition between sitting and standing.

Now compare that seated position of the worker to the workstation. The person's seated elbow height is the reference point to the position of the worksurface, keyboard, and mouse. If they have a fixed height workstation, the person's seated elbow height should equal the workstation height, which means you may have to raise the person up in the chair and potentially suggest an ErgoFusion footrest. If they do primarily keyboarding and their workstation is too high, suggest an adjustable ErgoFusion keyboard tray.

Feel free to contact your Ergonomist should the person have any special needs or any questions regarding seated positioning. Happy selling!