



DSI Work Solutions
Concepts that work. Solutions that last.

DSI Work Solutions, Inc.
130 West Superior Street
Suite 625
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218.625.1051
Fax: 218.625.1052

sisernhagen@dsiworksolutions.com
www.dsiworksolutions.com



Hot Topics

Announcing the DSI Work Solutions National Conference Nov 10-11, Denver Colorado
Functional Fitness for Duty
NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN WORK INJURY MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION

The DSI Work Solutions National Conference brings together national leaders from the medical, rehab and employer fields. The synergies of working together for injury reduction and decreased lost and modified days have brought new methods of interaction that answers employers' issues and provides therapy and medical providers with integrated programs. This interactive conference will be held in Denver, Colorado on November 10-11, 2006. The conference will feature Susan and Dennis Isernhagen, Russell Green MD, Andrew Wood, Susan Abeln, Scott Ege, Ginnie Halling, healthcare and manufacturing employers, and many other rehabilitation, medical and employer experts discussing important topics, programs and concepts for 2006 and beyond.

- Ergonomics...Refinements of Injury Prevention: Science and Art
- Job Function Matching....what it has done for industry
- Return on investment from the employer's point of view: case studies
- Reducing Injuries through the newest health and fitness concepts
- The aging worker.....the issues and the opportunities for change
- Determining cost savings of injury prevention and management through data analysis
- Employer forum: what are the pressing issues and what works and does not work
- Employer and Physician working as a team for the workers and employers
- Updates on Functional Capacity testing
- Legalities and effectiveness: major considerations in post offer testing

For information and a brochure, call or email the Isernhagens at sisernhagen@dsiworksolutions.com or 218-625-1051

New Social Security Panel

A project is now underway to help the US Social Security Administration take a fresh look at how functional and vocational experts and expertise are used in the disability evaluation process.

SSDC and Weability with Jennifer Christian MD, Project Director, announce that the following individuals have been selected to serve on the expert panel that will be making recommendations to Social Security (along with two representatives from state DDS agencies and two Social Security employees):

- Nathan Cope, MD – Paradigm Health Corporation, Concord, CA
- Robert Drake, MD – Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, NH
- Mellanie Ellexson, OT – Chicago State University, Chicago, IL

- Elizabeth Genovese, MD, MBA – IMX Medical Management, Philadelphia, PA
- Thomas Hardy, CRC – LLB from Reliance Standard Life Insurance, Philadelphia, PA
- Jay Himmelstein, MD, MPH – University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Boston, MA
- Susan Isernhagen, PT – DSI Work Solutions, Duluth, MN
- Rosalind Joffe, M.Ed, Chronic Illness.com, Massachusetts
- Ronald Leopold, MD, MBA, MPH – MetLife Disability, Atlanta, GA
- Tom McCallum, Workers' Transition Network,, PA
- Len Matheson, PhD, CRC - Washington University St. Louis, MO
- Kenneth Mitchell, PhD - UnumProvident, Chattanooga, TN
- William Molmen, JD - Integrated Benefits Institute, San Francisco, CA
- Timothy Tunner, PhD - National Association of Social Workers, Washington. DC
- Pamela Warren, PhD - Carle Clinic, Urbana, IL

The charge is not to focus on the existing disability process, but rather to recommend new thinking to improve the process. It will focus on better selection/evaluation of applicants and means to assist others. The panel is also addressing the best way to involve experts/expertise in the process. Social Security just published some new regulations and will soon begin making changes to their disability evaluation procedures. The committee is working now and is scheduled for a final report in July 2006.

***A Change in the Way to Manage and Control Work Injuries:
An interview with A progressive employer:*** by Dennis Isernhagen

In an era when workers' compensation and healthcare costs are rising at a rate of more than 10% annually employers are looking for ways to reduce their losses and control their costs. There are many players, internally and externally, involved in the work injury management process. Too often each of these players perform their routine without communicating or coordinating their efforts with the other players. There is no process.

One company who "controlled" their workers' compensation cost more effectively is Weather Shield Mfg., Inc. a national window and door manufacturer with headquarters in Medford, Wisconsin and plants in several other states.. The company's Safety and Risk Control Manager, Chad Demulling, wanted to enhance the company's work injury management process to reduce injury costs.

In 2000 Chad and his team determined that an immediate need was to reduce musculoskeletal injuries. MSD was identified as 70% of their workers' compensation injuries. They acquired the services of Nancy Bellendorf, OTR owner of Work Safe Therapy & Ergonomics to assist them in the implementation of an ergonomic process at one of its plants. Nancy was able to provide management training, employee training, conduct task analysis, implement stretching protocol, and train and develop an ergonomic team. Chad reported that the "ergonomic process has been very successful. We have seen our costs, injuries and lost time injuries go down by as much as 80%".

Weather Shield was not complacent with the success that it had gained through its ergonomic program. Chad knew that to maintain and improve on this success would require a more aggressive work injury prevention and management process. "We have always been aggressive in claims management and lost time is not in our vocabulary. Transitional (light) duty is always an option for our work related injuries. However, some cases are difficult to close when the physician only has subjective information from employees to base full duty return to work or MMI status. Thus we needed additional tools or methodologies to help close the loop on these type of claims."

With Nancy's recommendation, Weather Shield engaged DSI Work Solutions, Inc. to assist them on analyzing their current work injury management process and help prevent injuries and control the return to work process. The solutions developed have now become a part of the claims management process. According to Chad, the teamwork of Weathershield management and employees with Nancy and Dennis resulted in the following processes.

- Job function descriptions have provided objective information for the medical provider to use in assigning return to work status of an injured worker. The healthcare provider now knows what is required of the worker. The FJD allows the company and the provider to determine what part of the job or transitional job the worker can do. This has put valuable trained workers back into jobs in the factory as opposed to office tasks or off work.

- Functional testing is another tool we can now use to assist or in some cases challenge the medical providers return to work plan. Being able to objectively test an employee's functional capabilities and determine that they are further along in recovery than subjective information could provide allows for faster return to full duty. This decreases lost time and restricted duty days and a more rapid return to work.
- Post offer functional testing has reduced our injuries among new hires. In our opinion we hired and ended up owning as a result of aggravating pre-existing conditions or placing employees into jobs they physically did not have the capability to perform safely.
- A written return to work plan helps hold the injured worker accountable for their return to work responsibilities. We now document the restrictions, the assigned transitional work assignment, treatment plan and pertinent information to assist the employee, the employees supervisor, the on-site RTW coordinator and the claims manager in maintaining the plan with no deviation that may prolong the claim.
- Weekly case management meetings have helped us stay on top of lingering claims and forces us to talk about different strategies to bring to closure.
- Redefined policies and business rules have helped established strict protocol for all of the aforementioned tools. Consistency is key and having set protocol keeps all efforts focused on the goal of prevention and management of on the job accidents.

Chad indicates that "the local medical providers have responded very favorably to our process of objective information sharing and functional testing abilities. I am looking forward to rolling this process out to the non-work related injury side of injury / disability management. Our organization is self insured, and currently we do not accommodate non-work related injury restrictions. Thus we incur additional short term disability costs.

Having the ability to match jobs with individuals on non-work related restrictions will allow us to place our non-work related injured employees into productive rolls in the plant thus maintaining manufacturing efficiencies and lowering STD costs."

Chad Demulling ,Risk Control Manager
Weather Shield Mfg., Inc
Medford, Wisconsin

Nancy Bellendorf, OTR
Work Safe Therapy & Ergonomics
Medford, Wisconsin

For more information, contact Dennis at disernhagen@dsiworksolutions.com

Gender Discrimination in Hiring is Punished

Dial Ordered to Pay More Than \$3 Million in EEOC Sex Discrimination Case
52 women were rejected for Armour jobs because of strength test to receive job offers and back pay.

A federal judge has ordered the Dial Corporation to pay over \$3 million to resolve a sex discrimination suit brought by EEOC against the Dial Corporations Armour Star Meat Packing plant in Fort Madison, Iowa.

The EEOCs lawsuit claimed that Dials use of a strength test, which required the repeated lifting of 35 pounds to a height of 65 inches, discriminated against women, since only approximately 40% of female applicants passed the test, which virtually all male applicants passed the test. Although women had successfully performed the jobs in the sausage making department before the test was implemented in January 2000, Dial claims that he test was necessary in order to reduce injuries.

One of the plaintiffs claimed that she had successfully completed the seven-minute test, but was rejected because she had to, at times, stand on her tiptoes, and that she was told that she had failed because, at 5'2", she was too short.

Dail has made a job offer to each of the 52 women, and so far 14 have accepted the offer. Each of the 52 will receive back pay based on the length of time since the applicant was rejected.

DSI Ergonomic Insights

This issue author: Scott Ege of Ege Work Smart Solutions, PC (egesolutions@insightbb.com)

Cost-effective ergonomic solution proves priceless.

Q: I have an assembly employee who has left CMC joint arthritis. She must wear a thumb splint per her orthopedic physician. One of her primary duties involves performing various calibration tests. This task requires frequent use of a "calibration tool", which is actually a thin diameter screw driver (slightly smaller than the diameter of a pencil). She likes her job, but is having increased pain with using the small tools. What can I do to help her stay on the job and not add to further injury?

A: There are several options that may benefit your client. First, if you can, spend a little time observing the worker perform the calibration tasks. Try to measure the amount of pinch force she uses to operate the calibration tools with a pinch or grip dynamometer. Think of questions like this: Does the job task require significant use of pinch forces? Or, does the worker tend to use excessive pinch forces due to the small diameter of the tool itself? Education regarding proper technique is often overlooked in a situation like this.

Q: I did analyze the job and discovered she tended to a three-point pinch force to complete the calibration tasks. In fact, she would often exert force against the splint itself due to the small diameter of the calibration tool. The calibration tool was custom-made by the employer. Is there something I can do to change the tool? I tried using a coban wrap, but it wore out too quickly.

A: Cylindrical foam can be used to increase the tool diameter to approximately 1.5", thus reducing the three-point pinch force. Another option would involve using Plastazote® Tubing to build up the handle. There are various diameters that are offered for both these products. It's an easy, but effective solution that can be implemented immediately.

Q: Where can I get these products and how much do they cost?

A: I've typically purchased them through Alimed (alimed.com). The foam comes in 12" lengths and the Plastazote® comes in 1 yd lengths. The cost is under \$20.

Q: Is there anything else I can do to help?

A: Yes. Education and training should also be provided to ensure the employee avoids using a forceful three-point pinch with the newly modified calibration tool. Task rotation may also be implemented to reduce repetition. Total cost of the ergo solution: \$200 (foam and analysis time). Total cost of preventing further injury (and possible CMC joint arthroplasty): priceless.

Insights from Dennis Isernhagen

Most companies manage their work injuries by reacting to a situation rather than controlling the process. Assessment of companies who are successful at controlling their work injury costs use methods that are rigorous, scientific and based on continuous improvement. This leads to:

- Process driven solutions
 - Hire to retire process
 - Tools to provide objective information from which decisions can be made
 - Communication among key stakeholders
 - Establishment of policies, procedures and business rules
 - Outcome driven, continual monitoring, updating, there is no end to a successful process/system
2. Employers frequently foster unnecessary disability through a failure to communicate with the employee and the physician or a failure to make transitional work opportunities available during recovery.
 3. Workers who are away from work recover more slowly than those who remain actively engaged in productive labor. A disability mindset and lifestyle can start as a result of a delayed return to work.

For more information, contact Dennis at disernhagen@dsiworksolutions.com

DSI Announces Faculty Roster:

Sue Isernhagen of DSI announces four expert occupational rehabilitation professionals who are advisors to DSI and also teach the Job Function Matching Program and the new Functional Capacity Assessment: The faculty members are:

Curt DeWeese PT
Work Injury Solutions and Physical Therapy PC
Webster NY
cdeweese@rochester.rr.com

Scott Ege MPT
Ege Work Smart Solutions PC
Cherry Valley IL
egesolutions@insightbb.com

Ginnie Halling PT
Work Therapeutics
St. Charles IL
Ptgirl1214@Yahoo.com

Libby McCoy OTR
Highlands Therapy and Industrial Rehab
Covington VA
Highlandstherapy@aol.com



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Contact sisernhagen@dsiworksolutions.com