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Lighting upgrades boost workplace productivity

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In addition to the financial and environmental benefits driven by energy-efficient lighting upgrades, another very tangible benefit of upgrades is the positive impact they can have on boosting employee productivity. Employee productivity is classically defined as the level of output received from an employee based on the investment made in them. Significantly influenced by the workplace environment, employee productivity can increase as the result of a lighting upgrade and can significantly improve a company's bottom line, as shown in the following examples:

*A new study recently revealed that brighter office light can increase employee performance by more than 10%. Subjects tested in varying lighting conditions were found to experience mood elevation and be more alert under brighter lighting.

*A $300,000 lighting upgrade within the Reno, Nevada Main Post Office not only improved workplace morale, but significantly improved productivity - to the tune of a sustained 6% increase, as measured by the number of pieces of mail that the group was able to sort per hour before versus after the upgrade. In addition, employee error rates fell to the lowest level in the region. While the energy cost and maintenance savings resulting from the upgrade amounted to $50,000 a year, it was the value of the gains in productivity - estimated at $400,000 - $500,000 per year - which more than covered the cost of the initial investment in less than one year's time.

*The Verifone Company, a California-based manufacturer of electronic verification systems, tracked the results of its "Costa Mesa Experiment," the impact on employees which resulted from the 1993 upgrade of Verifone's expansion facility to "healthy building" status. Following a building overhaul, which involved the aggressive use of skylights and lighting controls to maximize the use of natural daylighting, the company experienced a 5% boost in productivity and a 40% reduction in absenteeism.

*At Pennsylvania-based American Hardware Supply Company, a lighting upgrade within the company's 318,000-square-foot distribution center enabled employees to work faster and make fewer errors. This improved productivity by over 1%, which was valued at nearly $40,000 annually to the company.

*Studies by research firms BOSTI and ASID report that up to 30% of the nation's office workers are uncomfortable with their facility's general lighting systems.

*A Cornell University study conducted within a Xerox facility in upstate New York found that 1 out of 4 workers experienced a loss in work time based on vision problems and discomfort caused by poor lighting. The lost time amounted to 15 minutes per day or over an hour a week per employee, the eventual equivalent of a full week of lost time per affected employee per year. Subsequently, improvements in the average office lighting system can result in up to 3-5% gains in employee productivity on an annual basis.

An estimated 90% of the nation's commercial buildings were built before 1985, with many still containing outmoded lighting products or systems configured before the onset of the computer era. Fortunately, numerous lighting products readily available in the marketplace can both enhance worker comfort and productivity as well as reduce energy costs. Upgrades involving such technologies as energy-efficient T8 fluorescent lamps, electronic ballasts, and controllable systems can attune lighting levels to the tasks being performed in the space and enhance employee comfort while providing energy cost savings of 20-50%. Don't wait to take advantage of these opportunities in your facility today!

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