

What Gets Recognized Gets Repeated

As we enter the holiday season of gratitude, thankfulness, family and friends, look for what is going right at your school.

Jeffrey Shields, FASAE, CAE

NBOA President and CEO

Last week, the NBOA senior staff discussed a [brief video](#) related to the book “The Best Team Wins: The Science of High Performance.” In the video, co-author Chester Elton speaks about creating an organizational culture where you can innovate, challenge the status quo and have aspirational conversations. Some of the advice was simple and perhaps obvious, but overall it served as a great reminder that every organization can create cultures that successfully innovate and inspire.

The truth is, do we always find time in our hectic days to recognize what someone is doing right?

Elton advocates for greater kindness in the workplace as a means of creating “psychological safety.” In my words, this suggests creating a safe place where team members can readily share new and different ideas that others consider and support — and that they can do so without fear of criticism or being ignored for going outside the status quo. His video is worth a quick view and has inspired many on the NBOA team to read Elton’s book and to flag his toolkit of “100 ways to inspire your team.”

However, what resonated with me the most in Elton’s video is the idea that “what is recognized is repeated.” Again, this is simple right? But the truth is, do we always find time in our hectic days to recognize what someone is doing right?

As business officers, you are very often rewarded for solving problems. Your aptitude for solving problems, in fact, may lead you to be on the lookout for systems or approaches that are broken, going wrong or no longer effective. You identify solutions, implement them and solve the problem. Your head of school, colleagues and faculty likely recognize this, and you are so gratified to fulfill your unique leadership role within your school that you do it again. Why? Because what gets recognized gets repeated.

But what about what is going right? As we enter the holiday season of gratitude, thankfulness, family and friends, I encourage you to look for what is going right at your school. Does your payroll coordinator distribute paychecks error-free and on time? Does your controller complete accurate monthly financial reports, enabling you to focus on something else? Has your manager of facilities prepared your campus for the winter months so that your school will be safe and operational throughout the season? Recognize it.

This is a great reminder for me as well. On the eve of Thanksgiving, I send my thanks to the entire NBOA membership across the country and around the globe for your emails of support, your constructive feedback and your questions about what NBOA is doing and why. Every message from you affirms either what we are getting right or how we can serve you better in the future. This is just another example of how the NBOA community of business officers is the envy of the independent school world. Nobody on the NBOA staff takes it for granted, and I hope you don't either.

Let's recognize what is right and see it repeated through the upcoming season and into the new year!

Happy Thanksgiving!

From [Net Assets NOW](#), November 20, 2018.

Are you a Firebird?

"In 1953, a team of the most creative designers and engineers at General Motors set out to make history. Their task: invent the prototype car of the future. Unlike their mass-production counterparts who focused on streamlined operations, cost control, and maximizing profits, the dreamers on the Firebird project were charged with pushing the boundaries of possibility without the burden of commercialization.



These futuristic prototypes did more than turned heads. In addition to showing the world what the company was capable of, the models were the genesis of major innovation still being used today. The Firebird prototypes were the first to use disc brakes, independent suspension, and cruise control. In fact, the designers were so advanced, they were the first to suggest autonomous vehicles, pioneering automated guidance systems and "no hold" steering.

The Ford GT, the Acura NSX, and the Audi R8 elevate more than just their respective reputations. They serve as a learning lab, allowing innovators the freedom to explore and create bold new futures. In the auto business, today's supercars fuel tomorrow's mass-production breakthroughs.

Which leads to the question... what's *your* Firebird?

While most of our time and energy should be spent delivering current work for existing customers, we can't forget to allocate resources to build our own Firebirds. Whether you sell insurance, run a restaurant, or distribute airplane fuel, there's always some area in your business that is ripe for experimentation. Building and testing a prototype of our ideal services or products will eventually lead to the breakthroughs we seek. This approach also creates a safe environment for creative exploration outside of our present-tense obligations.

Start with a blank canvas and get to work on your own farfetched masterpiece. The ideal version of the future. The prototype of what's possible, how to supremely serve customers and deliver maximum value to the world. By starting with the extreme incarnation and then later ratcheting back from boldness, we avoid the trap of incremental thinking. Tweaking an existing approach rarely leads to breakthrough thinking, while developing the ideal prototype of the future will allow you to seize new possibility.

Ladies and Gentlemen... Start your engines. Your race begins now."

<https://joshlinkner.com/2018/whats-your-firebird/>

BACK TO SCHOOL

As cash registers speedily ring up #2 pencils and file folders, the back to school craze is officially in high gear. Last minute haircuts, wardrobe enhancements, and new lunchboxes help ring in this time of year when students prepare to learn. New courses, new teachers, new classrooms, new possibility. The back to school ritual signifies the transition from recovery to engagement; from rest to growth.

Doesn't it make you wonder why we adults don't have something similar?

Large groups of grownups turn the learning off when they complete their formal educations. Others rely on companies or bosses to instill the insights, solely looking at education as a means to an end. Instead, what if we borrowed from the back to school season and sent ourselves back to the chalkboard in order to achieve more, deliver more, and win more?

Each of us can take charge of our own learning and development. Just as middle schoolers study a subject for a finite time period, we can establish similar practices such as a learning topic of the month. Or perhaps we dedicate 90-day sprints on specific areas of learning, challenging ourselves to read, watch, and listen to as much subject matter as we can to elevate our expertise.

Let's have some fun as we define our own learning objectives, self-study curriculum, and testing procedures. The content can be a mix of TED-talks, blogs, articles, whitepapers, demos, discussion groups, or interactive games. Unlike the rigidity of traditional schooling, we can craft our own learning experiences to be full of energy, agility, and inspiration. We can schedule our own summer vacations or holiday breaks, but there should never be a whole school year without a deliberate learning game plan. In today's highly competitive world, the responsibility of learning must fall squarely on each of us in order to meet the challenges of the day.

In the season of open minds, let's open ourselves up for new ideas, experiences, and education. Committing to lifelong learning – followed by a structured plan of attack – can be the difference-maker in helping you win and soar.

Back to learning. Back to Growth. Back to School.

By Josh Linkner

[September 3, 2018](#)

THE THREE LEVERS OF PRODUCTIVITY (#3 MAY SURPRISE YOU)

“Do more with less.” “Boost your productive output.” “Get more done, faster!”

Messages around efficiency, productivity, and hard work are drilled into us from the first day of our careers. Today, these themes pound in our heads, originating from bosses, shareholders, suppliers, customers, colleagues, and family members. Most of us have internalized the demands, hearing the productivity drumbeat in our minds even in moments where others are not overtly verbalizing.

The problem is, we all hit the same 24-hour-a-day wall. Without time expansion or external resources magically appearing, how do we boost productivity to meet the challenges of the day? Why do some people achieve remarkably while other hard-working folk languish? To solve the mystery, let's examine the three primary levers of productivity:

Lever #1 – The Effort

This is the classic move we've been taught since kindergarten: work harder, tough it out, boost intensity. Even the busiest among us can generally extract an extra 10-15% more output through good old-fashioned hustle. In the same way athletes achieve more by pushing themselves to a higher level of training and intensity, most of us have room to enjoy solid gains by deploying greater effort. Grit works.

Lever #2 – The How

Since effort alone may not be enough deliver the results we seek, the next level of productivity involves the manner in which we do the work. Cutting the lawn with a scissors or a riding mower may deliver the same outcome, but one is dramatically more efficient than the other. If you challenge yourself to carve out one hour a week for the next six weeks to examine how you do your job (vs. just cranking out the work), you'll likely uncover fresh hacks, process improvements, and changes to your methods that end up boosting productivity significantly. In fact, one hour a week dedicated to improving your approach (just 2% of a typical 40 hour gig) can skyrocket your overall productivity by 30% or more. The early wins will be especially big, so get started soon!

Lever #3 -The What

Once you've ratcheted up your effort and improved how you actually do the work, you're ready to take on the What. Here, it is exploring what work you're actually doing, looking for activities that can be swapped out for higher value ones. If you spend two hours a week on cold-calling new prospects, is there better use of that time that could fuel results? Maybe it's hiring a part time employee; maybe it's replacing manual calls with ads on LinkedIn. The core idea – examining the various task, projects, and functions that currently fill your schedule to discover opportunities for an upgrade. Exploring the workload itself, trading up lower-value duties for higher ones, can boost productivity into the stratosphere. This is the trick of billionaires and industry titans, consistently upgrading what they do with their precious hours in order to maximize results. Unlike the first two levers, the gains to be seized are limited only by your imagination.

In our always on, 24/7 business world, we must constantly seek new ways to boost output to achieve our full potential and best serve the world. Investing in the three levers of productivity, taking time to look inward to optimize what and how you deliver, is one of the highest return investments you can make.

To increase time, it's time to lever up.

<https://joshlinkner.com/2018/the-three-levers-of-productivity-3-may-surprise-you/>

Accounting for EQ: Why emotional intelligence matters for accountants

[inpractice Workplace](#) 08 Sep 2017



Help your firm stand out from the crowd with the help of emotional intelligence.

[By Mark Phillips](#)

Improving your emotional intelligence – or EQ – could be the key to building more trust and better rapport with clients of accounting firms.

It may come as no surprise that 1200 executives in 44 countries believe [technology](#) is having the greatest impact in the modern workplace, but according to PwC’s just-released 20th [Global CEO Survey](#) there is also an X factor.

“The rise of [automation and robotics in the workplace](#) is driving a greater need for people that possess qualities that can’t be replicated by machines,” notes the PwC report.

Foremost among these are creativity, adaptability, problem-solving – and emotional intelligence.

Rachel Green, director of Perth-based [The Emotional Intelligence Institute](#) says, “I always tell my accounting clients that according to the World Economic Forum’s 2016 [The Future of Jobs](#) report, emotional intelligence will be one of the top 10 job skills in 2020”.

She adds: “Sadly, very few of us were given emotional intelligence education when we went through school, so we’re all in catch-up mode.”

What is emotional intelligence?

Simply put, emotional intelligence is a measure of someone's ability to identify, use, understand and manage the emotions of themselves and others in a positive way. Commonly abbreviated as EQ (emotional quotient) or EI, the term was coined in 1990 and gained widespread attention with the 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman. In the same year, *Time* magazine ran a cover story on EQ.

EQ has since been the subject of numerous studies, many of which point to it being a better predictor of professional success than someone's general cognitive ability (IQ).

Researchers believe it explains why some people with high self-confidence, optimism and many so-called "soft" skills – but with modest intelligence and talent – often excel where those with greater natural intelligence and talent fail. Research from Harvard Business School, for example, suggests that EQ counts for twice as much as IQ and technical skills.

More importantly, unlike IQ – generally viewed as fixed and the result of genetics and environment – EQ can be trained, practiced, developed and improved.

The rise of EQ in accounting

This should encourage [accounting](#) firms, where compared to even just a few years ago practitioners are offering clients far more than number-crunching.

To offset the loss of traditional bread-and-butter staples to outsourcing and automation, today's accountants are increasingly reliant on skills that include management, business advisory and new business development.

Learning and applying intangible assets that help them to empathise, collaborate, influence and build trust with clients to create business relationships that are based on more than financial transactions can set a firm apart in a crowded and commoditised market – an important factor in an industry where 84 per cent of new business comes from referrals.

"The one thing that now and into the future will differentiate one accountant from another is not numeracy, but their ability to manage client relationships," Green says.

"They have to perform a different role – to be more client-facing and to offer advice, which means being able to really understand the client and what they need, to explain it and then motivate them to do what's required."

This, Green says, necessitates an ability to influence outcomes, "which in turn involves managing emotions because emotions drive people's behaviour".

"If you can inspire someone to comply with or follow your advice, you're going to achieve a better outcome than if the person is complacent," she says.

"Watch the person you're explaining to. Are they getting it or not? Don't provide data without monitoring their emotional response and know how and when to change tack according to that response."

All of which is well and good if you already have the appropriate EQ, but as Green notes, it can be challenging to relearn and look at decision-making in a different light.

“Many finance professionals have been brought up to believe that they have to factor out emotions from every decision they make,” she says.

This may explain why more organisations have started giving employees opportunities to improve their EQ.

Testing times

“Some of the banks are investing heavily in the area, and I’ve had one finance department in the public sector put its team through training for a whole year,” Green says.

“Also, the entire directorate of an accounting firm has embarked on group workshops and personalised one-on-one coaching and completed the [MSCEIT](#) [Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test].”

MSCEIT is one of a diverse range of tests used for measuring EQ in individuals, organisations and teams. The tests fall into four broad categories:

- abilities-based in the same way IQ tests measure cognitive ability
- personality or disposition (trait-based)
- tools that measure how frequently a person demonstrates emotionally intelligent behaviours and actions
- and competency tools that in a workplace context measure learned capabilities against those expected according to role.

Some tests may include questions such as: Do you let clients’ needs determine how you communicate with them? Do you stay optimistic when things go wrong? Are you motivated by the satisfaction of meeting your own standards of excellence? Do emotions take charge when you encounter stressful situations? Do you enjoy helping colleagues develop their skills? Can you read office politics accurately?

At the end of the day, they are all designed to give greater predictability in areas such as promotion, leadership, succession planning and, of course, recruitment.

New rules of engagement

Historically, most professional accounting firms have not placed a lot of emphasis on EQ. However, according to principal consultant at Melbourne-headquartered recruitment firm [Marshall McAdam](#), Gavan McDonald, who has over 20 years’ experience in financial and accounting recruitment, this is changing in both public practice and corporate accounting.

“The salient issue is increased automation of finance processes, which means everyone has to value-add to the business,” McDonald says. “Even junior candidates are being asked how they business partner and engage with non-finance people.

“Businesses want to hire people that not only bring a high degree of technical skills, but an ability to communicate insights. Another example is at the analyst level, where producing

shiny reports is no longer enough. You need to have answers to questions before they're asked.

“Obviously, any good practising accountant wants to really know their clients because it means more business. But you can't produce insights if you can't read the tea leaves.”

According to McDonald, there are very few exceptions to these new rules of engagement.

“In some cases, where specialist knowledge of statutory reporting or certain accounting standards is required, technical expertise will still win the day, but those roles are relatively few and far between.”

Bottom line impact

Nonetheless, because of the sheer number of variables at play when it comes to maintaining and expanding a client base, quantitating the direct impact EQ has on any firm's financial bottom line is difficult.

However, at the 2015 Emotional Intelligence Summit in London, Grant Thornton UK presented the results of a five-year organisational transformation in which EQ was built into its leadership training program.

The firm quoted a 35 per cent revenue increase and 16 per cent uplift in client satisfaction.

A book co-authored by Daniel Goleman titled *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, cites a study of partners at a large US public accounting firm where those with significant strengths in self-management contributed 78 per cent more incremental profit than partners without them.

Partners with strong social skills added 110 per cent more profit than those with only self-management competencies. This resulted in a 390 per cent incremental profit annually.

Interestingly, those partners with significant analytical reasoning skills contributed only 50 per cent more incremental profit.

Nothing 'soft' about soft skills

McDonald says savvy job seekers are aware of the growing need for “soft” skills in finance.

“Those who are serious about building a career look for opportunities to take themselves out of the comfort zone and become involved in projects where they may be tested on skills they haven't used before, such as influencing people in a team environment and achieving outcomes where non-finance people are involved,” he says.

“It's a good box to tick, especially in public practice, where if you don't have the EQ to understand your target market and build rapport with clients, I don't see how you can be effective, let alone generate business.”

Regardless, he still encounters practitioners who, for whatever reason, do not have the mindset or interest to develop relationship management skills.

“It’s always a bit galling to see someone who after five years in a practice environment says they didn’t realise that they’d be expected to generate revenue,” he says.

“Their struggles in the wider world have probably just begun, because to stay in a firm with a tremendous bag of technical tricks but without gaining much expertise around interacting with people is not what the CFOs or CEOs of other businesses or industries will be looking for.”

How office work can kill you

[Workplace](#) 01 Oct 2017



Every hour spent sitting increases the risk of dying by heart disease as much as 18 per cent... even if you exercise regularly.

[By Thea O'Connor](#)

Computers and smartphones have revolutionised the way we work, but our health is suffering in insidious new ways. The tip from ergonomics experts is: don't just sit there, do something.

If you are reading this article on a screen, chances are that your spine is slouched and your neck is protruding forward. If it's a mobile device you are using, your turtle-neck posture will be even more pronounced.

When the Australian Standard for screen-based workstations was written in 1990, a workstation meant a desktop computer on a permanent desk.

Today, with the advent of mobile devices and trends such as hot-desking and BYO devices, a workstation could be anything from a laptop to a tablet or smartphone perched on your lap, palm or pillow, on a bus or in bed. This is leading to increasingly contorted postures as we pretzel our bodies to peer into the screens of our gadgets.

While the Australian Standards haven't been updated for more than 25 years, the list of ailments afflicting the bodies of sedentary, screen-based workers has. Physiotherapists and ergonomists are now treating new conditions such as tech neck and email apnoea, as well as back pain and wrist pain. The scary thing is that the more time we spend online, our bodies go off-line, and vital signs of life diminish – we move less, blink less, even breathe less.

Sedentary death

The risk of sedentary death syndrome (SeDS) has never been higher, with 75 per cent of a typical workday spent seated, according to recent estimates. The term SeDS was coined by medical researchers to wake us up to the fact that excessive sitting is a way to slowly kill yourself.

“When we focus intensely ... we tend to inhale and hold our breath.” Tania Clifton-Smith

Every extra hour spent sitting increases the risk of dying by heart disease as much as 18 per cent, according to a 2010 study of 8000 people by the [Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute](#). That’s true even if you exercise regularly.

Email apnoea

Auckland-based physiotherapist Tania Clifton-Smith, who specialises in breathing pattern disorders, says she sees many people affected by email apnoea. The term is a play on the serious condition sleep apnoea, where sufferers stop breathing for very short periods, or shallow breathe while they sleep.

“When we focus intensely, such as when texting, typing hard or answering emails under pressure, we tend to inhale and hold our breath,” says Clifton-Smith.

This unconscious reaction occurs many times a day, and if you add in stress and a slumped posture, a typical day’s work can become a high-risk activity for low-grade hyperventilation.

“People are usually unaware that they are holding their breath and think their breathing is fine,” says Clifton-Smith. “They can’t believe that something so simple could be causing such severe symptoms as insomnia, a foggy brain or anxiety.”

The [Nijmegen Questionnaire](#) (PDF), which Clifton-Smith uses to assess dysfunctional breathing patterns, also lists symptoms such as tight neck and shoulder muscles, dizziness, poor digestion, and heart palpitations.

Tech neck

A study by New York spinal surgeon Kenneth Hansraj demonstrated that when you lower your head to look at a screen, it creates much more pressure on your neck than you might imagine.

When your head rests in a neutral position on your shoulders, the pressure it creates is equal to the weight of the person’s head – which is usually about 5kg.

A 15-degree forward tilt of the head increases the weight on the cervical spine to 12.2kg, Hansraj estimates. At 30 degrees, the weight increases to 18kg, and at 60 degrees, 27.2kg. That’s like carrying a suitcase around on your neck for several hours each day. The result? Tech neck.

Ergonomist Sue Chennell, director of Sydney- based [Shared Safety and Risk](#), says smartphones are the main culprits causing tech neck.

“People spend about three hours a day on their smartphone, often doing activities that require quite a lot of concentration, such as booking flights or responding to email,” says Chennell.

Symptoms of tech neck include chronic pain in the neck, shoulders, upper back and upper arms, disc injury and associated nerve pain.

Pain distracts the brain

Employers should be interested in addressing discomfort well before it becomes an injury, says Kirsty Angerer, ergonomist with [Humanscale](#), who has worked with companies in the UK, Europe, the Middle East and now Australia. Not only does early intervention reduce treatment costs, it's also important for productivity, says Angerer, as "pain distracts the brain".

Workers who experienced a pain condition in the preceding fortnight lost an average of 4.6 productive hours a week, found a survey of 28,902 American adults, published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) in 2003.

"Standing is good, but stepping is better." Genevieve Healy, University of Queensland

Digital natives who have grown up with a computer mouse in their hands are emerging as a significant client group complaining of discomfort, according to Angerer.

"I will often go to do an assessment expecting to see someone aged over 40, but the person can be in their 20s and spending 12 to 18 hours a day working on screens," she says.

The 20:8:2 cycle

Professor Alan Hedge, from the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis at Cornell University, has been studying workplace ergonomics for decades and its impact on health, comfort and productivity.

He has recently distilled research findings into a 30-minute formula designed to keep our joints, muscles and metabolism healthy: 20 minutes sitting, eight minutes standing and two minutes of movement – the 20:8:2 cycle.

However, is it possible to tear ourselves away from our digital screens and concentrated stream of thought this often?

The workplace trial, Stand Up Victoria, which involved 231 workers, was designed to test the feasibility of the "stand up, sit less, move more" message. Its results, published in 2016, showed that you can reduce daily sitting by one hour and 40 minutes, through a best-practice intervention involving individual health coaching, social and [leadership](#) support, as well as sit-stand desks.

The trial also reported significant reductions in workers' blood glucose levels. Changes were small but the group was already healthy. "In people who are overweight or have diabetes, even greater health gains can be achieved," says associate professor Genevieve Healy, lead study author from the School of Public Health, University of Queensland.

Is standing sufficient, or do you need to move?

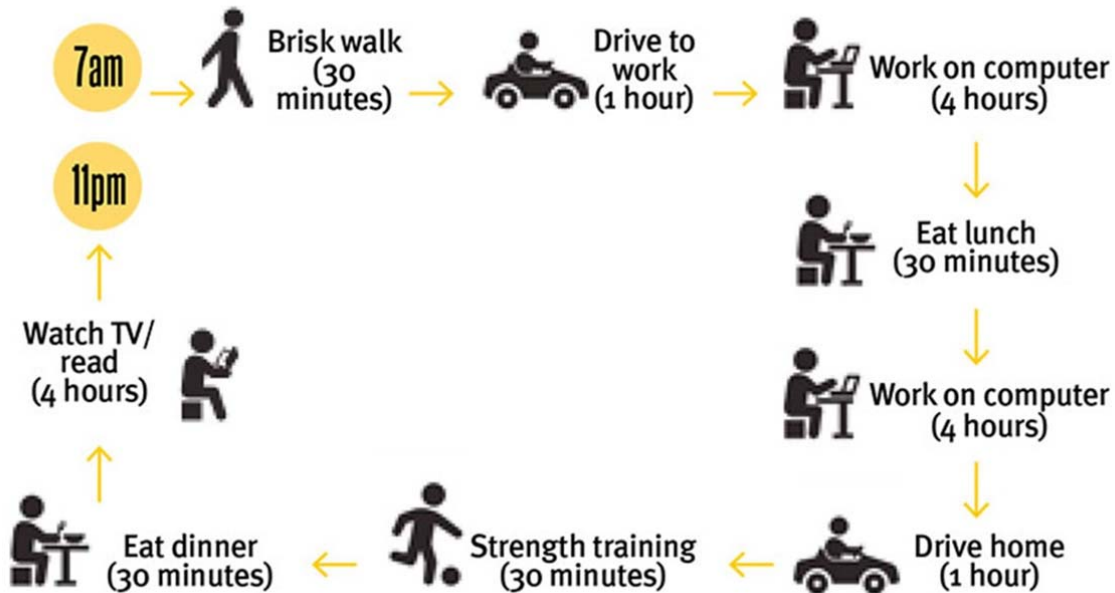
"Standing is good, but stepping is better," says Healy. Some biomarkers, such as blood glucose and blood fats, respond to simply getting up; other biomarkers, such as body weight and body fat, are likely to respond more to movement which involves greater energy expenditure.

The Stand Up Victoria study demonstrated that achieving a simple behaviour change – to stand up more – requires a concerted effort.

Until the design of our work tools makes regular movement natural and easy, we'll need to raise our body intelligence in order to avoid the high toll of sitting all day at a screen.

“Listen to your body,” says Healy. “It’ll tell you when you need to move.”

YOU COULD BE SITTING FOR 15 HOURS A DAY



Source: “Sit less, move more” health tip sheet, National Heart Foundation

Check your vital signs at work

Move

- Move every 30 minutes by standing up, taking a short walk, doing some stretches, or at least changing your posture.
- Increase how much you stand by standing up to take phone calls, standing in meetings or standing at the back of the room during long presentations.
- Increase stepping by having walking meetings, taking the stairs or getting on and off public transport one stop early.

Breathe

- Practise breath awareness throughout the day.
- Focus on the exhale first, which helps to relax your muscles. Lengthen the exhalation for a relaxation effect.
- Breathe in and out of your nose.
- Breathe into the lower chest and abdomen, rather than the upper chest.

Source: Physiotherapist Tania Clifton-Smith, www.breathingworks.com

See

- Don't forget to blink to keep your eyes moist!
- Take a regular eye break by looking into the horizon – this relieves the strain on the ciliary muscles involved in close vision.
- Adjust lighting to reduce glare on your screen.
- If you are aged over 40 and wear glasses, get a special prescription for computer use, otherwise you'll need to tilt your head back.
- Get a regular eye check – poor vision can contribute to neck and shoulder problems.

Source: Jennifer Long Visual Ergonomics, www.visualergonomics.com.au