

ATs Working in Occupational/Industrial Setting



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Athletic trainers (ATs) working in the industrial and/or occupational setting provide the same injury prevention risk management and care as they do to their sport medicine patients. The key difference is the “athletes” in the industrial and occupational settings may not have the means to manage their own fitness and health levels to match the job demands. Too often these “athletes” believe the job is actually keeping them in shape rather than spending time preparing their fitness to match the job at hand. This can present some unique industry injury trends. ATs are health care professionals with the skills to identify injury risk potentials, create strategies to reduce risk of injury, and promote healthy choices for employees. Information in this document is not comprehensive concerning the occupational/industrial setting for the AT, but can be used as a place to start your learning or a conversation with an employer. Reference *Practice Advancement* documents for additional insights into the business of athletic training.

I have spent all of my education learning about college age athletes and return to sport protocols. How does that relate to the occupational setting or industrial rehabilitation?

In athletics, the occupational/industrial setting, and/or in life, people need support to remain active, healthy and advance their health. ATs are musculoskeletal specialists regardless of the population or setting. ATs are trained to evaluate movement and determine injury potential to prevent said injury. An AT working with a swimmer or overhand thrower and evaluating overhead repetitive injuries is directly applicable to the industrial athlete who has to do work overhead. One is an athlete training for sport and the other is being “trained” on the job. The tools used for recovery and rehabilitation are similar. The “athletes” may be different, but their bodies are going through similar stresses and demands that lead to musculoskeletal injury. ATs focus on injury prevention to keep their athletes and teams performing at top levels. These athletes or teams may be playing a sport, or working a line to assemble something. However, in all cases, ATs help their “athletes” stay in the game.

I am interested in working with industrial “athletes”, how do I get started?

Schedule an initial phone call with an AT who works in the industrial setting or with a representative of an industrial company that employs ATs. During the call, learn more about the roles and responsibilities of an industrial AT. It is important to get a sense of the “Business Skills” necessary to operate effectively within a business climate. Become familiar with the language of business and understand how to establish and execute initiatives. For example, providing pre/post season injury screening and intervention strategies encompasses similar skills to the AT assessing job demands and the employee’s ability to meet those demands. There will be

times when company-wide prevention strategies are needed along with business metrics to measure the effectiveness of those interventions. Successful ATs in the industrial setting become a part of the overall customer team and fit into the culture of the business. Additionally, the AT may be called upon to offer solutions to business customer needs and asked to demonstrate a return on investment in order to justify a position. A site visit also is very important to see the workplace in action to determine whether this environment is one you would enjoy and feel comfortable in.

I am working for an organization right now that offers industrial rehabilitation but my organization has told me ATs are not qualified to work with this market. How should I respond?

ATs are uniquely qualified to work in the industrial setting. ATs specialize in the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries. Corporate America is looking for prevention-based solutions as opposed to injury management services offered following an injury. Work-place injuries negatively affect cost, quality, and productivity which ultimately lead to decreased net profit and the inability to compete effectively in the marketplace. Business leaders understand it is cost effective, and thus good business, to prevent injuries and keep employees at work.

ATs have a broad skillset which provides value back to companies. Injury prevention, acute injury response, rehabilitation of injuries, and return to activity are AT skills which are critical to having an effective injury prevention and management program. Visit the NATA website on practice advancement and review information that describes how to describe your value added to a company in more ways than just return on investment.

If you are thinking of a career in the occupational/industrial setting you should:

- Become familiar with basic business principles such as Return On Investment (ROI), value added, and marketing trends in your direct area of business as well as national trends.
- Understand Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards to familiarize yourself with federal safety regulations and how the industry reports injuries.

For more details, please visit the [NATA website](#) on Practice Advancement. You also will find information describing companies across the USA that are employing ATs for occupational and industrial work as well as materials to help you learn more about the business of athletic training.

Visit nata.org for more information on Practice Advancement.