

COBA



The Maintenance Budget Gap

Why manufacturers invest thousands maintaining machines but overlook the people who operate them

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THE MAINTENANCE BUDGET GAP

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Executive Brief

A practical guide to recognising the hidden cost of prolonged standing and why workstation maintenance deserves a place in every preventative maintenance plan.

Every manufacturing business understands the importance of preventative maintenance.

- ➔ Production lines are serviced before failures occur.
- ➔ Equipment is calibrated.
- ➔ Safety systems are inspected.
- ➔ Components are replaced before they become a problem.

These activities aren't questioned because everyone understands the cost of downtime.

Yet one critical part of the production environment is rarely included in the same conversation. The workstation.

Every day, operators spend hours standing in fixed positions to keep production moving, often on hard concrete floors designed to support machinery rather than people.

Unlike machines, people don't have warning lights.

- ➔ There are no dashboards showing fatigue.
- ➔ No sensors indicating discomfort.
- ➔ No scheduled service intervals.

Instead, the effects develop gradually and often remain invisible until productivity, wellbeing or attendance begins to suffer.

The question isn't whether preventative maintenance is valuable.

It's whether workstations deserve the same level of attention.

Every day, operators spend hours standing in fixed positions to keep production moving, often on hard concrete floors designed to support machinery rather than people.



The Hidden Maintenance Gap:

Preventative maintenance is designed to stop problems before they become expensive.

Manufacturers routinely replace worn components before failure occurs because reactive maintenance costs more than planned intervention.

The same principle can apply to workplace design.

Hard flooring is durable, practical and easy to clean.

It was never designed for prolonged standing.

Over time, standing on hard surfaces can contribute to discomfort and standing fatigue, particularly where movement is limited.

Fixed workstations such as:

- ➔ Assembly lines
- ➔ Packing stations
- ➔ Inspection benches
- ➔ Machine operating positions
- ➔ Production cells

can expose operators to the same flooring conditions every day.

Because these effects develop gradually, they are often accepted as “part of the job.” They shouldn’t be.

Supporting operator comfort isn’t simply a wellbeing initiative. It forms part of creating workplaces that help people perform consistently throughout the working day.

Why This Matters to Business Performance

Preventative maintenance is designed to stop problems before they become expensive.

Manufacturers routinely replace worn components before failure occurs because reactive maintenance costs more than planned intervention.

Most operational dashboards focus on measurable assets.

- ➔ Machine uptime.
- ➔ Production output.
- ➔ Energy consumption.
- ➔ Downtime.
- ➔ Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE).

These metrics are essential.

However, people influence every one of them.

When employees become uncomfortable during long shifts, the impact may not appear immediately in reports, but it can influence concentration, movement and overall workplace experience.

Research commissioned by COBA through OnePoll found:

48%

of standing workers had taken time off in the previous year due to standing-related health issues.

46%

experienced lower back pain.

82%

of workers who had used anti-fatigue mats found them helpful.

These findings reinforce an important point.

Operator comfort isn't separate from operational performance.

It's part of it.

A PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITY DURING EVERY MAINTENANCE SHUTDOWN

Maintenance shutdowns already provide planned access to production areas.

Equipment is inspected.

Production lines are reviewed.

Improvement opportunities are identified.

This makes them the ideal time to review workstations as well.

Consider asking:

- Are operators standing directly on concrete?
- Are existing anti-fatigue mats worn or damaged?
- Have production layouts changed?
- Are all fixed workstations adequately supported?
- Could flooring be standardised across similar production areas?

Unlike many workplace improvements, replacing anti-fatigue matting requires minimal disruption when production is already paused.

Small improvements made during planned maintenance can continue supporting operators long after production restarts.



TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

The most effective maintenance strategies don't simply keep machines running.
They support the entire production environment.
Including the people who make production possible.

If your next maintenance shutdown already includes machinery inspections, consider adding workstation reviews to the checklist.

It may become one of the simplest improvements you make all year.

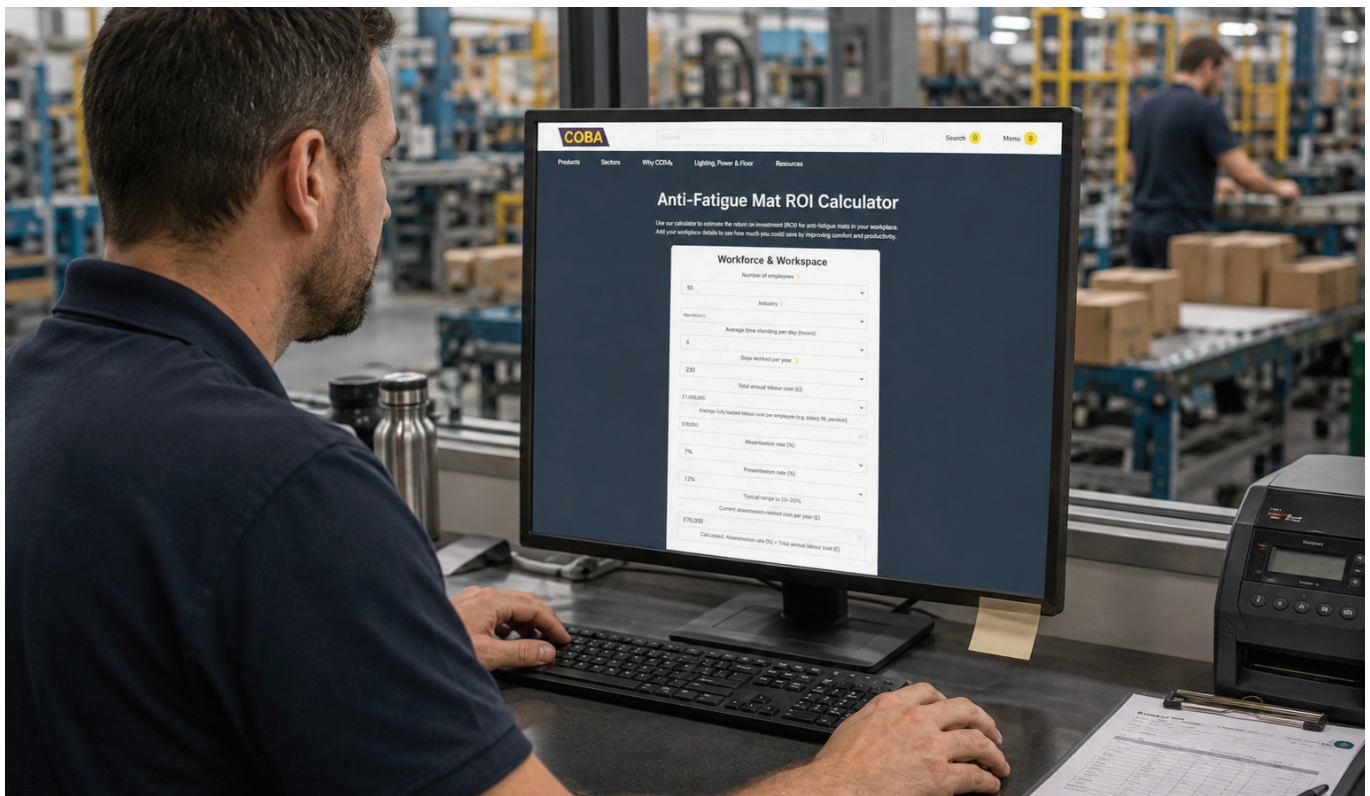
Calculate the Potential Return

COBA's Anti-Fatigue Mat ROI Calculator helps manufacturers estimate the potential return from improving standing workstations.

Using your own operational data, it provides a practical way to build the business case for investing in operator comfort.

Calculate Your Potential ROI

<https://www.coba.com/anti-fatigue-mat-roi-calculator>



ABOUT COBA

For 60 years, COBA has helped organisations create safer, more comfortable and more productive workplaces through specialist workplace matting and flooring solutions.

Our range includes anti-fatigue, anti-slip, entrance, ESD and electrical safety matting, designed to support businesses across manufacturing, warehousing, engineering and industrial environments.

Whether you're reviewing a single workstation or planning improvements across multiple facilities, our specialists can help you identify the right solution for your environment.

