



## Healthy Workplace Initiative



Brooks Sports Inc.

## Microsoft Hardware Helps Brooks Sports Hit Full Stride With Employee Comfort, Productivity and Wellness.

### Overview

**Country**  
USA

**Industry**  
Athletic Shoes/Apparel

**Customer Profile**  
Headquartered in Bothell, WA, Brooks® Sports, Inc. is a leading running company that designs and markets a line of high-performance running shoes, apparel and accessories in more than 80 countries worldwide. The global company is entirely focused on the run and employs approximately 150 people around the world.

**Business Situation**  
Brooks Sports is committed to ensuring that health initiatives are sustained with top-notch IT implementation, support and management. Managers kept this work ethic top of mind when they standardized keyboards and mice throughout the company, with a focus on ergonomics, design and ease of use.

**Solution**  
At Brooks, Microsoft implemented a complete mouse and keyboard solution that included the Digital Media Keyboard for straight keyboard users or the Natural® MultiMedia Keyboard for those employees accustomed to a split keyboard configuration. The keyboards were paired with the IntelliMouse® Explorer, a wired ergonomically designed mouse with Tilt Wheel Technology.

- Benefits**
- Approximately 86 percent of participants found greater comfort with their new PC peripherals and 73 percent experienced greater productivity.
  - After using the new hardware, employees reported a marked decline in physical discomfort such as wrist strain or fatigue.
  - Eighty-six percent of the Natural MultiMedia Keyboard users reported that the sloped, split keyboard design helped them type in comfort longer.
  - Brooks' employees' favorite features for efficiency and productivity on the IntelliMouse Explorer were Optical Technology and Tilt Wheel Technology.

*“We’ve improved morale and increased wellness by working with Microsoft Hardware. It seems like a simple thing — installing new keyboards and mice — but for us, we’ve seen huge benefits for everyone.”*

*— Brooks CFO and COO David Bohan*

### Summary

Microsoft Corp. teamed up with Brooks Sports Inc., a leader in high-performance running gear, to provide the company's employees with high-quality mice and keyboards as part of Brooks' Healthy Workplace Initiative. Working at the company offered notable benefits, specifically in terms of employee health and wellness, morale and productivity. Employees in each department, from footwear designers to customer service specialists, were outfitted with a new mouse and keyboard desktop solution. The results were significant, with approximately 86 percent of participants finding greater comfort with their new PC peripherals and 73 percent experiencing greater productivity.

*Discover the Difference*  
Microsoft® Hardware | performance  
comfort  
design

***“Without question, when we do everything in our power to ensure that our employees have a healthy work experience, we invariably end up in line with ergonomic regulations set out by those charged with ensuring workplace safety and wellness.”***

***— David Bohan, Brooks’ CFO and COO***

## **Situation**

Brooks is a global manufacturer of superior running shoes, apparel and accessories. Known for its positive work environment, Brooks has earned its reputation by giving employees tools that will help them stay healthy and productive. The company’s commitment to workplace wellness is so focused that the headquarters’ location was selected for its proximity to running trails, and nutritious meals are cooked on-site every day. As for healthy workspace environments, company management recently brought in an outside consultant to assist in the selection of new chairs for all employees. After reviewing several styles, Aeron chairs were chosen for their comfort and ergonomic features. Going the extra mile for its employees in this way is a hallmark of the Brooks organization.

David Bohan, Brooks’ CFO and COO, is a major force behind maintaining the company’s positive work environment. “We are focused on employee health and comfort first and foremost, rather than on compliance with guidelines and regulations,” Bohan said. “Without question, when we do everything in our power to ensure that our employees have a healthy work experience, we invariably end up in line with ergonomic regulations set out by those charged with ensuring workplace safety and wellness.”

Brooks’ IT management is committed to ensuring that the company’s health initiatives are sustained with top-notch implementation, support and management. Managers kept this work ethic top of mind

when they began to take action to save time and money by standardizing computers, software and infrastructure throughout the company. “When contemplating a switch to new PC peripherals,” said George Lewis, network user support engineer, “primary considerations were ergonomics, design and the ease of deployment. Those were all important to us in deciding to work with Microsoft for our Healthy Workplace Initiative.”

## **Solution**

To begin, Brooks needed to assess the workstation environment at the company. Through an internal survey, the IT department learned that the majority of Brooks’ employees were spending between six and eight hours at the computer each day. Whether scrolling through Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets, writing e-mail, placing orders, or creating documents and presentations, the IT department recognized that a couple of key components were missing from the current desktop solutions. Almost every employee believed that a comfortable workstation was important, and, interestingly, more than half were experiencing some degree of physical discomfort, such as wrist strain or fatigue, and some were not using a keyboard palm rest. Similarly, the majority of staffers thought time-saving features were very important to their ability to be productive at work, yet most did not have additional productivity features on their mouse or keyboard such as a mouse scroll wheel, Zoom Slider or My Favorites Keys.

***“When contemplating a switch to new PC peripherals,” said George Lewis, network user support engineer, “primary considerations were ergonomics, design and the ease of deployment. Those were all important to us in deciding to work with Microsoft for our Healthy Workplace Initiative.”***

***—George Lewis, network user support engineer***



After meeting with representatives from Microsoft’s Hardware division, the two groups determined which mice and keyboards would best meet Brooks’ top criteria. Microsoft implemented a complete solution that included the Digital Media Keyboard for straight keyboard users or the Natural® MultiMedia Keyboard for those employees accustomed to a split keyboard configuration. The keyboards were paired with the IntelliMouse® Explorer, a wired ergonomically designed mouse with Tilt Wheel technology.

#### **Digital Media Keyboard.**

This keyboard was selected by Brooks and Microsoft for its comfortable and familiar flat design combined with a number of productivity-enhancing features. A Zoom Slider lets users zoom in and out of documents and pictures without taking their hands off the keyboard. Customizable My Favorites Keys give users one-touch access to the company Web site, programs and files employees use most. Five customizable Hot Keys are easy to set, so users can simply access their files or corporate intranet site with the touch of a button. And enhanced F-Key functionality lets users perform common tasks, such as opening documents and replying to e-mail, with the touch of a button.

#### **Natural MultiMedia Keyboard.**

This ergonomically designed split keyboard was selected for Brooks’ split keyboard enthusiasts. Its design is gently sloped, with a 12-degree split and 8-degree gable, encouraging natural hand, wrist and forearm positions for maximum comfort. In fact, this Microsoft keyboard is proven to



reduce symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. One-touch Hot Keys take users directly to their favorite Web sites and programs. And, as with the Digital Media Keyboard, enhanced F Key functionality lets users perform common tasks with the touch of a button.

#### **IntelliMouse Explorer.**

This award-winning, contoured, right-handed mouse was selected for all Brooks employees for its comfort and productivity benefits. The mouse features the efficiency of a scroll wheel with Tilt Wheel Technology that lets users scroll horizontally as well as vertically through documents and Web pages. Optical Technology met Brooks’ criteria of durability and consistent performance with unsurpassed precision and control. Customizable buttons save time by letting employees reassign five buttons to commands or keystrokes they use most often, such as copy and paste. And the Back and Forward buttons correspond to the Forward and Back commands of browsers, giving employees efficient intranet and Internet navigation for numerous work tasks.



## Results

Microsoft's desktop solutions are playing a key role in helping Brooks meet its goals for fostering one of the most productive, efficient and healthy work forces in the sporting goods industry. "One of the most significant effects of working with Microsoft manifested itself in terms of employee morale," Bohan said. "When the new mice and keyboards were installed, it was the talk of the building — you could feel the excitement." Ten weeks after installation, Microsoft conducted a second survey to discover how satisfied Brooks employees were with their new hardware. "Receiving these new devices was a great joy to our employees," Bohan said. "Installing this state-of-the-art hardware demonstrated our commitment to the health and success of our employees, and the employees appreciate it. We've improved productivity and comfort and boosted morale at the same time. I'm delighted."

Prior to receiving the new hardware, slightly more than half of Brooks' employees said that they experienced some physical discomfort, wrist strain or fatigue while working at the computer. After using the new hardware, employees reported a marked decline in physical discomfort such as wrist strain or fatigue. Twenty-five percent of those surveyed who initially had pain no longer experienced it or said it decreased significantly after using the Microsoft mice and keyboards. The majority of Brooks' employees were satisfied with the comfort, functionality and reliability of their Digital Media Keyboard, Natural MultiMedia Keyboard and IntelliMouse Explorer. According to Philip McCorvey, test engineer and desktop support, the hardware was also a hit with Brooks' IT department. "Depending on the job, some of our keyboards get beaten up pretty bad," he said. "We tend to replace them pretty frequently. But these new keyboards were easy to install and have been extremely reliable. We haven't had any

hardware problems at all. We've been using them for months, and I haven't had to replace one yet."

### Digital Media Keyboard

Brooks employees gave this keyboard high ratings overall for comfort, functionality and reliability. Their favorite efficiency and productivity features were the keyboard Zoom Slider, My Favorite Keys and mouse Tilt Wheel.

In addition to increased efficiency and productivity, 32 percent of Brooks users reported wrist strain or fatigue was decreased or eliminated as a result of using the Digital Media Keyboard.

*"I use the My Favorites for database inventory, and I really like to zoom in and out. I use zoom most in Excel, Word and PowerPoint®."*

— **Megan, Sales and Marketing Administrator**

### Natural MultiMedia Keyboard

A quarter of the employees at Brooks were split keyboard loyalists. Performing a wide range of tasks from administrative to marketing, ergonomic keyboard fans are dedicated to the comfort of the split design. These consistently receive the highest customer satisfaction ratings, and one out of every 10 keyboards sold is an ergonomic keyboard. It was important that Brooks' split keyboard users receive a keyboard that would not only sustain but improve their comfort level. After using the Natural MultiMedia Keyboard for 10 weeks, this group rated the product very high for both comfort and functionality. The gently sloped shape of the split keyboard design encourages natural hand, wrist and forearm positions, providing workers with the comfort they need. A built-in palm rest and adjustable keyboard legs are designed for maximum comfort.

Employee Benefit	% Rating
<b>Digital Media Keyboard</b>	
Found greater comfort	87%
Increased functionality	91%
More reliable	89%
Improved efficiency	71%
Increased productivity	70%

Employee Benefit	% Rating
<b>Natural MultiMedia Keyboard</b>	
Found greater comfort	86%
Increased functionality	86%
More reliable	90%
Improved efficiency	67%
Increased productivity	68%

In terms of efficiency and productivity, their favorite overall features were the sloped and split keyboard design.

Eighty-six percent of the Natural MultiMedia Keyboard users reported that the sloped, split keyboard design helped them type in comfort longer.

*“My department is very busy, processing lots of orders eight hours a day, doing very repetitive tasks. This keyboard gives us a lot more functionality a lot quicker.”*

— *Richie, Customer Service Manager*

### IntelliMouse Explorer

Designed by in-house ergonomists at Microsoft to fit comfortably in an employee’s hand, IntelliMouse Explorer received an overwhelming thumbs up for overall comfort. Brooks employees’ favorite features for efficiency and productivity were Optical Technology and Tilt Wheel technology.

Eighty-five percent of Brooks employees rated the Tilt Wheel as a favorite efficiency tool; 72 percent reported using it either “regularly” or “all the time.”

*“The IntelliMouse Explorer is extremely comfortable to use. The feel is great. The lightweight design is awesome, making it a joy to use on a daily basis.”*

— *George, Network User Support Engineer*

Employee Benefits	%Rating
<b>IntelliMouse Explorer</b>	
Found greater comfort	91%
Increased functionality	91%
More reliable	93%
Improved efficiency	78%
Increased productivity	82%

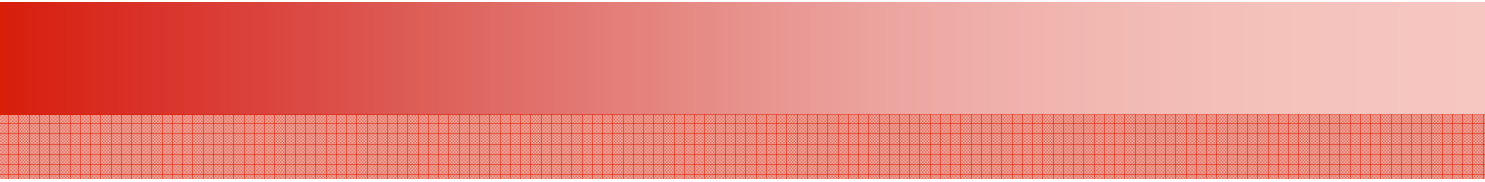
## Conclusion

Too often, the importance of mice and keyboards is overlooked and underestimated. It’s the PC that dominates the attention of employees, administrators and managers. Yet it is input devices such as mice and keyboards that enable us to have direct interaction with our PCs.

Today’s mice and keyboards have improved in lock step with the needs of the modern work force. As workers have become increasingly health conscious and businesses have realized the return on investment of a healthy workplace, ergonomics has played a major role. And as software and the Internet have become integral to doing our jobs, businesses are finding that they need time-saving features as well as speed and precision. Hardware advancements such as Optical Technology and Tilt Wheel Technology can result in business benefits that include fewer customer support calls; better, smoother tracking; and increased functionality.

Brooks Sports’ approach to a healthy workplace environment is an example for companies across the country and around the world to follow. Office and information workers typically spend the majority of their day on a desktop or laptop PC. This population has become increasingly technologically sophisticated and is demanding higher-quality devices.

As demonstrated in the Brooks initiative, an upgrade to comfortable, reliable and functional peripherals can reap dividends for large and small companies alike.



Everyone from the administrative staff to top executives can benefit from an upgrade. And the company's bottom line can benefit as employee morale, health and productivity increase.

According to Brooks Sports CFO and COO David Bohan, "Installing Microsoft's keyboards and mice caused quite a buzz of excitement throughout the company. Even I'm thrilled. We've improved morale and increased wellness by working with Microsoft Hardware. It seems like a simple thing — installing new keyboards and mice — but for us, we've seen huge benefits for everyone."

<sup>1</sup> This is an average of specific *efficiency* ratings for features of the Digital Media Keyboard based on users' ability to save time or increase efficiency: Zoom Slider — 82.98 percent; My Favorites Keys — 72.34 percent; Enhanced F Keys — 65.96 percent; Hot Keys — 61.7 percent.

<sup>1</sup> This is an average of specific *productivity* ratings for the Digital Media Keyboard based on how much users believed these features helped them be more productive at work: Mouse Tilt Wheel — 85.1 percent; Zoom Slider — 72.34 percent; My Favorites Keys — 70.2 percent; customizable Hot Keys — 65.96 percent; customizable Mouse buttons — 63.83 percent; enhanced F Keys — 63.83 percent.

<sup>1</sup> This is an average of specific *efficiency* ratings for features of the Natural MultiMedia Keyboard based on users' ability to save time or increase efficiency: My Favorites Keys — 76.2 percent; enhanced F Keys — 61.91 percent; Hot Keys — 61.9 percent.

<sup>1</sup> This is an average of specific *productivity* ratings of the Natural MultiMedia Keyboard based on how much users thought these features helped them be more productive at work: Sloped keyboard design — 90.47 percent; Mouse Tilt Wheel — 76.19 percent; customizable Hot Keys — 61.9 percent; customizable Mouse buttons — 57.14 percent; enhanced F Keys — 52.38 percent.



- **Microsoft Hardware**

Microsoft employs innovative engineering, cutting-edge industrial design, and extensive usability testing to create hardware of exceptional performance, quality, and durability. Microsoft Hardware strengthens the connection between people and their PCs to provide a more convenient, productive, and enjoyable computing experience.

For more information about Microsoft Hardware, go to:  
[www.microsoft.com/hardware](http://www.microsoft.com/hardware)