

# Ergonomic Chair Replacement Proposal

A Practical Solution to Increase Team Member Safety, Comfort, and Morale

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# Project Summary

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Ergonomics is the scientific study of human work as it relates to the physical and mental capabilities and liabilities of a worker as they perform their job. Office Ergonomics is a specific branch within the field of ergonomics that deals specifically with problems and issues that arise in an office environment. As the amount of work done in front of a stationary computer increases, the number of work related injuries due to poor ergonomics also increases (Washington (State). WISHA Services Division. Office Ergonomics Advisory Committee (Wash.) 1).

A major component of having a proper ergonomic setting in an office is having a proper chair in which to sit. Failure to have a proper chair for employees promotes improper seating at one's desk. This can lead to further improper work practices resulting in injuries. In addition to possible injuries, having an improper chair can lead to an employee's discomfort and loss of morale (Amick 626).

The replacement of the current, less ergonomic, chairs should be a priority for Wells Fargo as they seek to improve team member safety and comfort. The current chairs have surpassed their intended use period and do not meet all of the ergonomic standards suggested by the Risk & Insurance Measurement group on the TeamWorks website.

There are currently two different ergonomic chairs suggested by the Corporate Properties Group Customer Solution Center (CPGCSC) for each line of business to choose from when purchasing from our third-party vendor. CPGCSC can make available a demo chair for a short amount of time to help each line of business decide. Ultimately each manager for a particular line of business is responsible for the budgeting, ordering, and setup of all new office equipment.

This project will allow office ergonomics at the Orlando site to be improved greatly. Team member input into the decision on which chair will be ordered. There will also be communication sent out to our sister sites that have already been through this process for their assessment on the decision they made. These feedbacks will then be examined by the management staff to help make a final decision on the chair chosen.

To help keep the overall cost down for our own line of business, we will be looking at ways to decrease the number of chairs needed by our department. It will also be of great value to reach out and partner with other business lines within our building. By increasing the number of chairs ordered, Wells Fargo may be eligible for additional discounts from our vendor. It will be crucial to reach out to the other lines of businesses located in the building to help control overall costs for each business line.

# Introduction

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The purpose of this proposal is to implement a plan of action to replace the current chairs, Steelcase Surprise (Figure 1), utilized by team members at the Wells Fargo Operations Legacy Campus. The current chairs have been used by a countless number of individuals, do not meet current ergonomic standards, and are no longer under warranty. Team member complaints about the poor condition of the chairs and uncomfortable seat cushions have been increasing in the last two years. In the most recent poll about the environment of their workplace, new chairs were the number one feedback item where we could improve.



**Figure 1: Surprise, PhotoSource OhioDesk.com**

This proposal will help show that the replacement of these chairs is both wanted and necessary. It will discuss the numerous benefits for both team members and Wells Fargo of replacing the current chairs with new ergonomic chairs. This action plan will seek out input from the team members in a practical way to make sure the right chair choice is made. Finally it will discuss some of the monetary aspects involved in the replacement of the new chairs including reducing the overall cost for our line of business.

# Rationale and Significance

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## Why improve the ergonomic setting for Wells Fargo Team Members?

Wells Fargo Team Members in the Orlando Returns department are a vital part of our business process. Each team member is committed to doing quality work as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, if team members are not given the proper tools to work safely in their environment injuries can and will occur. The most common computer and office related injuries are described as Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) of the upper extremities and neck (Figure 2). These injuries account for 30% of the total injury cases nationwide in 2005 (Robertson 73). It can be very costly when a person develops an on the job injury and that person cannot perform their job duties properly. Besides the estimated \$1 billion per week that OSHA estimates employers pay for direct workers compensation, there are additional costs to a company to replace the productivity supplied by that person ("Business Case for Safety and Health Costs").

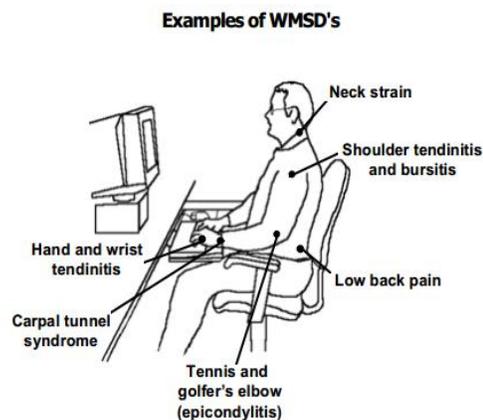


Figure 2: Illustration: Washington State

## Are there benefits to improving the ergonomics of a Team Member's work area?

Work place injuries are not the sole reason to improve work place ergonomics. A workplace that has better ergonomics removes barriers that may prevent employees from performing more efficiently. The increase in efficiency of an employee can help the company reach daily, weekly, and monthly goals with little extra effort. It is often common for ergonomic improvements to increase productivity by 10-15% while reducing the number of errors made. (MacLeod 43).

## **Benefits of Ergonomics**

- Increased productivity
- Increased work quality
- Reduced absenteeism due to injury

## **Is an ergonomic chair really necessary?**

Yes! Chairs that are designed to be fully adjustable in several key areas are an essential part of an ergonomic workstation. OSHA recommends that a good chair provide “necessary support to the back, legs, buttocks, and arms, while reducing exposures to awkward postures, contact stress, and forceful exertions” (“OSHA Ergonomic Solutions: Computer Workstations eTool.”).

## **What features should the new chairs have?**

In his article “Office Chair: Choosing the Right Ergonomic Office Chair,” Lefler suggests the following features:

**Seat Height:** The seat height should be easily adjustable with a pneumatic lever and range from about 16-21 inches off the floor.

**Seat Width and Depth:** The seat should measure between 17-20 inches wide and have a depth (front to back) large enough so the user can sit against the backrest while leaving 2-4 inches between the back of the knees and the seat of the chair.

**Lumbar support:** A proper ergonomic chair should have an adjustable lumbar support (both height and depth) so the user can have the correct amount of support on the inward curve of the lower spine.

**Backrest:** The backrest of the chair should be adjustable in both height and angle and be between 12-19 inches wide. (Lefler)

# Plan of Work

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## Scope

This action plan is to only replace the chairs that are currently being used by the Returns Department at the Wells Fargo Legacy Campus in Orlando. This plan does not address any other aspects of ergonomic equipment. More information about setting up your workstation in an ergonomic manner can be found on the TeamWorks website.

The ideas expressed in this proposal are specifically intended for the chairs currently being used by the Returns Department line of business. However, this proposal should be shared among all lines of businesses located in the building interested in replacing their chairs in the near future. Building partnerships between the different lines of businesses will help ensure that Wells Fargo is receiving the best possible price when the chairs are ordered. Each line of business should take the proper steps necessary to receive the proper funding from their appropriate Vice President.

## Methods

The decision on which chair to order will be done in a two step process: Testing & Feedback and Cost Analysis. Each step will be allotted a set of amount of time to be completed. The two chairs to be tested will be the pre-approved Steelcase Leap (Figure 3) and the Herman Miller Mirra (Figure 4) which will be provided by the Corporate Properties Group Customer Solution Center. These chairs are only for testing and must be returned promptly. Once the Testing and Feedback steps are done management will meet to review the findings. At that time a Cost Analysis will be done to determine which chair will be selected, total number of chairs to be ordered, and final budget for the purchase.



Figure 3: Leap, Photo Source Steelcase.com



Figure 4 : Mirra, Photo Source HermanMiller.com

## **Task Breakdown**

*Testing & Feedback* will consist of rotating out a sample chair among the Team Members to try out for a day. Once a Team Member has had a chance to test the chair for a day they will provide feedback on the form provided and pass the chair to the next person in line. Both chairs will be on site at the same time so testing for both chairs will happen during the same time period. Since there are 42 Team Members within the Returns Department this phase of testing will be completed in 50 days once the demo chairs are received.

*Cost Analysis* will consist of the three individual managers in the department meeting with senior management to review the feedback from Team Members. Once management has reviewed all available feedback a decision will be made as to which of the two chairs will be selected. Also at this meeting it must be decided how many chairs will need to be ordered. On the assumption that it will only be the Returns Department ordering chairs at this time the number of chairs needed will be based on the total number of workstations that will need chairs, not the current number of employees. Based on past, current, and future employment trends 50 workstations will need to have chairs. This will allow the empty workstations to have the new chair in case of new employees or to temporarily replace a broken chair until it is fixed. The purchase order will then be sent to the Vice President for final approval before the order is placed.

In the event that another line of business decides to join in purchasing chairs at the same time, management from the department will be present at Cost Analysis meeting. During the meeting the number of chairs needed will be discussed. If the two lines of businesses share the same VP then the same procedure from above will be followed. If it is a different VP then a copy of purchase order will be sent to each for approval, and then sent to each line's accounting department to ensure each line of businesses is charged/refunded appropriately.

## **Problem Analysis**

The plan of action proposed should have minimal problems during course of execution. As of right now the following issues might delay this project being completed timely:

- Failure to receive sample chairs from CPGCSC
- Completely negative feedback about both chairs
- Third-party vendor unable to complete order
- Disagreement between VPs on cost sharing if combining order with another line of business

As there is no hard deadline for this project to be completed each of these issues can be dealt with individually with little or no effect on Team Members. The goal is for this project to be completed by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2013.

## Personnel

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The replacement of all the current chairs being used with new ergonomic ones will require a team effort by all Team Members within the Orlando Returns Department. Currently the Orlando Returns Department is made up of three teams of various sizes. Each team manager will be responsible for ensuring that everyone on their team has had a chance to test and leave feedback about the test chairs. Each manager is expected to attend the Cost Analysis meeting. The table below (Figure 5) shows a breakdown of the teams and their respective manager.

Breakdown by Team

| Team             | Manger       | Number of Team Members |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Incoming Returns | Calvin Byrom | 13                     |
| Outgoing Returns | Tammy Long   | 12                     |
| Research         | Kathi Frye   | 17                     |

Figure 5: Table 1

# Budget

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Besides the cost of buying the chairs there should be no additional costs accrued for this proposal. All testing, feedback, and meetings will be held during normal working time. The below table “Price of Chairs” (Figure 6) shows the total price for each one of the chairs introduced in this proposal.

Price of Chairs

| Chair               | Price per Chair | Total Price (50 chairs) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Steelcase Leap      | \$889.00        | \$ 44,450.00            |
| Herman Miller Mirra | \$619.00        | \$ 30,950.00            |

Figure 6: Table 2, Prices per chair from Steelcase.com and HermanMiller.com respectively

Please keep in mind that the prices listed are the retail prices listed on each company’s website. The actual price may be less once a decision on the total number of chairs being ordered is made and the vendor is contacted about bulk discounts. Also, while these prices may seem high initially studies have shown that over time good ergonomics in the office can save the company a large sum. This savings is realized over time as there are less work related injuries that the company will have to pay (Bidassie et al. 426).

## Conclusion

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The purpose of this proposal was to outline the action plan needed to replace the outdated chairs currently being used by the Orlando Returns Department and replacing them with more ergonomic chairs. These new, more ergonomic chairs have many benefits that far outweigh the initial costs to implement this plan.

The new ergonomic chairs will promote a healthier and safer work environment. In this new work environment employees will enjoy having their needs and wants met, and by including them in the decision process they will have a sense of ownership in the new chairs.

In this more ergonomic environment there is a much greater chance that the number of work related injuries will decrease compared to previous years. The savings from paying less in workman's compensation claims added to the increase in efficiency and productivity almost guarantee that the new chairs will more than pay for themselves in the long run.

A safe work environment.

Happy and healthy employees.

An increase in productivity and saving.

I can't think of any reason why the department shouldn't receive new ergonomic chairs.

# Appendix

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## References

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## **List of Illustrations**

**Figure 1.** Steelcase Surprise. Photo Source: OhioDesk.com

**Figure 2.** Examples of WMSDs. Illustration: (Washington (State). WISHA Services Division. Office Ergonomics Advisory Committee (Wash.) 2)

**Figure 3.** Steelcase Leap. Photo Source: Steelcase.com

**Figure 4.** Herman Miller Mirra. Photo Source: HermanMiller.com

**Figure 5.** Table 1. Breakdown by Team.

**Figure 6.** Table 2. Price of Chairs. Prices: Steelcase.com; HermanMiller.com