

Project Site

Doctoral Capstone Site: Vera Bradley, Design Center & Distribution Center | Roanoke, IN
Areas of Focus: Research & Leadership
Areas of Practice: Work & Industry



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Mission & Vision Statements

Mission Statement: To develop expertise in ergonomics in order to promote safety and wellness in a workplace.

Vision Statement: To demonstrate advance knowledge of ergonomics by making improvements to a workplace with the application of an occupations-based approach in ergonomics.

Project Description & Needs Assessment

- The capstone was centered around ergonomics in the workplace. The location was at Vera Bradley's distribution center and design center which is located in Roanoke, IN.
- Vera Bradley is one of the largest employers in the Fort Wayne area, providing hundreds of local jobs. On Vera Bradley's main website, one can see their corporate responsibility and sustainability report for 2022 as well as key stakeholders. Vera Bradley identified their key stakeholders as customers, associates, retail partners, shareholders, industry, and the community.
- Vera Bradley has adopted the CARES approach that focused on communication regarding health and safety, assessment of risk and exposures, risk reduction, education of risk and controls, and surveys to help ensure feedback is given.
- Vera Bradley focuses on these factors to create a safer community within and outside their company which is strongly related to ergonomics in the workplace. My capstone focused on ideas highlighted in their corporate and sustainability responsibility report, such as risk assessment, reduction of risk, and education on risk and controls, as well as a survey to receive feedback on job demand and comfort level at work.

Literature Review

- Benefits of the application of ergonomics can include: increased productivity, improved health and safety of workers, lowered workers' compensation claims, compliances with government standards, job satisfaction, increased work quality, decreased worker turnover, decreased lost time at work, improved morale of workers, and decreased in absenteeism rate (Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA], n.d.; Fernandez, 1995; Tee et al., 2017). All of these benefits can make a difference in a company for both the employers and the employees.
- Workplace musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) are prevalent the workplace, comprising approximately 30% of all workers' compensation (BLS, 2021). OSHA (2020) reports that companies in the U.S. spend approximately \$50 billion directly on WMSDs, but it is estimated that companies spend five times that direct amount cost on WMSDs indirectly. Ergonomics is a beneficial preventative practice for reducing WMSDs and is effective in many workplace settings for preventing injuries (Amick et al., 2003; Trinkoff et al., 2003; Zare et al., 2019; Garg & Kapellusch, 2012).
- The aging of a workforce is an essential factor that should be taken into consideration for companies. Our workforce is currently saturated with the baby boomer population (55+ years old) consisting of 40% of the workforce and was predicted only to keep increasing during the next decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017). Ergonomics can help employers identify hazards, implement programs, modify the environment, and change processes and procedures to fit older workers (Perry, 2010).
- Workplaces are becoming a more positive and safe place to work due to the integration of ergonomics. Examples of factors that have improved the workplace environment identified in the literature review are addressing the aging workforce, ergonomic programs, and adapting workstations. Ergonomics helps to address the gap in work and safety by identifying areas of potential improvement to prevent or reduce risk factors (Zare et al., 2019; Garg & Kapellusch, 2012; Punnett et al., 2009). The gap identified created the initiative for an Occupational Therapy Doctoral Capstone Project to address ergonomics in a workplace to help increase overall well-being and quality of life.

Deliverables

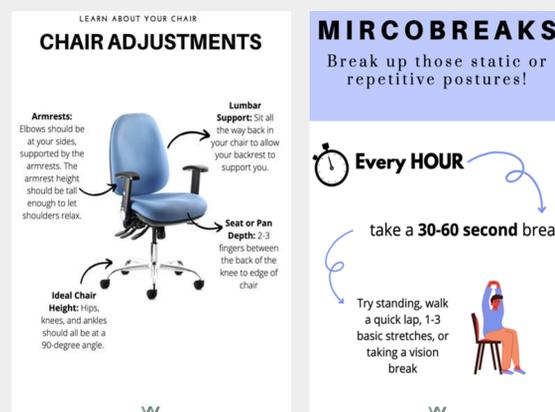
1. Outcome Measure: Two certificates of Completions → Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist II certification and Ergonomics in Retail certification

1a. Learning Objective: Evidence of data Collection → Job demand analysis and comfort level survey data collection

1b. Learning Objective: Compilation of completed assessments → Two assessments which included five standardized ergonomic assessments each along with the summary sent to an associates



ErgoWISE Office Ergonomics



2 Outcome Measure: Completion of sustainable resources → WorkWISE monthly documents, future ergonomic recommendations for Vera Bradley, and recommendations for future capstone students

2a. Learning Objective: Evidence of developed educational workshop session → ErgoWISE Office Set-Up, ErgoWISE Neck Discomfort, and two presentations used as evidence of workshops

2b. Learning Objective: A digital folder of ergonomic resources → Digital folder containing resources created for Vera Bradley's use

Project Completion & Outcomes

Vera Bradley received the following at the conclusion of the doctoral capstone:

- A baseline ergonomic report on the Design Center from the job demand analysis and comfort level survey
- Ergonomic recommendations were made based off the results of the survey and analysis of the findings
- Each department received individualized educational workshop to address specific concerns or high risk tasks
- Sustainable ergonomic resources that VB can use as a resource bank for when they have concerns or questions about ergonomic recommendations based on their company

Christ Service Scholarship

Christ: Colossians 3:23-24
Scholarship

- Research
- Resources
- Education

Service: Providing ergonomic services & individualized care

Future Plans

- How has this capstone experience helped pave my future?
 - Provided me with hands-on experience
 - Proficiency in ergonomic assessment from OT perspective
 - Made significant connections and learned more about the business world
- What is next for me? I enjoy working in orthopedics/hand therapy which pairs well with ergonomics. I can apply the knowledge and experience I have gained at VB in an orthopedic setting.
- Email: hicksk@huntington.edu



References

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