

The Business of Furniture | July 15, 2020

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**Want to End the Race to the Bottom?
Focus on Branding**



18 Listening Leads to Success at Via Seating

Via Seating believes its key to success and creating long-term partnerships with its customers comes from being a solutions-driven company. Its seating products are not a commodity, and the company refuses to be pulled into the race for the bottom in the category.

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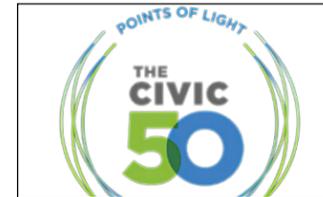


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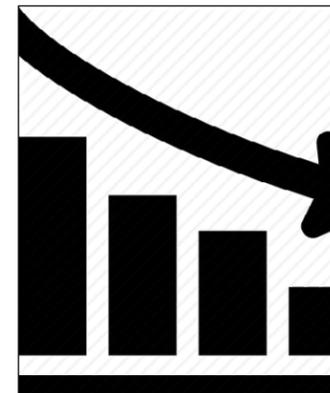


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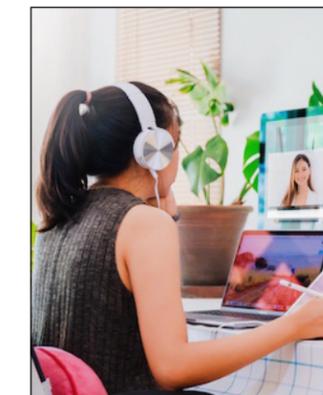
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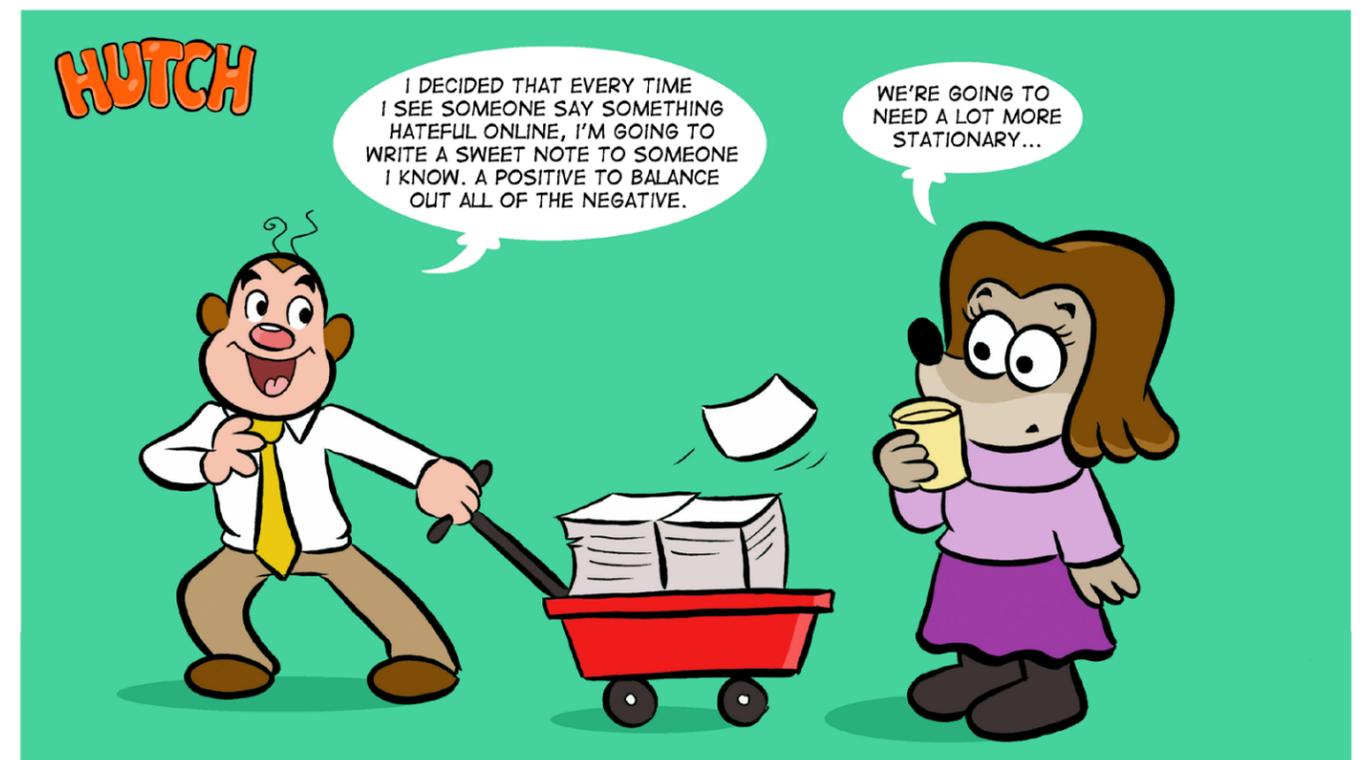
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Business of Furniture and *Workplaces* magazine are the go-to sources for keeping you informed about everything that is happening in the industry. From trends that affect your bottom line, to new products that will help your customers work better, to stories that will help you run a better, more informed company.

ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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Want to End the Race to the Bottom? Focus on Branding



Happy Wednesday friends,

A lot of talk lately of a “race to the bottom” seems to be happening when it comes to products like seating, height-adjustable tables and other office furniture categories. Many manufacturers bemoan the idea that their product category — whatever that may be — is being pushed on price to the point where it’s almost not worth selling anymore.

The race to the bottom, if it actually IS going on, is a direct result of a general lack of branding and brand recognition in our industry. If everything is “generic,” why wouldn’t there be a race to the bottom, to the lowest-priced product out there?

I was chatting recently with my friend Martin Flaherty, owner of Pencilbox, a marketing company that is laser-focused on corporate brand communications. Martin does a lot of work in the industry. You probably know him as the emcee of the BIFMA 360° Leadership Conference (and the man behind a lot of the branding and messaging around the event). I like him for a lot of reasons, including his good taste in music and British candy. I also have a lot of respect for his work around branding.

We recently exchanged a few emails about branding, and he noted a fascinating gap. “When I speak about quality products in our industry, only a handful can name a brand,” he said. “And those that can only know the Aeron while a few others have name recognition for Knoll and Steelcase. Conversely, I’ve asked how many automotive brands and tech brands can they name, and their ability to do so is dramatically different.”

In short, we do a lousy job in this industry of branding our companies and our products. I would take it a step further. Ask anyone in any of the office buildings around you what kind of computer they use. Chances are they know if it is an Apple, Dell, IBM, whatever. Ask the same person what desk or chair they use, and you get answers

like “a mesh one” or non-helpful descriptors like “I think it has blue fabric.”

Many in the industry argue that it doesn’t matter whether the end user knows what brand chair they sit in or the name of the desk they use. After all, the designers are the specifiers. All that matters is if they know the brand and call for it on projects.

That kind of attitude is shortsighted and ignores the inroads made by companies like Vari (formerly Varidesk) and X-Chair, unknown brands that have grown tremendously by branding to the masses.

I’m not saying we need to start buying ads during the Super Bowl. That’s foolish. But we should do a better job of explaining why we matter — why our companies and our brands matter. When we do that, the race to the bottom will effectively end. When you conjure an image of a Mercedes-Benz AMG S 63 Sedan, you immediately think of luxury and performance. When you think generically about a car, it doesn’t have the same impact. And the mental image is even worse for a generic office chair or desk.

“We are a part of an industry that outside of being namechecked in an occasional Wired article or as part of a museum installation, products that are core to work have virtually no name recognition to the people who use the products,” Martin astutely observed.

It doesn’t have to cost a fortune to prove how much office interiors matter. It takes strong marketing as a company and as an industry. When those Wired reporters namecheck an office product, it is our duty to stay connected to them and offer ourselves up as sources for future articles about the workplace.

It is important to keep your brand in front of the A&D community as well. But if you want to end the race to the bottom, become a company with products and services that set you apart.

Rob Kirkbride and the Business of Furniture team



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➔ Allseating has launched L1, an ergonomic task chair inspired by the L1 vertebra, the most superior of the lumbar vertebrae that gives reinforcement to the entire upper spine.

L1 lives up to its namesake by providing the end user with back support and comfort for the entire day. It accommodates a wide range of body types to ensure all employees are being supported throughout the extended time spent at their desks.



Steelcase Recognized as One of the 50 Most Community-Minded Companies in the United States

Recently, Steelcase was named a 2020 honoree of The Civic 50, an initiative of Points of Light. The company's expansive involvement in community programs – including a mix of volunteered time, product/service donations and financial gifts, as well as the integration of community commitment into business policies and practices – led to the recognition.

“At Steelcase, we believe business can be a force for good and, by leveraging our scale and resources around the globe, we can make a real difference in the communities where we live and work,” said Kim Dabbs, director of social innovation at Steelcase. “This recognition honors our commitment to helping others reach their full potential and transform the way organizations and the systems we are a part of engage, improve and innovate.”

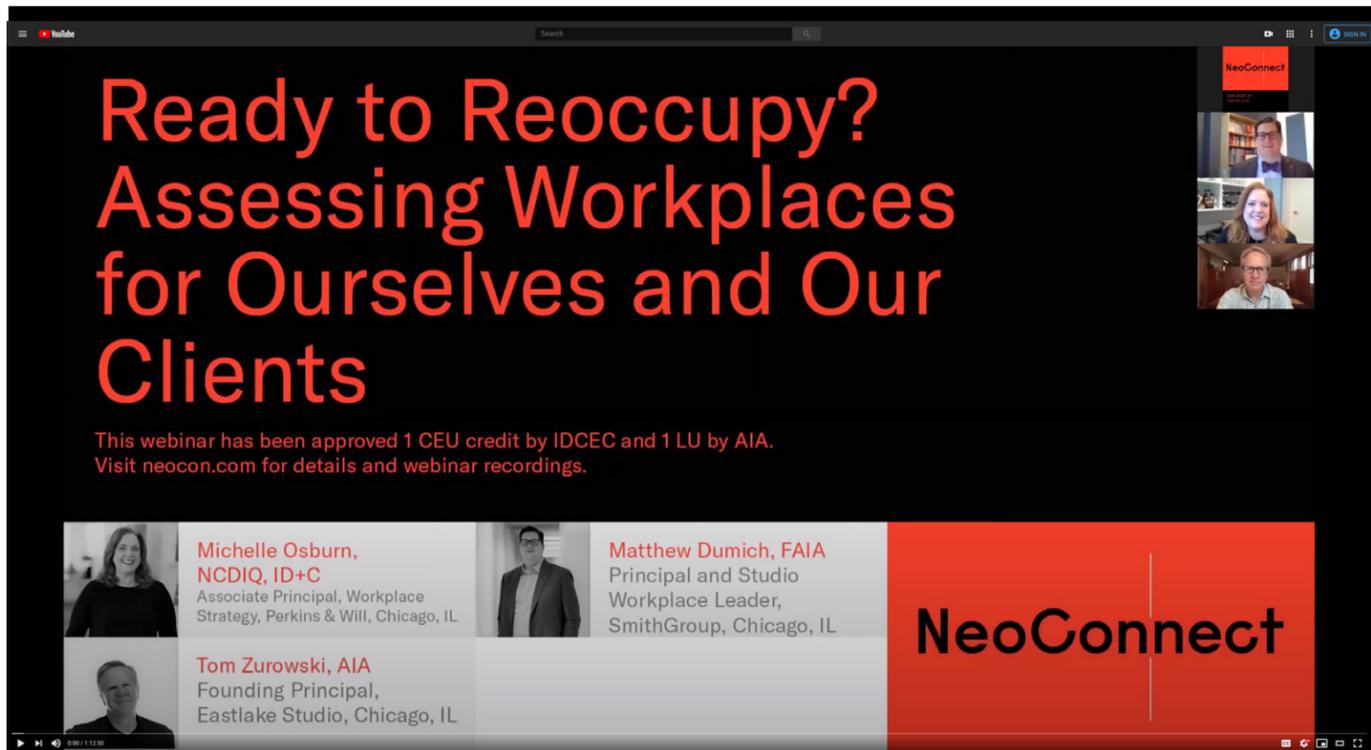
Steelcase's social innovation efforts prioritize furthering inclusive and equitable quality education, reducing inequalities and creating sustainable communities and cities. In fiscal year 2020, Steelcase employees reported a 250% increase in volunteer hours in 45 global locations. A number of partner organizations received support from the company, individual employees or a combination of both.

The Civic 50 provides a national standard for superior corporate citizenship and showcases how companies can use their time, skills and resources to impact their communities. The Civic 50 honorees are public and private companies with U.S. operations and revenues of \$1 billion or more; they are selected based on four dimensions of their U.S. community engagement program including investment, integration, institutionalization and impact.

“Points of Light believes now more than ever, companies must drive transformative social change around the world,” said Natalye Paquin, president and CEO, Points of Light. “We thank Steelcase for their investment and look forward to supporting them in innovating and expanding this work.”

The Civic 50 survey was administered by True Impact, a company specializing in helping organizations maximize and measure their social and business value. The Civic 50 is the only survey and ranking system that exclusively measures corporate involvement in community.





Returning to Work Comes with Challenges, But Also Opportunities

EMPLOYEES MIGHT BE FACING ISSUES WITH CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY, REDUCED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, THE NEED TO CARE FOR OTHERS, OR INCREASED RISK DUE TO HEALTH CONDITIONS, FOR INSTANCE.

by Emily Clingman

While uncertainty continues regarding COVID-19's overall impact, not all are struggling with sinking morale.

Matthew Dumich, principal and workplace strategy leader at SmithGroup in Chicago, is look-

ing at it through a comprehensive lens.

"I'm really optimistic because this holistic approach will allow us to thrive and emerge from this crisis with a better workplace than the one we left just a couple months ago," he said. "An

organization's greatest asset is its people and each employee has a unique perspective," adding that a non-judgmental flexibility to guide the process of preparing workplaces for safety and adaptability is key.

Dumich, along with Michelle

Osburn of Perkins & Will, and Tom Zurowski of Eastlake Studio in Chicago, during a NeoConnect2020 presentation, "Ready to Reoccupy? Assessing Workplaces for Ourselves and our Clients," weighed in on how business and building owners can adapt their properties and company culture clients to create an environment and an attitude that supports staff safety and comfort beyond furniture plans and high-touch surfaces. Emotional wellness is becoming more important and flexibility equals responsibility as the COVID pandemic continues to disrupt design.

Michelle Osburn suggests leading with compassion.

"As makers of space, we have a lot to think about as we come back during the transition phase," he said. "Employees will not have the same comfort level about returning to an office environment for a variety of reasons."

Employees might be facing issues with childcare availability, reduced public transportation services, the need to care for others, or increased risk due to health conditions, for instance.

"The message must be clear that it is OK to defer your return and no reason is needed," she said. "If possible, start with a voluntary return at first."

Some are questioning why return to the office at all, as remote workers are settling in to a new normal.

"What did we really learn from the work-from-home experience," Osburn asked. "On a

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practical level, the importance of a good chair. We also developed very deliberate communications, prioritizing it above all other things, knowing that we can't see each other every day."

While many companies note the availability of technology practically saved their businesses during quarantine, the lack of spontaneous staff interaction and detachment from the company culture is difficult for just about everyone.

"What are some of the things beneficial to do in person? Creative collaboration," she said. "Social interaction is important

and something that we miss. Maybe we didn't appreciate it that much until it was gone. On the other hand, focused work seems to be happening better at home. So maybe we can support that better in our offices and going forward with clients."

A variety of choice must be the mindset when reopening, according to many in the architecture and design industry.

"With different people that have different comfort levels, our focus with new projects has been with building owners," said Tom Zurowski. "We're figuring new ways to help clients to invest

in their buildings and be ready when people return. And the truth is, it is a very different space that they need to get people excited about."

Flexibility is talked about the most lately, Zurowski notes. And building owners want to know what to invest in. Where traditionally, in new office design, architecture and furniture solutions were often chosen to make a statement, "but that is a short-term concern," he said.

Now, the demand is for flexible solutions that have longevity and adaptability — but also a space that workers and clients can con-

nect with.

"The challenge becomes trying to have guidelines that are not hard and fast rules," Zurowski said. "Just because we're humans and nobody likes being told exactly how they need to move through their day."

Providing opportunities for feedback will build trust in what your company is trying to achieve, he says — "if they aren't comfortable, they aren't going to get any work done."

Corporate clients with larger real estate portfolio across different regions and different countries, have another challenge of staying consistent across their portfolio.

"Whether that's the planning

aspect, the protocol, the change management, branding and signage, we have to help our clients with the message they want to deliver," Michelle Osburn said. "And some clients that have smaller spaces just need a plan for how to come back. Our value is in our understanding of their space and helping them make the right adjustments, and how to think forward."

Something Osburn stresses are these sudden and sometimes dramatic shifts in building and design should not happen in a vacuum, per se.

"It can't be done without local leadership who understands the feelings in the area and how their space is used, she said. "So, even

though there is this phased approach, there is not just one way back into the office, and phasing will look different and in different locations and happen at different times. We need to think in the long term, with research that is science-based."

Matthew Dumich agrees.

"These are very complex issues and hopefully we can sort this conversation out between short-term, getting back to work; and long-term, the future of work — perhaps beyond a vaccine," he said. "I don't even know what normal is anymore, but when people talk about a new normal or next normal, we need to understand this is a very fluid situation." **BoF**

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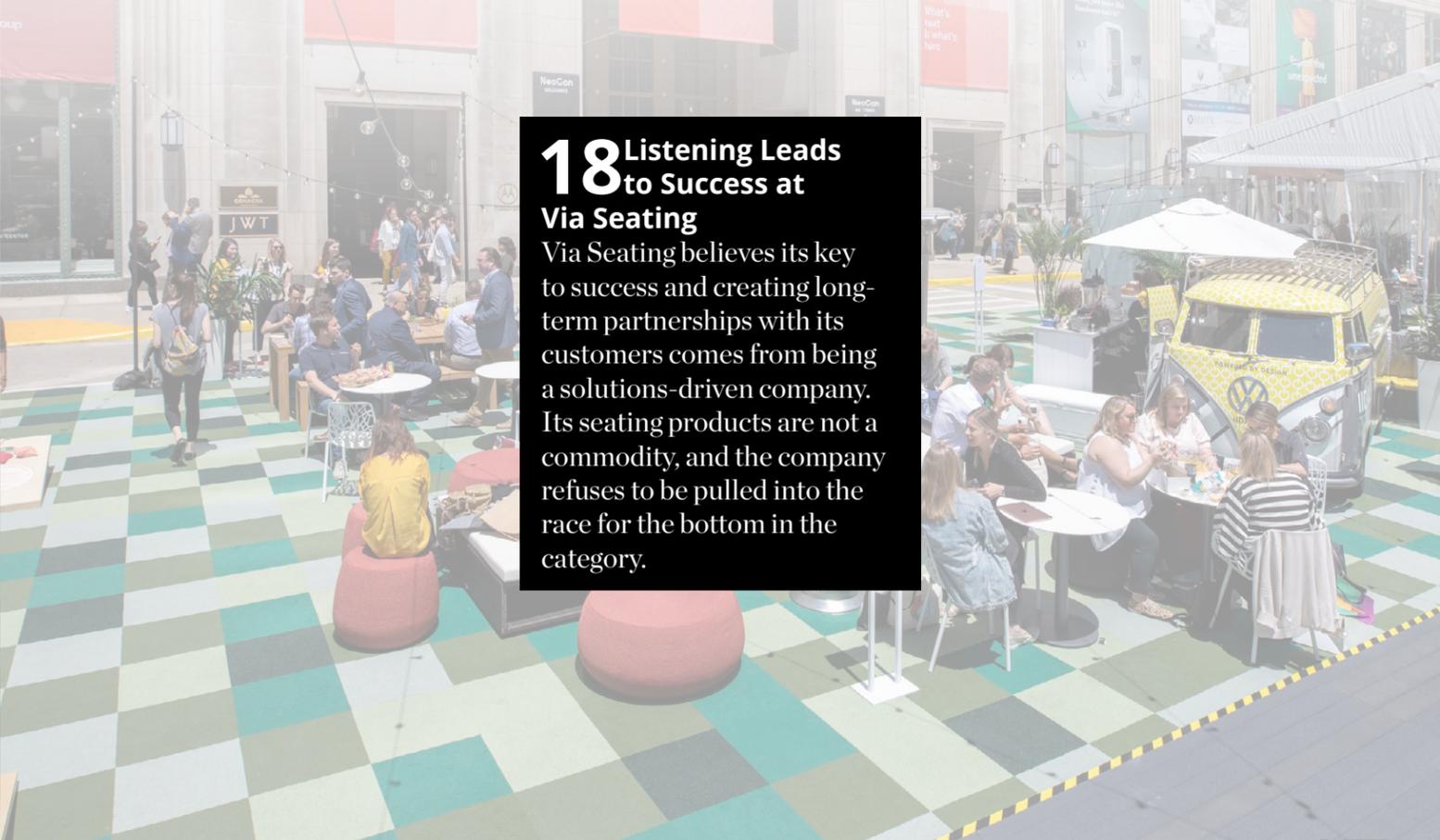
We launched Products, People and Projects this year to help fill the gaps. We don't want all the information we would have learned about at NeoCon to be lost.

So we worked with theMART to come up with a program you have seen since early June. For the rest of the summer, we will be presenting Products, People and Projects, a few companies at a time so as not to overwhelm the reader.

We're thrilled to present a story from Via Seating in today's issue. Make sure you read the all stories in this great series to learn about what these great companies are doing.

NeoCon: Products, People and Projects

BoF



18 Listening Leads to Success at Via Seating

Via Seating believes its key to success and creating long-term partnerships with its customers comes from being a solutions-driven company. Its seating products are not a commodity, and the company refuses to be pulled into the race for the bottom in the category.

Listening Leads to Success at Via Seating

A certain comfort and trust comes when you are working with a company that is filled with good listeners, doesn't it? You know the kind of company: They look you in the eye when talking to you, take good notes and over time, become a valued partner that is able to anticipate what you might need before you even need it.

Via Seating is one of those companies. It listens to its customers and creates products based on those deep conversations. Because of that, Via has grown and succeeded, which allows it to be able to do even more for its customers. Success begets success.

Via Seating believes its key to success and creating long-term partnerships with its customers comes from being a solutions-driven company. Its seating products are not a commodity, and the company refuses to be pulled into the race for the bottom in the category.



The company's new Copper Stripe Collection includes the first-of-its-kind copper infused mesh in office chairs.

Despite the COVID-crisis and cancelation of NeoCon, Via Seating continues to come out with cool and innovative new products, all by listening to its customers. That led to what President and Chief Executive Officer Chas Hepler said was an incredible year in 2019.

"How did we achieve that? We are seating experts," he said. "We focus on office seating, and we think we're very good at it. And the way you become very good at seating and become experts is you develop a team in a platform and the capability to research worldwide what's happening in this industry. We have seven full-time engineers and product developers on staff and (we rely on) our vendor partners across the world. We've been able to put out world-class seating, new products and that's critical and essential to be successful."

That's not as easy as it sounds, especially during a worldwide pandemic. The company con-

tinues to launch new products, even during this very challenging time, including an important seating enhancement that can help limit the spread of the virus when used on Via Seating products.

The company's new Copper Stripe Collection includes the first-of-its-kind copper infused mesh in office chairs. Why copper? Because copper is biocidal and a proven technology in the fight against bacterial spread and infectious disease control. Via has made the patented technology available in three more of the company's seating series — all at mid-market prices — so more people can take advantage of the peace of mind they provide during this time.

The copper mesh will be available in existing products like Run II and 4U along with the new Onda chair.

The addition of the Copper Stripe Collection wasn't added hastily to address COVID,







Via Seating began thinking about using copper-infused mesh after a customer visit in 2017.

though it does add an important weapon for designers and facility managers looking to re-open offices. Via began looking at copper in seating products a year ago, according to Nora Fenlon, executive vice president of sales and marketing. At that time, Via put together a CEU on how to combat superbugs in the health care system. The CEU was based on a whitepaper Via produced on copper-infused mesh.

Via Seating began thinking about using copper-infused mesh after a customer visit in 2017. The customer wanted Via's award-winning Genie series chair designed by Henner Jahns but asked if it was available in an upholstered back version — important to the customer because they wanted it for infectious disease control areas. It needed to be anti-microbial and bleach cleanable.

At the time, no mesh chair could be used in health care, acute care or infectious disease control areas.

Hepler happened to read about copper and the benefits of copper in health care systems and found it has biocidal effects. Essentially, what copper does is blow bacteria apart by shredding the membrane of the cell and oxidizing it so it can't regenerate, adapt or become resistant. It effectively dies on contact. Copper is used on hard surfaces like tabletops, handrails and touch plates on light switches. When Via further researched copper, the company found it is also infused in intensive care unit bedsheets and in some textiles, gowns and masks.

"So we got our mesh supplier and our copper supplier together to develop the first-ever copper-infused mesh product

While the coronavirus is viable on surfaces like cardboard, plastic and stainless steel from two to four days, on copper, it is only stable for about four hours.

in our industry,” Fenlon said. “And we tested it against all the textiles that are currently used in infectious disease control areas. So there’s a lot of antimicrobial textiles used that have chemicals infused in them to meet all the requirements for being infectious disease control appropriate and bleach cleanable and so on. We tested our copper-infused mesh against all of those, and our copper infused mesh outperformed them all. In other words, the bacteria colony count on our surface was far lower than textiles that were approved for infectious disease control areas and acute care areas.”

So Via came up with a new innovation for the industry and re-imagined what a task chair could be, all based on the fact that they listened to a customer and identified a problem. The innovation led to Best of NeoCon and Nightingale awards.

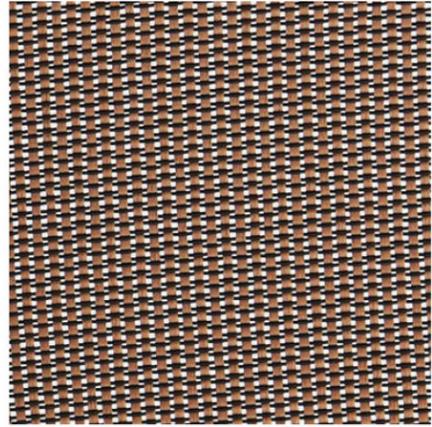
The product line is a good example of just how quickly Via can move. The customer came to Via for a visit in October 2017, it had a prototype sent to them by March 2018 and had the product in front of customers by NeoCon 2018.

Enter COVID-19. While the coronavirus is viable on surfaces like cardboard, plastic and stainless steel from two to four days, on copper, it is only stable for about four hours. Since the lockdown, Via has held its CEU on the subject and attracted a large number of designers who are looking for products that help in the fight against COVID. The copper-infused mesh isn’t going to solve the coronavirus crisis, but it can help.

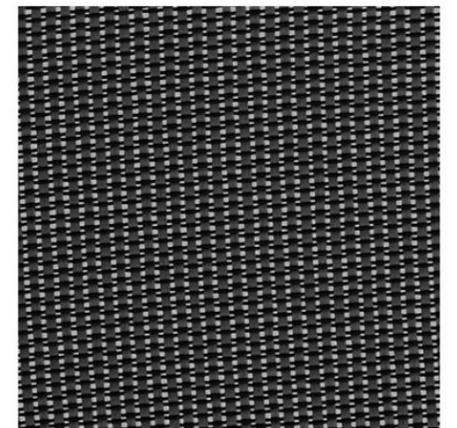
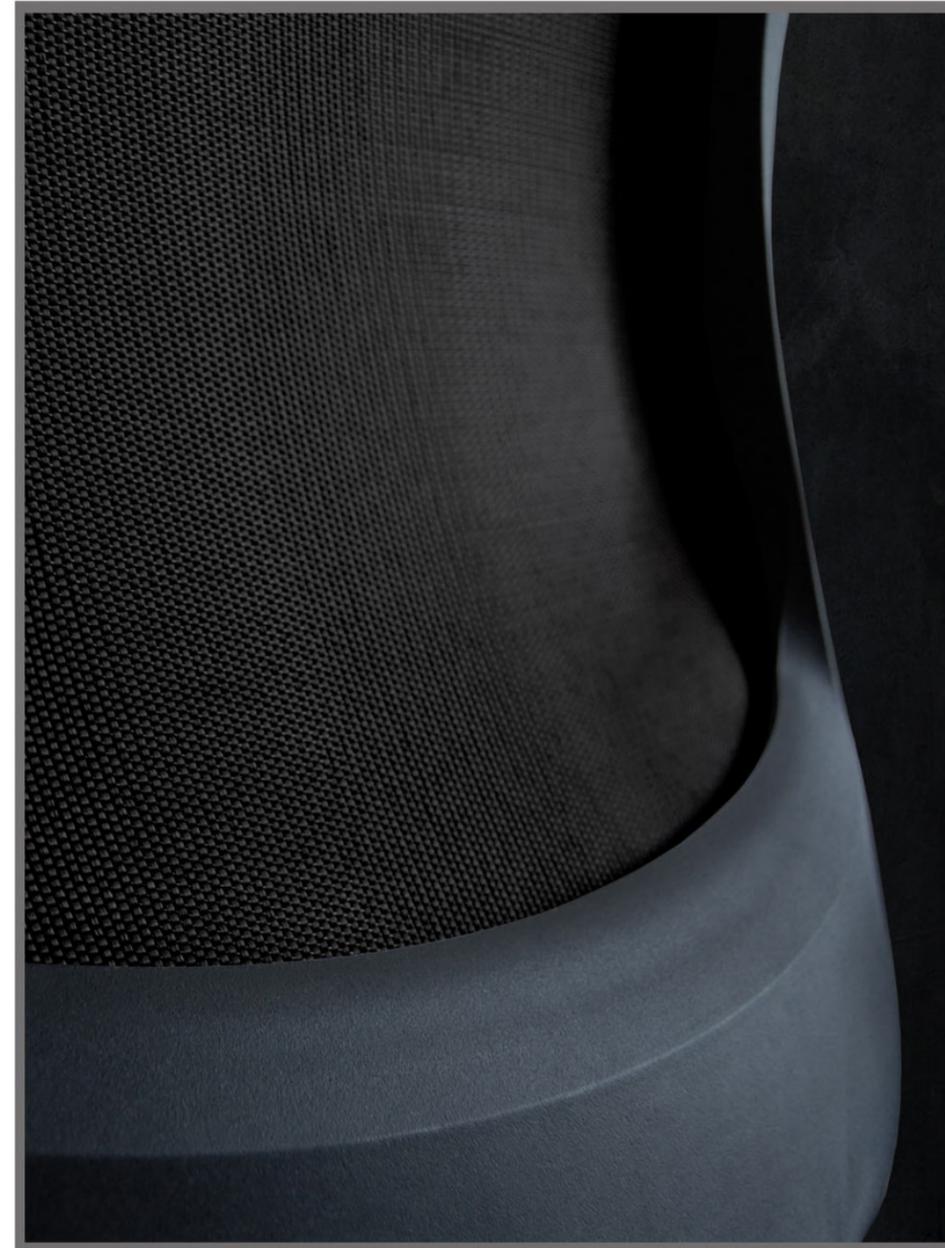
“Copper is not the solution, it’s part of an overall strategy, but it shows in a very tangible way that there is a strategy, that there is a mission, that there is an opportunity to allow an employer to express that they are concerned,” Fenlon said. “And I



Two Copper Mesh Colors



natural copper



black copper



Nebula



Via Seating recently held a virtual NeoCon training for its distribution partners who reacted positively to its new products and ideas.

think the most powerful things that are going to make the biggest impact are our behavioral changes.”

While the Copper Stripe Collection began with the Genie chair, a 24/7 chair that has a 12-year warranty, Via extended that into a broader selection of products that are multi-user interface products as well — products that would go into a conference room, training room, dining area, cafeteria or shared workspace. It has more than 10 products across task, training room, cafeteria and multipurpose areas that can have the benefits of copper-infused mesh.

The Copper Stripe Collection is a good example of how Via Seating responds to a crisis. Instead of pulling in its horns or waiting out the pandemic, it continued to expand its pipeline of new products, Hapler said. It has launched six new

product series. It is not standing still in the face of the crisis.

“There is going to be a point where (we emerge from the crisis), and I think we already are emerging from this to a certain extent, but emerging cautiously and carefully, and who knows what’s going to happen next, but we are going to figure it out one way or the other,” he said. “And we feel we’re positioned very well, having kept our team together, having the capability we have, launching new products and moving forward and not holding back at all.”

Via Seating recently held a virtual NeoCon training for its distribution partners who reacted positively to its new products and ideas. Fenlon said it tried to emulate as much as it could the feeling and energy of its NeoCon Sunday training sessions. She praised the company’s reps as “a workhorse

Meteor offers additional customization opportunities to that of Nebula with two-tone upholstery and contrasting stitch detail.

group of what we consider the best in our industry. And just some of the most charismatic, motivational, collaborative people that I've ever had the pleasure to work with."

She said all of the company's new product launches are designed to meet today's challenges. All of them are scheduled to launch between now and October.

Nebula is the company's new soft seating product. With its sophisticated and playful curves, Nebula is compact, with a clean profile that broadens its applications, making it a perfect seating product for lobbies, lounges, suites and more. It can be specified with matte black or silver wire framework.

Nebula also offers additional customization opportunities with two-tone upholstery and contrasting stitch detail.

Meteor is Via's new low-profile, wood base seat. Meteor's shape is the perfect companion to the Nebula Sofa. It is a designer lounge piece that is perfectly balanced and features a new, low profile and sophisticated wood base available in oak and walnut finishes. Meteor offers additional customization opportunities to that of Nebula with two-tone upholstery and contrasting stitch detail.

Muir is a new lounge seat with classic design at a mid-market price point. It is comfortable, but not puffed up; uncompl-





Genie Flex features a back support Thermo Plastic Polyurethane (TPU) material that is abrasion and scratch resistant.



cated, but classically finished. Its design is versatile and unassuming. It does, however, have presence with its wire outer frame. With its deliberate low profile it immediately, intuitively creates a casual sit with perfect seat and back angle positioning.

Genie Flex is Via's new task seating that is a bleach cleanable, heavy duty task chair with a 12-year "bumper to bumper" warranty. Beautiful but tough, Genie Flex features a back support Thermo Plastic Polyurethane (TPU) material that is abrasion and scratch resistant. This chair can withstand intense use, but delivers comfort and support.

Via Seating's new products provide great examples of how the company thinks — and how far ahead of the curve it is because of the way it listens to the markets it serves. Via definitely missed NeoCon, not only because it couldn't share its

new products with the masses that descend on Chicago, but because it is an opportunity to take the pulse of the market as well.

"Our lifeblood, the way we operate, is we're good listeners," Fenlon said. "And we love engaging our team and our customer base. We are becoming recognized by much more of the industry as the seating experts. We have a growing connection to a broader audience. It is important to keep that momentum going. NeoCon was going to be another opportunity to really expand on that — to ask them questions and get more feedback on our new products."

Via Seating is already planning its 2021 product offerings and looks forward to continuing the conversation as the world continues to reopen. After all, it needs you to make sure it is going in the right direction.

BoF

PACIFIC WEST

CITY TO APPEAL

LOS ALTOS, Calif. — Los Altos City Council has voted to file an appeal of a decision by a judge who cleared the way for developers Ted and Jerry Sorensen to build a 66-foot building on a property they own at 40 Main St. The 29,566-square-foot building would have offices on the first floor and 15 apartments on the second through fifth floors, with two of the apartments set aside as subsidized units. A lawsuit was filed last June by the California Renters Legal Advocacy and Education Fund, a pro-housing group that often sues cities that reject housing developments. [Palo Alto Daily Post](#)

MOUNTAIN WEST

LIBRARY RENOVATION FEATURES NODS TO REGION

SUN VALLEY, Idaho — In 1955, 17 visionary women from the Sun Valley area founded The Community Library as a privately funded, privately governed, nonprofit library. By the intention of the founders, the library receives no tax funding, which makes it unique in the field of public libraries. A renovation of the 27,000-square-foot mountain lodge-like structure, with nearly 160,000 items, features a new central spine generated a “main street of knowledge.” Color and furniture palettes were selected to foster intuitive wayfinding and unify the building while allowing each space to reflect the personality of its primary functions. Key design motifs integrate the library’s interior and outdoor spaces as well as integrate the past with the present and future. Strategically applied diagonal wood members coupled with the library’s newly crafted “mountain of books” were used as a reference to Idaho’s

mountain landscape while simultaneously applying a modern touch to the building’s architecture. [Colorado Real Estate Journal](#)

NEW HQ ANNOUNCED

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Wave-Front Dynamics, an early-stage ophthalmic medical device company, is expanding its operations with the opening of its brand new 9,800-square-foot headquarters in Albuquerque. The new facilities consisting of office, development labs, and manufacturing space will meet the needs of the company’s growth through its next stage of development and commercialization. “This is not a typical seed-stage startup,” said Dan Neal, CEO. “The company has a fully staffed R&D team with state-of-the-art optical labs, optometry lane, and machine shops in place to drive our development efforts forward. The new office space is the first of several important changes for the organization as we prepare for the exciting road ahead.”

[OA Online](#)

HEALTH CAMPUS REMODEL COMPLETE

CAÑON CITY, Colo. — GH Phipps Construction completed the Solvista Health West Campus Remodel in Cañon City. Solvista’s West Campus facility was previously a newspaper publishing plant, purchased in 2015 for business expansion. Solvista Health identified a need to renovate the building to expand services for their community, and had a vision to design and construct a therapeutic, unique and modern facility tailored to children, teens and families. Working with architect Keys+Lauer, the project centered on the renovation of 8,000 square feet to house the child and family team, increase

space for child and family services, and improve administrative and support spaces. [Colorado Real Estate Journal](#)

MIDWEST

PROJECT ON ICE

CHICAGO — Goldman Sachs has pulled funding from Chicago’s largest active condominium project, the \$470 million tower on Michigan Avenue. The construction lender has put the 74-story tower on ice until it assesses the real estate market’s strength in September. The bank is “concerned about economic stability of the market at this particular time due to recent events,” said Francis Greenburger, whose firm Time Equities is co-developing the Helmut Jahn-designed tower alongside New York-based JK Equities and Oak Capitals. [The Real Deal](#)

[The Real Deal](#)

UNDER CONSTRUCTION



CHICAGO — Despite the pandemic, construction activity in the office sector hasn’t slowed down in Chicago since the beginning of the year, with groundbreaking for two large projects occurring during the shutdown — the 1.5 million-square-foot BMO Tower and Salesforce Tower Chicago, both located in the city’s Central Business District. The 50-story BMO Tower is the second-largest office development

under construction in Chicago, with delivery expected in early 2022. The Salesforce tower features a Pelli Clarke Pelli design and will rise 60 floors on one of the last available riverfront sites in downtown. [Commercial Property Executive](#)

[Commercial Property Executive](#)

NORTHEAST

CHURCH TO BE TRANSFORMED

NEW YORK — Saint James Episcopal Church in the Bronx has filed plans with the New York City Department of Buildings for a 102-unit mixed-use project. The development at 2520 Jerome Ave. in Fordham would be split between about 73,000 square feet of residential space and 21,000 square feet of community space. Churches across the city, coming to terms with New York’s development boom in recent years, have been trying to determine the most effective ways to use their often-valuable real estate. [Connect New York](#)

[Connect New York](#)

RESIDENTS WANT MIXED-USE

WINDSOR, Conn. — Residents who answered a survey would like to see a mixed-use redevelopment of the former Roger Wolcott School property, and either a mixed-use development or open space on the undeveloped parcel across the street from the school. The former Roger Wolcott School has been redeveloped before when the original school building, built in 1913, was replaced with a new one in the 1960s. But the town’s changing needs, including lower enrollment, changing curriculum, and district balancing, have left the school unused since its closing in 2012. The 5.68-acre lot has been owned by the town for many years. [Journal Inquirer](#)

[Journal Inquirer](#)

SOUTH

REZONING REQUESTED

CHARLESTON, S.C. — A large tract of undeveloped land over a former trash dump on the Charleston peninsula is once again being eyed for a future use, but development of Laurel Island is still years away. The land is currently zoned for uses that include general business, heavy industry and diverse residential, but the owners, Lubert-Adler of Philadelphia, as well as Charleston County would like to see the land use changed to allow a planned-unit development. [The Post and Courier](#)

[The Post and Courier](#)

SCHOOL TRANSFORMED TO OFFICE



DALLAS — The transformation of a three-story, 50,000-square-foot East Dallas school into a modern mixed-use center is complete. Fort Worth developer M2G Ventures converted a former Texans Can Academies campus into the Bogart on Ross, complete with offices, a sculpture garden and a coffee shop. “We are most excited to showcase the curated collection of museum-quality art throughout the project. The unique amenity spaces and exclusive address have already piqued the interest from headquarter potentials to intimate studio users wanting the light-filled open spaces to private offices,” Susan Gruppi, co-president of M2G. [Lakewood Advocate](#)

[Lakewood Advocate](#)

OFFICE SELLS FOR \$13 MILLION



CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — A real estate investment group that specializes in medical office properties has acquired another physicians’ office building in downtown Chattanooga. The Chicago-based MB Real Estate health group and the Boca Raton, Florida-based KA Real Estate bought the three-story office building at 901 Riverfront Parkway last month for nearly \$13 million. The 33,789-square-foot medical building was erected in 2018 by Noon Development. “We own a number of medical office buildings in Chattanooga, which we think is a strong market,” said Brian Burks, vice president in the Southeast region for MB Real Estate. “It’s a healthy market with strong hospital networks and our occupancy remains high.” [Chattanooga Times Free Press](#)

[Chattanooga Times Free Press](#)

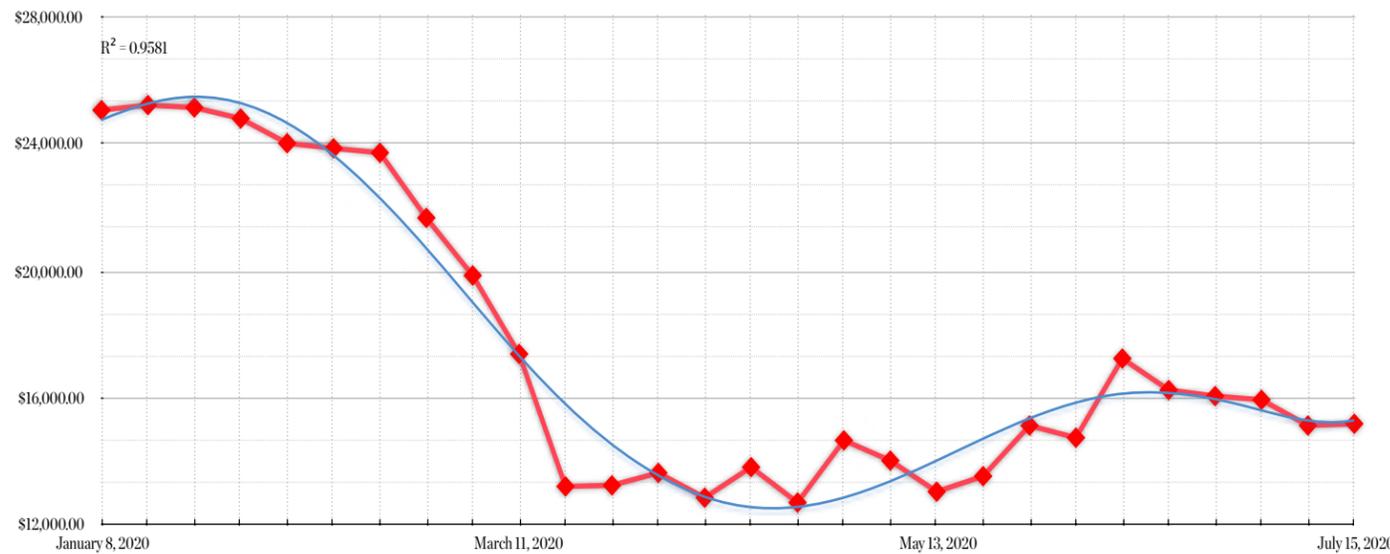
Compiled by Emily Clingman

BoF

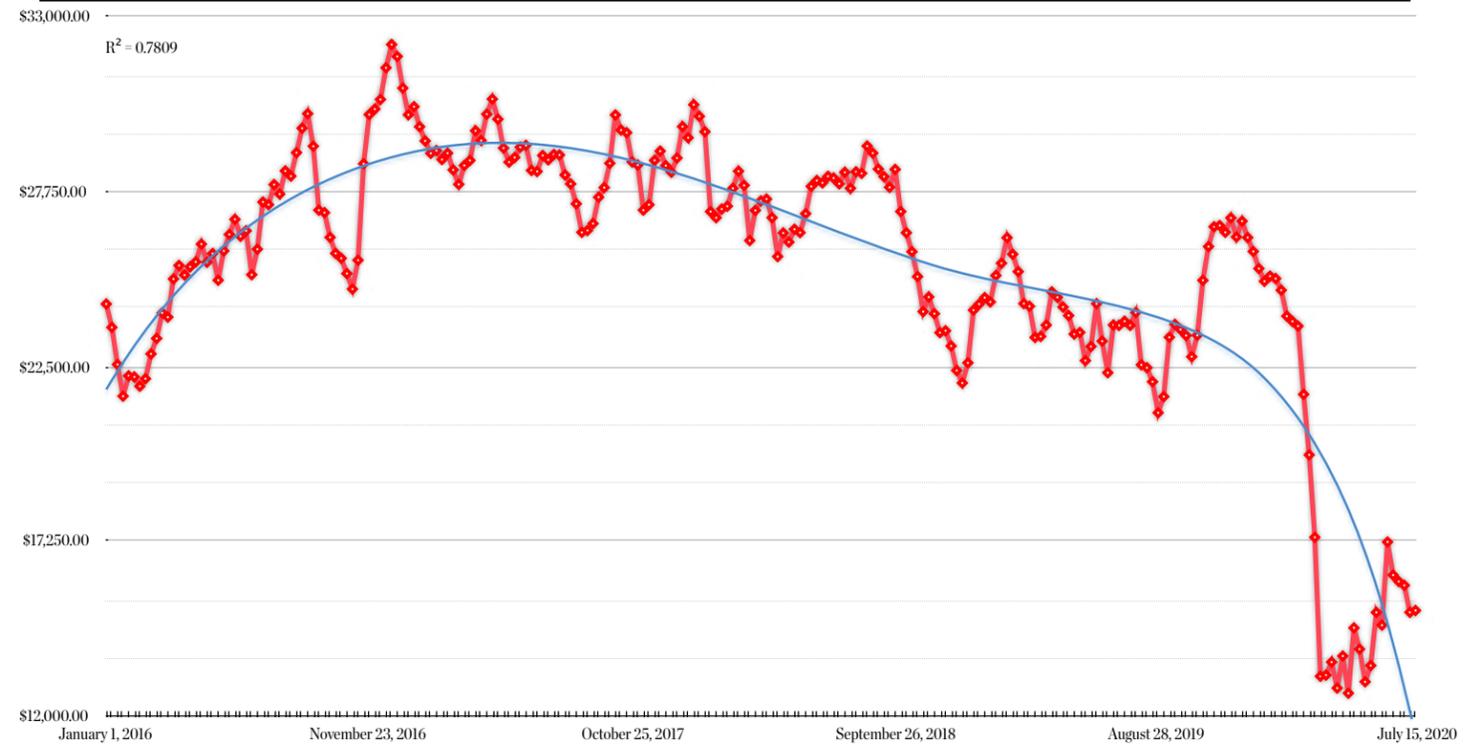
ALL TIME | January 1, 2016 BoF Industry Index Start: \$24,379.54
 YEAR TO DATE | July 15, 2020 Yearly Start: \$25,443.00 (2019 Ended Up +15.31%)

CURRENT VALUE **\$15,180.92** **TOTAL GAIN / LOSS** **-9,198.62 (-37.73%)** **2020 YTD GAIN / LOSS** **-10,262.08 (-40.33%)**

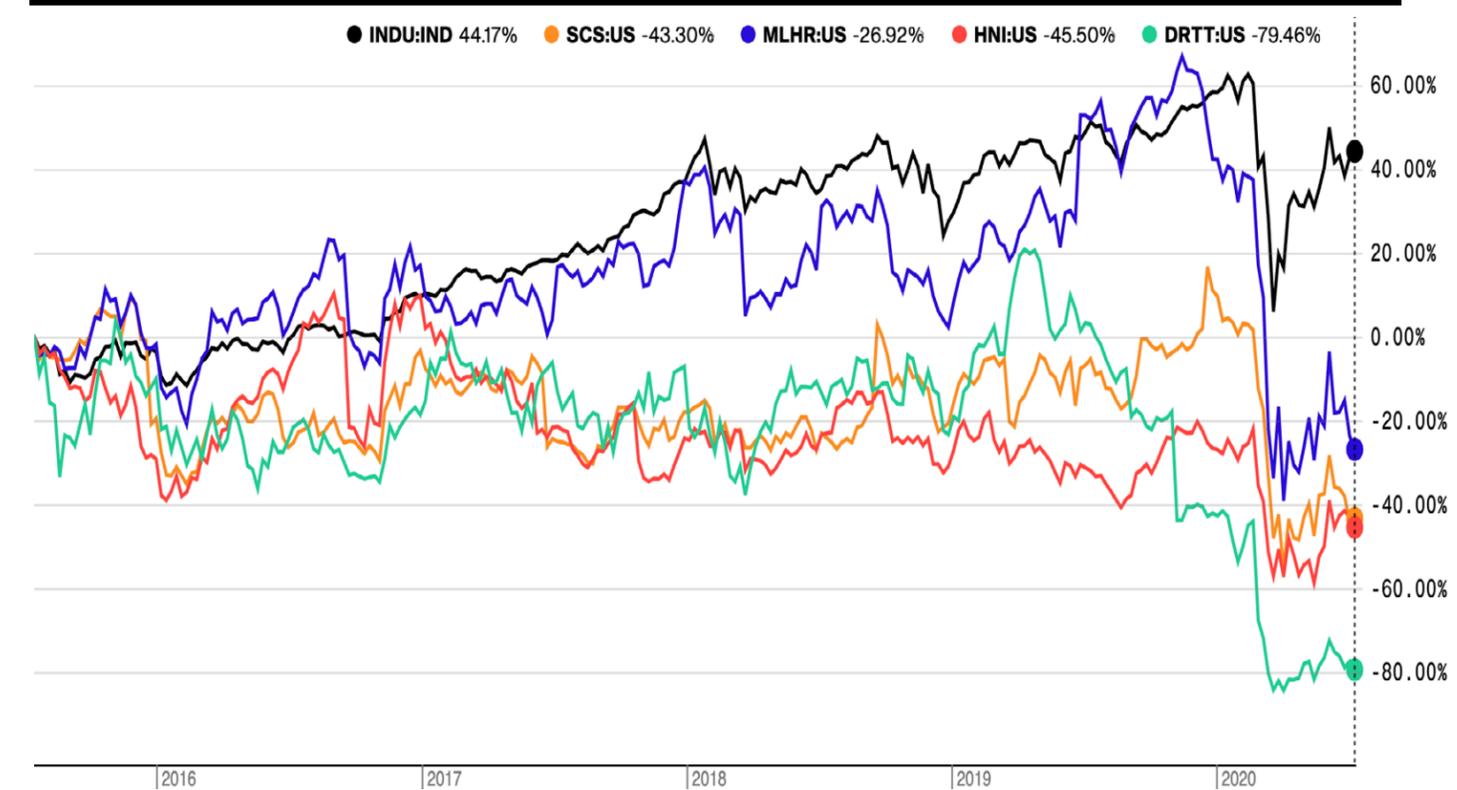
▲ SYMBOL	PRICE ↕	CHANGE ↕	TOTAL GAIN ↕	1D GAIN ↕	OPEN ↕	PREV CLOSE ↕	VOLUME ↕	MARKET CAP ↕	DAY RANGE	52WK RANGE
DRTT:US DIRTT Environm...	1.11 20:00	-0.89% -0.01	-84.01% -583.00	-0.89% -1.00	1.12	1.12	48,616	94.00M	1.09 -1.14	0.71 -5.70
FLXS:US Flexsteel Indust...	13.49 20:00	+0.82% +0.11	-69.47% -3,069.00	+0.82% +11.00	13.39	13.38	79,930	107.93M	13.02 -13.79	7.81 -21.31
HNI:US HNI Corp	28.74 20:04	+2.24% +0.63	-20.30% -732.00	+2.24% +63.00	28.19	28.11	156,345	1.23B	27.79 -28.82	16.61 -42.90
INQ:CN Inscape Corp	0.44 00:00	-6.38% -0.03	-85.33% -188.21	-6.38% -2.21	0.50	0.47	31,300	6.33M	0.44 -0.50	0.35 -1.22
KBAL:US Kimball Internati...	10.56 20:00	+0.86% +0.09	+8.09% +79.00	+0.86% +9.00	10.48	10.47	167,711	388.98M	10.38 -10.74	8.19 -22.40
KEQU:US Kewaunee Scie...	8.99 20:00	-5.01% -0.47	-49.49% -880.43	-5.01% -47.43	9.37	9.46	720	24.72M	8.99 -9.37	6.96 -19.57
KNL:US Knoll Inc	11.28 20:04	+1.17% +0.13	-40.00% -752.00	+1.17% +13.00	11.14	11.15	289,170	572.17M	10.91 -11.38	7.74 -28.30
LEG:US Leggett & Platt L...	35.44 20:04	+2.13% +0.74	-15.66% -658.00	+2.13% +74.00	34.60	34.70	964,134	4.69B	34.18 -35.46	22.03 -55.42
MLHR:US Herman Miller Inc	21.38 20:00	+1.16% +0.25	-25.51% -732.00	+1.16% +24.50	21.17	21.14	484,381	1.26B	20.74 -21.40	14.39 -49.07
SCS:US Steelcase Inc	10.64 20:04	+1.04% +0.11	-28.59% -426.00	+1.04% +11.00	10.50	10.53	574,146	1.22B	10.34 -10.66	7.02 -23.02
TILE:US Interface Inc	7.20 20:00	+0.98% +0.07	-62.38% -1,194.00	+0.98% +7.00	7.13	7.13	330,647	421.04M	6.94 -7.24	5.06 -17.68
VIRC:US Virco Mfg. Corp	2.66 20:00	-6.34% -0.18	-20.12% -67.00	-6.34% -18.00	2.84	2.84	10,208	41.80M	2.64 -3.00	1.82 -4.63



BoF Industry Index - Since Jan 1, 2016



Five Years - Major Industry Stocks



I'm Over Used and Under Appreciated

Dear Stephen,

I manage a regional sales office for a medium-sized furniture manufacturer, working out of a showroom in the Merchandise Mart. The territory and team I manage covers several midwest states. Like a lot of companies during this health and economic crisis, we had to reduce expenses by furloughing or firing some employees and then reducing the salaries of the remaining staff by 25 percent. The people we let go, or furloughed, were mostly support and showroom people. One high-priced senior sales rep on my team was also let go. I was told by upper management that it was a temporary situation, and my team that remained just had to pitch in and make up the slack from the colleagues who were let go.

So, here I am, a sales supervisor responsible for recruiting, coaching, training and managing results for a number of salespeople, some working from home and some working from the showroom. I'm also responsible for the inside

support staff, only now they are all gone, so we rotate the salespeople and myself to cover those duties to make sure someone is always here in the showroom and to make sure the phone is answered. I also now cover the territory of the senior salesperson that was terminated. I totally understand downsizing three months ago when the Mart cancelled NeoCon, the industry was in panic mode, and no one knew what would happen next. And we all have friends at major design firms who were let go as projects dried up or were put on hold by cautious (or terrified) end users. It freaked out our company owners, and they made the right decisions at the time, so we all had to pitch in, work harder, keep the company going and get through the new normal.

Now things are starting to change, and I see light at the end of the tunnel. Our dealers are telling me

projects on hold are opening up again because their clients are locked in to leases and need to furnish their space. Many companies need to make PPE changes, and they look to the dealers to help them with that. It's a strange situation because we're busy providing information, samples and specification but we're not getting many orders yet. Customers are not quite ready to give us the final go-ahead (an actual purchase order) but the good signs are all there. Business is not booming but it is busy and clearly coming back.

I'm doing three jobs at 25% less pay and no chance of a bonus in 2020. I report to the VP of sales, and I suggested to him we consider hiring some people back by Labor Day so we are ready for the



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter [@stephenviscusi](https://twitter.com/stephenviscusi), Like [Stephen on Facebook](#); and follow him on [LinkedIn](#).

up-surge in business. I'm getting resistance from executive management on bringing back our furloughed people — it seems like they are playing the pandemic card. I really feel like it's reached the point where the pandemic is an excuse to overwork and overuse me. What gives? And what can I do about it? Any suggestions? Time to leave?

Signed,

Feeling overused and under-appreciated

Dear Overused,

Your dilemma is one we get emails about every day starting just this month. And a big NO to the question of whether it's time to leave. Although if you worked for me, and I heard your complaint I would probably fire you. You're the manager, it is your job to keep the team together and motivated. Follow your company's goals, and if you just do not want to or can't, then, yes, I guess leave the job. With your attitude I am not sure who else would hire you. All those projects that were on hold do seem to be opening up, everyone in your position is saying the same thing. I hear this from dealers and managers at manufacturers and even designers. Yet in most cases, as you mention, the actual orders have not been cut yet. Many of the largest projects are still "wait-and-see" and that applies to your job and attitude as well.

You may be working harder, which is part of a manager's job in the middle of a crisis, but you are not being used. Your company may not reverse the pay cut they had to give you until revenue returns to what it was before COVID-19. When all these projects that have been on hold open up in the last quarter of 2020, revenue will come back and then your personal income will start to return to normal — but in that order. I know you have to work harder because many specifications are changed on these orders to accommodate PPE requirements or in some cases the clients want cheaper options than specified six months ago. I get it. As the manager you need to lead your group and explain this is how it works. You must set an example, stop complaining and have a positive attitude about serving the customer and closing orders.

I know some companies where the employees took way more than a 25% pay reduction and, of course, we all know someone who lost their job. Look at our friends in the design community. Some of those firms were absolutely decimated and have little chance of coming back soon.

My advice is to keep your team members on their toes, encourage them to stay on top of the pending projects because, like you said, most of them are not orders yet, just lots of promises without dates. I believe there will

be orders for the companies and the sales people that persevere, and we will be a lot busier after Labor Day and even busier as the year comes to a close.

Wait for the revenue to show up before you start bugging your boss to hire more people back. So, you have to answer the phone and help keep the showroom clean, big deal. You have a job. This is one time I cannot tell you to work smarter, you just have to work harder and yeah, maybe do two jobs, even three. No, it is not time to change jobs, although if you want to look there are sales jobs out there. I see sales opportunities every day on LinkedIn, and some great ones here in BoF in our help wanted ads. Also, The Viscusi Group and my fellow recruiters have more and more demand for sales reps who have strong, existing customer relationships.

But you are jumping the gun because I can tell you like your company and your job — you're just feeling sorry for yourself, and it's not an attractive quality. So get back to work and stop writing letters to me. Most importantly do not let the team or your manager get a hint you are not up to the task at hand. Lead, encourage and motivate your team because if you can't there are plenty of good people ready to jump in and take your job.

Signed,

Stephen

GUANGZHOU, CHINA

CIFF

July 27-30, 2020



Founded in 1998, China International Furniture Fair (Guangzhou/Shanghai) (“CIFF”) has been successfully held for 44 sessions. Phase two of CIFF is dedicated to office furniture and seating, hotel furnishings, accessories, metal furniture, and furnishings for public spaces and reception areas, as well as materials and machinery for the furniture industry.

www.ciff.furniture

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Export Furniture Exhibition

August 27-29, 2020



Export Furniture Exhibition (EFE) is international furniture fair that attracts global buyers from all over the world as one of the top furniture fairs in Southeast Asia. One of the major highlights of EFE2020 is the inauguration of the “Office Furniture Hall”.

www.efemalaysia.com

COLOGNE, GERMANY

Orgatec 2020

October 27-31, 2020



Orgatec is a trade show that is dedicated to office furniture and concepts in the working environment and work culture. ORGATEC will gather professionals from various fields that will explore the newest trends and novelties in the industry.

www.orgatec.com

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

EDSPACES

November 11-13, 2020



EDspaces is where innovations are unveiled and collaborations form, bringing together education’s creative change agents who plan, design and manage innovative learning spaces. Leaders from school districts and colleges, architects, interior designers, distributors and exhibitors will engage and participate in the ongoing transformation of educational environments.

www.ed-spaces.com

LONDON (NEW DATE)

Clerkenwell Design Week

May 25-27, 2021

Clerkenwell is home to more creative businesses and architects per square mile than anywhere else on the planet, making it truly one of the most important design hubs in the world. To celebrate this rich and diverse community, **Clerkenwell Design Week** has created a showcase of leading UK and international brands and companies presented in a series of showroom events, exhibitions and special installations that take place across the area.

www.clerkenwelldesignweek.com

CHICAGO

NeoCon

June 14-16, 2021



NeoCon is the world’s leading platform for commercial design and the annual gathering place for over 50,000 design professionals and end-users. Marking its 52nd edition, NeoCon continues to serve as the commercial design industry’s launch pad for innovation - showcasing game-changing products and services from leading companies and emerging talent, and providing unparalleled access to the most cutting-edge solutions.

www.neocon.com

EVENT

DATE & LOCATION

CHINA INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE FAIR, CIFF (PHASE TWO) (NEW DATE)

July 27-30, 2020
Guangzhou, China

CIFF (Shanghai) sends tailor-made invitations to audiences from different industries and sectors through different channels. It hosts nearly 150,000 importers/exporters, dealers, retailers, brand chain stores, designers, architects, real estate developers and other professional audiences from 200 countries and regions annually.
<http://www.ciff-sh.com/en/index>

EXPORT FURNITURE EXHIBITION (NEW DATE)

August 27-29 2020
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Export Furniture Exhibition (EFE) is international furniture fair that attracts global buyers from all over the world as one of the top furniture fairs in Southeast Asia and the fair continues to be the most visited by visitors annually. The exhibition is the signature event of the Malaysian Furniture Council (MFC).
<http://www.efemalaysia.com>

DOMOTEX ASIA (NEW DATE)

August 31 - September 2, 2020
Shanghai, China

DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR is the leading flooring trade exhibition in Asian Pacific and the second largest flooring trade exhibition worldwide. As part of the DOMOTEX shows’ group, DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR is mainly targeting the emerging Asian markets. In 2019, the 21st edition of DOMOTEX asia/CHINAFLOOR covered over 175,000sqm of gross exhibition space filled by 1,560 exhibitors from 40 countries.
<http://www.domotexasiachinafloor.com>

ORGATEC 2020

October 27-31, 2020
Cologne, Germany

Orgatec is a trade show that is dedicated to office furniture and concepts in the working environment and work culture. ORGATEC will gather professionals from various fields that will explore the newest trends and novelties in the industry.
<http://www.orgatec.com>

INDEAL LEADERSHIP EVOLUTION

November 8-11, 2020
San Diego

INDEAL’s 2020 Conference provides program members with an opportunity to gain critical knowledge focused on supporting business growth and profitability. This year’s event offers perspective on developing teams that thrive, along with valuable insight into the state of the commercial furniture industry, economy and program at large. A varied agenda and numerous prospects for networking combine the benefit of multiple experiences into one, streamlined event.
Event website coming soon

EDSPACES

November 11-13, 2020
Charlotte, North Carolina

This is the event for connecting key stakeholders who are designing, building, equipping, and managing learning environments with the manufacturers, distributors, and service providers offering solutions. Explore how the convergence of technology, space, and pedagogy impact learning.
<http://www.edspaces.com>

CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

May 25-27, 2021
London

Clerkenwell is home to more creative businesses and architects per square mile than anywhere else on the planet, making it truly one of the most important design hubs in the world. To celebrate this rich and diverse community, Clerkenwell Design Week has created a showcase of leading UK and international brands and companies presented in a series of showroom events, exhibitions and special installations that take place across the area.
<http://www.clerkenwelldesignweek.com>

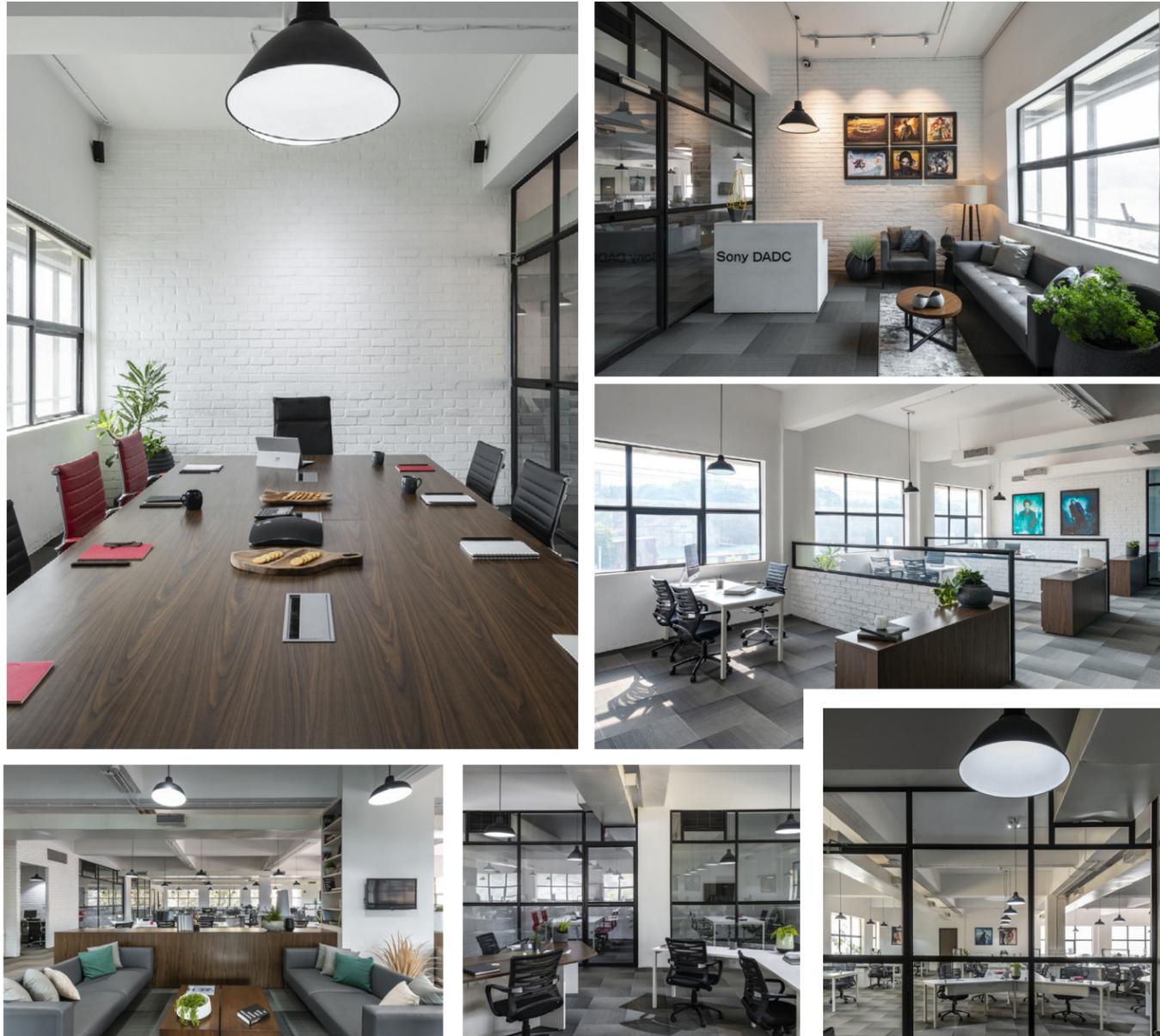
NEOCON

June 14-16, 2021
Chicago

NeoCon is the world’s leading platform for commercial design and the annual gathering place for over 50,000 design professionals and end-users. Marking its 52nd edition, NeoCon continues to serve as the commercial design industry’s launch pad for innovation - showcasing game-changing products and services from leading companies and emerging talent, and providing unparalleled access to the most cutting-edge solutions.
<http://www.neocon.com>

Cancelled / Postponed Notes:

BoF will provide continuing coverage of Coronavirus related cancellations and postponements, and will provide you with new dates when they are made available.



Photography: Photographix India

Sony DADC Offices – Mumbai

Ashleys recently realized the corporate minimal design for Sony DADC's offices located in Mumbai, India.

The Sony office, nestled in the urban milieu of Navi Mumbai, exudes a young vigour with the vibrant portfolio of Sony evident in every volume while restraining to the robust subdued corporate ethos.

The design strategy is interlaced with the idea of fluidity while retaining the vastness of the block. The Minimal yet corporate code of the office is attained by the subtle accents of industrial style where ceiling is rendered with exposed ducts and exposed brick walls are painted with white hues. Envisaging the work culture of the young and creative employees of Sony, the design weaves an eloquent narrative of elegance that gleams energy, encourage productivity and portray the charisma of Sony.

FIRM: Ashleys
 CLIENT: Sony DADC
 7,000 sqft
 SCOPE: Office
 LOCATION: Mumbai, India
 INDUSTRY: Manufacturing

READ MORE



Workplaces | July 2020

WHERE I'M WORKING: LUCY'S CAFÉ, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
74% OF WORKERS SAY A 6-HOUR WORKDAY WILL IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AMID COVID-19, ACCORDING TO STUDY
AS DESIGN MOVES FORWARD, DESIGNING FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS GARNERS MORE ATTENTION
LEVERAGING HOSPITALITY CUES IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORKPLACE
KI GOES BEYOND WITH OWENS CORNING IN FUTURE-PROOFING WORKSPACES WITH 'INFINITY FROM KI'
VIRTUAL REALITY MEETINGS: THE NEW NORMAL
AND MORE!!!

Read the July 2020 issue today at: <https://bellowpress.com>



WORK LIFE

The Workplace Redefined; Preparing For The New Normal

THE WAY YOU WORK IS CHANGING EVERY DAY, AND YOU'RE MOST LIKELY STILL FIGURING OUT YOUR PERFECT SET UP.

As signs of a curve flattening in many states emerge, elected officials are rolling out plans to get employees back to work — or simply back to the office.

Businesses across the country are preparing to reopen their offices, and with that, health and safety have become the number one priority.

Flexible solutions for home offices

The way you work is changing every day, and you're most likely still figuring out your perfect set up. Whether you have a dedicated room or share the space with the rest of the home, it's important that you have the right products that fit you and your home office needs.

Twitter employees are working from home as long as they choose, even permanently if they want. Google employees are remote until 2021, at least. Other tech companies are moving to remote work in the COVID-19 era, and it's brought into focus some long-held principles about work.

Whether you have a designated office or share the space with the rest of the home, it's important you have the right products that fit you and your home office needs.

The small home office

You might not have space for a formal home office, but HON's multifunctional desks and ergonomically friendly seating are designed to fit in small spaces — and if you're cramped for space, you can stow your desk away when the work day is done.

For workers who want a productive space that can also multi-task after hours, "having a nesting table like the Between is helpful," said Evan Sanford, category merchandising manager for The HON Company.

"Also, the Coordinate desktop riser is great because it sits on top of an existing work surface."

Coordinate desktop risers allow you to stand or sit, offering ergonomic flexibility and comfort throughout the day. When working with a small footprint (like an apartment), it's important to use furniture that fits when you need the space to work, but doesn't get in the way when you need the space for something else.



The shared room home office

As you continue exploring new workstyles in your own home, you may have found a nook that is just right.

Those who are outfitting shared rooms look for style and function, and typically, they want the furniture to coordinate with their home environment (known as “resimercial”). For a shared room, the fully-upholstered Matter chair is an excellent choice, providing comfort and a look that can blend into any space.

“When you walk into the room, you won’t necessarily say ‘that’s an office chair,’” Sanford said.

Another option in the shared-room category is the Voi work surface. Its contemporary and modern design gives off a minimalistic vibe, and it has various laminate top and paint options that fit many different aesthetics.

The dedicated home office

A designated office space can be key to maximizing productivity. HON offers products for a traditional or modern office solution designed to ergonomically support you and fit the aesthetic of your home. These products are similar to what you might see in an office space.

“Some of our best options are the Coordinate height-adjustable tables,” Sanford said. “When we talk to people about what products they want, height adjustability is at the top of the list. With the market shifting toward more workers being remote and/or working from home, a comfortable and ergonomic solution will make your home office more inviting, and you may find yourself more productive as well.”

How to plan for a health-conscious return to work

Work-from-home arrangements were made almost overnight as the pandemic forced the implementation of stay-home orders. While the transition was sudden, American businesses and workers have risen to the occasion. From a trying situation has come a revelation in the way we work, and how it might look going forward.

As signs of a curve flattening in many states emerge, elected officials are rolling out plans to get employees back to work — or simply back to the office.

Preparing for a new normal

While we don’t know for certain what work and office environments will look like in three weeks or three months, we do know they will look different. And the new dynamic could feature more permanent changes designed to support the health and well-being of employees.

Experts agree making employees feel safe and comfortable about being in the office should be at the forefront of every decision-maker’s mind as workers across the country get ready to return.

“The biggest thing that companies are focusing on is the mental and physical well-being of their workers,” said Holli Renaud, account merchandising manager for The HON Company. “Employees need to mentally feel good about coming into the office, and that translates into some of the physical things companies are doing to promote that comfortability.”

“It’s going to be about space, cleaning and separation between workstations and in common areas, too. That’s how a lot of people are thinking about this situation as they prepare for this change.”

The changes required won’t all be easy, though.

Finding a happy medium between appropriate spacing and a people-focused environment is the task facing companies now. Companies may be trying to juggle the open workplace and collaborative areas with options that can be conducive to social distancing.

“How do we incorporate those elements into the working environment?” asked Jim Foster, vice president and general manager merchandising and national accounts at The HON Company. “How do we make sure we continue to build a workplace that people want to work in while also being able to maintain social distancing? These are key considerations for companies as they look to reopen.” **BoF**

LIGHTING

BuzziSpace Debuts Innovative New Acoustic Lighting Solutions

BuzziSpace continues to strengthen its vision for happier and healthier workspaces with the introduction of two all-in-one acoustic lighting offerings — BuzziCone and BuzziJet Standing.



Conceived in response to the growing challenges in open-plan workspaces, BuzziCone and BuzziJet Standing function as solutions that enhance productivity and mood by preventing employee distraction and tiredness with their warm, high-quality light output and noise-reduction capabilities.

Abiding by its “no boundaries” philosophy, these new solutions offer the versatility needed for every space, whether it’s a lobby, a meeting room, lounge area, workspaces or home.

BuzziCone is a minimal, yet innovative pendant light with noise-reducing capabilities. Named after its distinctive conic appearance, BuzziCone features a playful, elegant body covered in soft BuzziFelt and a warm light. Available in a wide range of BuzziFelt colors and with three configurations to choose from, BuzziCone can be customized to fill the aesthetic needs of any space with the option of adding an extra layer of fabric to the BuzziFelt (inside or outside). The push buttons in glossy black reinforce the creativity of the lamp. The light can be used as a stand-alone fixture or in a creative cluster of multiple pendants.

Due to the success and high acoustic performance of the iconic BuzziJet, there is a new member in the portfolio: BuzziJet Standing. It is a simple and stylish sound-absorbing floor lamp, designed with flexible and open spaces in mind and with the benefit of no installation. Wide in diameter, BuzziJet Standing’s aerodynamic design allows sound waves to bounce back-and-forth within its circular body, reducing noise while emitting warm ambiance from above with its tall, curved arch. In addition, its dimmable feature creates different atmospheres.

BuzziJet Standing comes in a wide range of fabric, and its round flat base promotes optimal space use as it fits underneath desks and tables and doesn’t compromise leg room.



DIVIDERS

Spacestor Expands Palisades Collection with Stylish New Zone Divider

Spacestor has introduced Palisades Luxe. The newest addition to its popular range of customizable zone dividers, it features modular components and a sleek, minimalist structure with rich finishes and a range of accessories. Like its counterparts in the Palisades line, it is movable and reconfigurable, offering a flexible way to divide space in offices, restaurants and hotels without building walls.

“We’re observing a transition towards a more creative division of space, with the use of furniture to build flexible settings that can be easily reconfigured to suit the ever-changing needs of commercial spaces,” said Nic Baxter, Spacestor managing director. “Palisades Luxe was developed with this in mind ... it is elegant, versatile and perfect for creating different neighborhoods of space within an open-plan design.”

Palisades Luxe is open and modular, featuring a gridlike structure that merges zone division, shelving and storage. Various accessories such as mirrors, shelves and open or closed alcoves allow designers to build customized solutions that match the needs of a particular project.



SEATING

Laze From Source International

The latest piece the Source International team has brought to the market is Laze — a lounge chair distinguished by its angled, graceful silhouette.

Laze was designed by Burkhard Vogtherr, one of the best known European designers. Throughout the course of his extensive career he’s won numerous awards — designing for the most renowned furniture manufacturers in the world.



While the relaxed back angle evokes comfort, Laze is a meeting chair. At home around a low coffee table, its strong frame lets users perch near the front edge of the seat and hold a meeting in an active, upright posture. Laze delights in its artful form, bringing both utility and style to casual meeting and spaces for lobbies and private offices in corporate, hospital-ity and education settings.

The sled frame or stationary four-blade base can be specified in stainless steel for ultimate durability or powder-coated steel with a variety of finish options. Laze brings classic modern style for a comfortable and distinct option in the free-standing lounge category.

TEXTILES

Maharam Introduces Shift by Scholten & Baijings

Shift is the latest addition to a series of upholstery textiles designed by Scholten & Baijings in collaboration with the Maharam Design Studio.

Part of the studio's ongoing exploration of how color interacts with form, Shift uses an expansive gradient to transform a reduced grid along with any surface it upholsters. The pattern can be seen as a progression of three of Scholten & Baijings's previous scale, grids and dimensionality beginning with Blocks and Grid's (2014) exaggerated approach to color blocking, followed by an investigation of color's influence on the minimal geometry of the Bright Grid series (2015), and more recently, in the small-scale dimensionality of Mesh and Tracery (2017).

Epitomizing Scholten & Baijings's in-depth approach, Shift was developed using paper models cut by hand to experiment with the impact of layered color to create the illusion of movement. In the pattern's translation to a woven textile, designers opted for a dimensional matelasse construction for enhanced tactility and depth. Fluid transitions within ranges of pewter, sapphire, copper, and honeysuckle mark the studio's acute sense of color while dramatizing graphic and architectural impact.



SYSTEMS

Meet Olli, Pair's New Personalizable Workplace System

Olli, a new workplace system from Pair, lets clients customize how it functions by choosing from flexible elements that create space for focused task work, collaborative work, organization and lounging.

Multiple functional accessories attach via nodes to the central beam, which also carries power and data. Available accessories include a pivoting privacy screen, coat rack, two side tables and a hanging bar for planters or a screen. Sliding stackable storage and cushions can be placed along the beam. Olli's tackable pivot screen creates privacy from neighboring deskmates with its two panels that lock in 90-degree increments. It can be adjusted into either an L shape that provides privacy from team members both next to and across from the user simultaneously, or be shaped into a straight line. Both sides are tackable for better brainstorming or for easy decorating.

Here's how Olli seamlessly adapts to guide its user through a comfortable, productive day: In the morning, the user comes into the office and hangs up their coat on the coat rack built into their workstation. They know they get their best work done first thing in the morning, so they set the pivot screen to block distractions from surrounding coworkers. Later, when they need some



time away from their desk to do some solo work, they grab their notebook from the stackable shelves and move down the beam to the side table and cushion. They get a few ideas and pin them to the tackable pivot screen to share with their team later. One of their coworkers also needs to take a break away from their screen, so they move down to the end of the beam where there is a lounge chair and a café table that is plugged into the last node for their cup and cellphone. Both users eventually go back to their desks to finish their day. At the end of the day they grab their coats from the rack and head out of the office.



Each Olli can be fully customized to meet a client's needs. In the same office, for example, three Ollis can be configured in three ways: one for an executive, one for marketing and another for IT. The executive needs a place to work privately. In addition to screens around their desk, they also have a cafe table and lounge chair at the end of the beam for solo work away from their screen. The marketing team across the room needs room for brainstorming away from its screens, so it has a side table and cushion for brainstorming and a

hanging bar with a tackable screen to keep its projects organized. The IT team deals with sensitive information, so it has multiple pivoting screens for privacy and a hanging bar with greenery to brighten up its space. No two Ollis in an office have to be the same.

Pair designed the power and data beam to be quickly assembled and installed by combining a slip-slot connection with minimal hardware. A bench long enough to accommodate six desks with power can take less than 20 minutes to assemble, not including additional elements such as the pivoting screen or coat rack.

ACOUSTICS

Unika Vaev Introduces New Acoustic Products from Abstracta

Unika Vaev, provider of fresh solutions for contract textile and acoustical needs, has added Trumpet, a new acoustic product from Abstracta, and The dB Pillar Collection, a new piece of acoustic furniture.

Trumpet functions as an inverted trumpet, reducing noise while providing soft lighting. It is very thin, resulting in an aesthetic elegance to any space while contributing to noise reduction. Trumpet was designed for a dining room in an Andorra ski-resort, which on an average day is filled with 400 energetic kids with ski boots.

Cutu Mazuelos and Eva Prego created Trumpet for Stone Designs and were influenced by Japanese and Scandinavian culture. Like many of their designs, Trumpet is characterized by simplic-



ity and a careful attention to detail.

“It is not an acoustic panel with LED lighting,” Mazuelos said. “It’s a lamp with acoustic properties.”

Trumpet has a solid wood body and an acoustic core made from recycled waste fabrics and used PET bottles. It comes in two standard sizes and a wide selection of fabrics and colors. Custom sizes are also available.



The dB Pillar Collection is a game-changer in the field of acoustic furniture. In combination with the material and the pillar design, the collection employs acoustic features that radically reduce the level of low frequency noise. DB Pillar is also unique from an environmental viewpoint: The pillars are filled with textile scraps from Abstracta’s factory.

Swedish designer Thomas Bernstrand explored the potential of an essential element of architecture — the pillar — to add new value and function to a space. Since antiquity, the pillar has been used as support for buildings but also as an ornament or a monument.

Bernstrand’s version of the pillar makes a playful reference to the latter.

DB Pillar includes tables, stools and pillars available in various heights and features. The products are available in a wide selection of fabrics and colors. The tables include power outlets for phones and laptops.

SEATING

Jannis Collection for Gebrüder Thonet Vienna

For its first collaboration with Gebrüder Thonet Vienna, Dainelli Studio designed Jannis, a collection of upholstered furniture with a strong link to the contract sector. The aesthetic is minimalist and typical of ‘70s design.

In Dainelli Studio’s project, the frame and the cushions’ solid shape — featuring practical curves but also a strong character — are bound together by graphically powerful wooden elements.

This contemporary rigor inspired by the past defines the Jannis collection, which reveals its personality through its details. The wooden structure that appears light but is actually solid embraces the seat cushion and the back. The front leg rises upward to define the thin outline of the armrest, ending in a brass, semi-spherical tip. At the back, the leg is supported by a small wooden arch, an element congruent with the heritage of Gebrüder Thonet Vienna.



DESKS

Narbutas launches MOTION

MOTION Executive is a system of electric, height-adjustable desks designed for a combination of modern elegance and thoughtful functionality. The desk is modern with panel legs that hide the space under the desk, giving more visual privacy. Its sophistication is strengthened by the huge size of the top, which is designed for comfortable work. The two models are different in their construction and availability of finishes.



MOTION Executive has 36 combinations. The insert of the panel leg can be made of black, grey HPL Fenix or white HPL. For a melamine combination, you have a choice of eight colors for the top, while the insert of the leg can be white, black or pearl grey. A modesty panel, matching the top and preserving a united style also is available.

The storage space of MOTION Executive desk consists of several pedestals with different sizes and drawers. The biggest pedestal opens with a light push and has a height-adjustable shelf. Four drawers do not have handles either, which adds to the image of a clean workplace. Metal file bars can be ordered for document storing. The easily reachable drawer in the upper corner is convenient for storing valuables and is lockable from the side. Spiral cables help create an image of neatness. You can select the access and charge your electronic gadgets in the integrated power blocks using flip sockets or grommets.

PANELS

Smith & Fong introduce First Array of Durapalm Carved Panels for 2020

Smith & Fong has launched a new range of Durapalm carved wall and ceiling panel systems.

Derived from the patterns and designs of Smith & Fong’s popular Plyboo Linear bamboo panel collection, the Durapalm products take on a deeper, more exotic look, owed in part to the unique color and texture of the palm material itself. The eight colors include Mandalay, Desert, Darjeeling, Kashmir, Bitterroot, Simla, Colonial and Rangoon.

“The palm look is hard to describe because it is truly in a class of its own,” said Smith & Fong CEO Dan Smith. “It is sort of at the crossroads of mid century-modern meets tribal-tropical. It is really a striking aesthetic and enables a business or a homeowner to convey their message in a fresh, eye-catching medium.” All Durapalm carved wall and ceiling panels are manufactured in the U.S. with imported and domestic materials.



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INDUSTRY EVENTS

NeoConnect Engages Commercial Design Industry

➔ NeoConnect, NeoCon's dynamic digital hub, brought the commercial design industry together during June with virtual product launches from NeoCon exhibitors, compelling content from media and community partners and more than 70 online programs and events. The digital hub will continue to connect the community by offering new content and resources through the fall. All of the action will take place on neocon.com and NeoCon's social media platforms.

According to Lisa Simonian, vice president of marketing for NeoCon, "We are so pleased with the response to NeoConnect. It was clear that our community did not want to miss the networking, learning and product launches that they have come to expect at NeoCon every June."

June programming attendance was consistently high with registrants representing 30 countries and tremendous traffic on the program's site and social media channels throughout the month.

"Our community truly came together and shared resources and ideas that will help us all work, create and navigate throughout the year ahead," Simonian said. "Our partners stepped up to the plate to offer important content as well as creative inspiration, and we look forward to continuing to share their contributions with the community for the next several months — until our major focus shifts to NeoCon 2021."

NeoConnect 2020 June highlights

In June, NeoConnect showcased the latest introductions from NeoCon exhibitors and original content from its media and association partners. It offered unique virtual moments to connect, network, learn and share within the industry.

Daily webinars were hosted by thought leaders and innovators in their fields, including Primo Orpilla (O+A), Cheryl Durst (International Interior Design Association), Paul Makovsky (Contract Magazine), Jane Abernathy (Humanscale) and Bill Bouche (HOK). Conversations centered around timely topics such as designing for a new era in the workplace, studying the 21st Century classroom, workplace amenities, new innovations in plastic reuse and how to hone creativity in everyday life. If you missed any programs, several were recorded and can be accessed through the NeoConnect hub into the Fall.

In addition, NeoConnect launched "The Silver Lining," a community-driven blog series featuring thoughtful narratives from experts in the industry such as Ken Wilson (Perkins + Will), Susan Chung (American Society of International Designers), Jennifer Busch and Martin Lesjak (13&9). The ongoing blog series addresses compelling issues such as the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace, design in a post-pandemic world and the power of research in design.

The NeoCon social platforms offered NeoConnect visitors a glimpse at industry leading products, NeoCon exhibitor news and insightful videos, including a new Be Well series with #DesignStandsTogether. The venture, organized in partnership with Novità Communications, features design industry heavyweights offering tips and tricks on creative-inspired endeavors and wellness. Contributors have included Suzanne Tick (Luum Textiles & Suzanne Tick, Inc.), Ghislaine Viñas (Ghislaine Viñas, LLC), Roger Thomas (The Roger Thomas Collection), Royce

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Epstein (Mohawk Group), Michael Suomi (Suomi Design Works), Mary Jo Miller (HBF Textiles), Doug Wittnebel (Gensler Oakland) and Giona Maiarelli (Maiarelli Studio), with themes ranging from basket weaving, collaging, lap loom production, environmental cleaning and more.

The much anticipated NeoCon cocktail parties and award shows were also a feature of NeoConnect, with a two-segment HiP Awards ceremony hosted by Interior Design Magazine's Cindy Allen and a virtual celebratory happy hour hosted by the NeoCon team from the bar at Marshall's Landing.

PEOPLE

KI Applauds IIDA 2020 Educator of the Year, Nebraska Architecture Dean Katherine Ankerson

➔ Katherine Ankerson, dean of the College of Architecture at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has been awarded KI's IIDA 2020 Educator of the Year Award. KI and the International Interior Design Association jointly honored Ankerson at a virtual awards ceremony June 11.

"We're delighted to present Katherine with this award in recognition of her extraordinary efforts in service of students and the design community," said Bryan Ballegeer, vice president of education markets at KI. "At KI, we believe in the power of design to transform communities and learning environments. Katherine has equipped countless designers with the



Ankerson

skills to do so.”

The IIDA Educator of the Year Award “recognizes and celebrates a full-time design educator for outstanding accomplishments and commitment to interior design education.” The winner receives a \$10,000 cash prize, a complimentary IIDA membership and features on IIDA.org and in DesignMatters, IIDA’s flagship newsletter.

Ankerson was also inducted into the IIDA College of Fellows, the organization’s highest and most prestigious honor. As a fellow, Ankerson will mentor aspiring designers and run educational programs.

“It’s a joy and a privilege to honor Katherine as Educator of the Year and an inductee to our College of Fellows,” said Cheryl Durst, executive vice president and CEO of IIDA. “We can’t wait to work with her to teach and inspire the next generation of designers.”

Ankerson served on the faculty at Nebraska from 1996 to 2011. Before returning to Nebraska in 2016, she was professor and head of the Kansas State University department of interior architecture and product design. She has also held academic positions at Radford University and Washington State University.

“I am so honored to receive this award and have been blessed throughout my career by many encouraging mentors and colleagues,” Ankerson said. “Seeing the impact each educator has on the future of the design profession keeps me centered and enthusiastic about the future.”

INDUSTRY EVENTS

Salone del Mobile Postpones Shanghai and Focuses on its 60th Edition in Milan

➔ The Salone del Mobile.Milano, after a lengthy analysis of the situation wrought by the Covid-19 crisis, and an appraisal of all the organizational aspects, such as uncertainty over international flights, mandatory quarantine and the suspension of visas by China, has been canceled.



Salone del Mobile. Milano Shanghai

The organizing committee acknowledged it was impossible to hold the event with the quality standards that have set it apart from the very beginning.

“It was a painful but inevitable decision,” said Claudio Luti, president of the Salone del Mobile. “It will, however, drive us to be even more resolute and determined to consolidate the leadership of the Salone del Mobile brand as a benchmark brand for design the world over. We will be channelling all our efforts into an intensified promotional campaign linked to the 60th edition of the Salone del Mobile in Milan.”

The 60th edition — from April 13-18, 2021 — will represent the first major opportunity for international visitors and professionals to come together and welcome the Chinese public.

Activities also are being planned for the fifth edition of the Salone del Mobile.Milano Shanghai, which will take place in November 2021, with a view to further boosting the visibility of the trade fair and bolstering the success of Italian companies that have put their faith in the Chinese event.

“The Shanghai appointment has merely been postponed, and we will spend the coming months

working towards its relaunch, conscious that together — event and companies alike — we will continue to grow and support Made in Italy furnishing in China and throughout the world,” Luti added.

Salone del Mobile originally was scheduled April 21-26, then postponed to June 16-21 before being canceled completely for 2020.

CAREERS

Herman Miller’s Greg Bylsma Announces Retirement

➔ Greg Bylsma, Herman Miller’s president for North America and global operations, is retiring.



Bylsma

Bylsma has been with the company since 2000. He served as a finance director from 2000 to 2005, corporate controller from 2006 to February 2009, chief financial officer and executive vice president from 2009 to February 2015, and has led the North America contract business since March 2015, adding responsibilities for global operations in 2019.

The company will conduct an internal and external search for his successor and plans to announce it later this year. Bylsma will work through the transition period.

CAREERS

AJ Paron Named Executive Vice President and Design Futurist, SANDOW Design Group

➔ AJ Paron has been appointed as executive vice president and design futurist at SANDOW Design Group.



Paron

Paron is widely respected as a creative thinker, innovative leader and engaging speaker and panelist. An accomplished professional, she has tremendous knowledge and relationships in the design industry. Her experience includes creating and leading a multimillion-dollar, award-winning design/build firm, developing national programs for the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and developing design research programs for the University of Minnesota. As a design professional, she has specialized in procurement innovation, design implementation and collaboration, environmental initiatives/LEED and workplace change management. Paron is an Allied Member of ASID where she recently received an honorary fellowship.

Paron former job was as national sales director at Design Public Group, a technology platform that streamlines the furniture procurement process in design. Prior to that, she held the national A&D director position at Allsteel/Gunlocke.

In her new role, AJ will work collaboratively with B2B partners to develop solutions, launch new products and create brand building opportunities. Internally, Paron will work with leadership across SANDOW’s design brands to grow its ecosystem of media, technology and services with oversight of sales, marketing and experiences for the group’s B2B brands.

“AJ is an incredible asset for the SANDOW Design Group,” said Adam Sandow, CEO of SANDOW. “Her diverse expertise will be key as we introduce new ways to inspire, engage, connect and solve problems for the architecture and design community.”

Paron has been honored with accolades from numerous organizations, including the Interna-

tional Interior Design Association, ASID, National Kitchen and Bath Association, National Association of Remodeling Industry, U.S. Green Building Council and Chrysalis Awards.

“I’m honored and thrilled to join the incredible team at SANDOW,” Paron said. “It’s exciting to work with an organization that is committed to moving the profession and industry forward as SANDOW continues to do.”

MANUFACTURERS

Howe Introduces Brand-New Chicago Showroom

➔ Howe’s new space in theMart, suite 10-110, was designed to express all Moving Design possibilities. The showcase highlights HOWE’s unique functionalities.

The Bauhaus principle of form following function has always driven HOWE toward better, more flexible solutions. HOWE’s new Chicago showroom features how easily designs can blend into different settings while also serving up multiple solutions for how a single space can be used. Products stack, roll, fold and nest and are distinctively adaptable.

Each piece selected for the new showroom comes in handpicked finishes and carefully chosen fabrics. From classics like the Tempest table and the 40/4 chair, to five new colors of the SixE chair inspired by the landscapes of Denmark, the designs embody beauty and simplicity.

MANUFACTURERS

Peter Pepper launches CET Designer Extensions

➔ Peter Pepper Products, the leading contract manufacturer of ancillary products, has launched a CET Designer Extension.

“Our CET Designer Extensions enables designers to easily specify products in 2D and 3D with all the functionality that incorporates the rules, parts, finishes and pricing for space planning and product ordering,” said Kip Pepper, vice president of sales and marketing at Peter Pepper.

Peter Pepper product categories include visual boards, health care essentials, waste and recycling receptacles, tables, carts, display cases, magazine racks, acoustics, partitions and more.

Developed by Configura, CET Designer is used by nearly 17,000 design professionals globally. It helps manufacturers and their dealer designers and specifiers by providing a single software solution for space planning and product ordering. The highly visual software includes a collaboration tool, photorealistic renderings, fly-thru videos, virtual reality and instant pricing.

“We are very excited to launch this complete solution that enables the users to visually find our products and simply drag the files into their space plans for a more streamlined and accurate specification process,” Pepper said.

The Peter Pepper CET Extensions are free to users of CET and can be downloaded via Configura’s Marketplace at www.configura.com.

In addition to Configura, the software platform PROJECT MATRIX has published the CET Extension of products as well. “At Peter Pepper, we are excited to launch these new CET Designer Extensions on all three software platforms to add functionality and support to our specification community,” Pepper said.

MANUFACTURERS

Knoll + Muuto Work from Home Furniture, Lighting and Accessories Launched at knoll.com

➔ Knoll has launched Knoll + Muuto Work from Home furniture, lighting and accessories at knoll.com. Consumers can shop online for work-from-home products that bring the trademark design, comfort and performance of the Knoll and Muuto brands to their doorsteps — shipped free in just one to three days.

Muuto is based in Denmark, working to write new chapters in the long standing heritage of Scandinavian design. Muuto products pair seamlessly with the range of modern Knoll designs.

“We’ve developed the kit you need for the perfect home workspace,” said Benjamin Pardo, Knoll design director. “As we become accustomed to new work styles in the office and at home, designing a modern, comfortable and affordable personalized space for remote work is increasingly important.

“People who have been working from home miss their workplace-specific furniture such as a high-performance desk chair, an adjustable-height desk and accessories, even a comfortable reading chair. Our work-from-home offering responds to the need for good design for today’s work-from-home lifestyle.”

Commenting on the products that ship in one to three days, Pardo added, “With the Knoll + Muuto e-commerce site launch, it is easier than ever to work comfortably from home as well as refresh living and dining spaces with our award-winning Knoll and Muuto designs.”

Knoll + Muuto Work from Home designs include a range of Knoll classic and contemporary designs by David Adjaye, Harry Bertoia, Florence Knoll, Marc Krusin and Eero Saarinen that ship in one to two weeks.

Knoll is also working closely with clients in the commercial, health care and education sectors on programs allowing their employees to purchase Knoll + Muuto work-from-home furniture online.

Knoll + Muuto Work from Home, ready-to-ship products include designs created with a roster of international talent.



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