

olive

APRIL 2025

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD'S MOST IMPORTANT MATERIAL

Indiana Furniture Knows a Thing or Two About Wood





Prioritizing People and Planet
Sustainable and Socially Responsible
Manufactured in America

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JEFES

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Sustainable Design

This Earth Month, we're diving into sustainability—spotlighting how manufacturers and designers are embracing eco-conscious materials, energy-efficient processes, and planet-friendly practices. Discover the innovative ways the contract furniture industry is designing for a greener future.

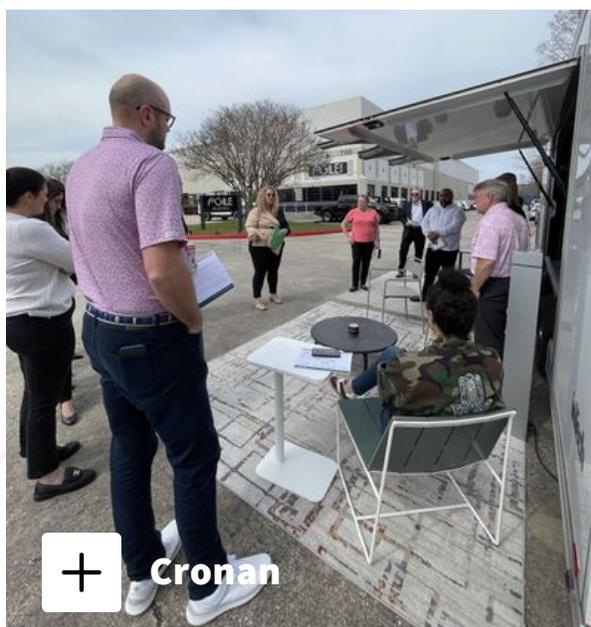
Our cover story features Indiana Furniture's commitment to social responsibility, specifically focusing on the world's most important material: wood.

Read the story on page 16 →



Celebrating the Power of **CONNECTION**

Our industry runs on the relationships we create and maintain, so join us in exploring the ways our rep friends stay connected. Want to be featured? Send your images and info to Abby Koesterman at abby@myresourcelibrary.com!





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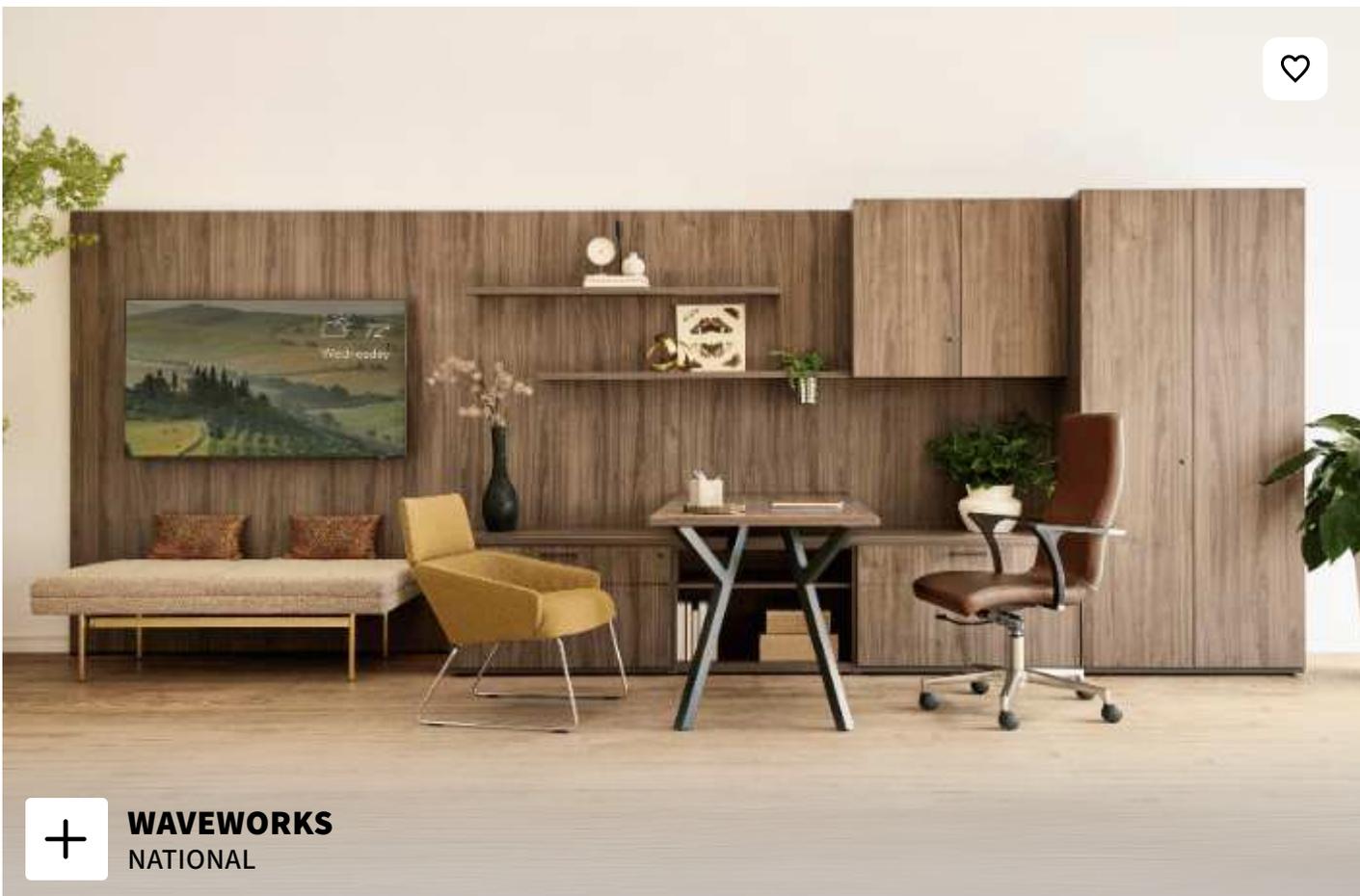




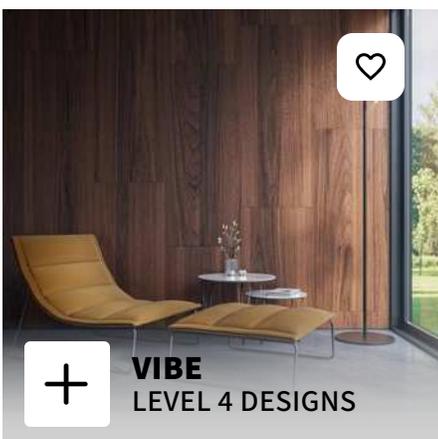
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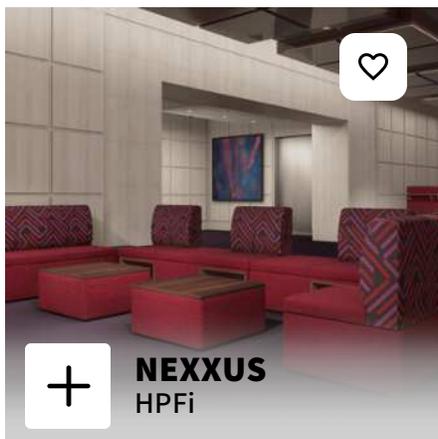
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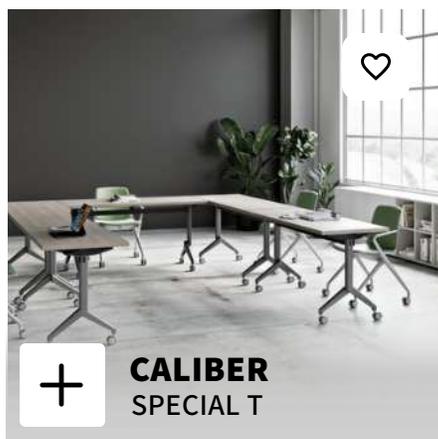
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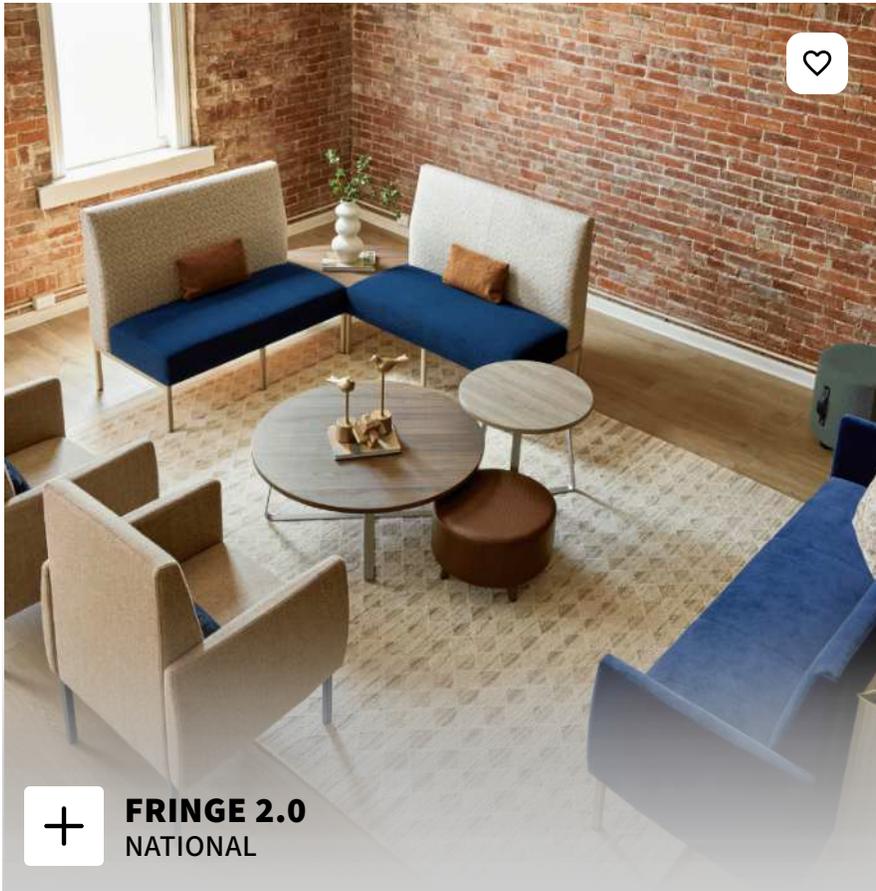
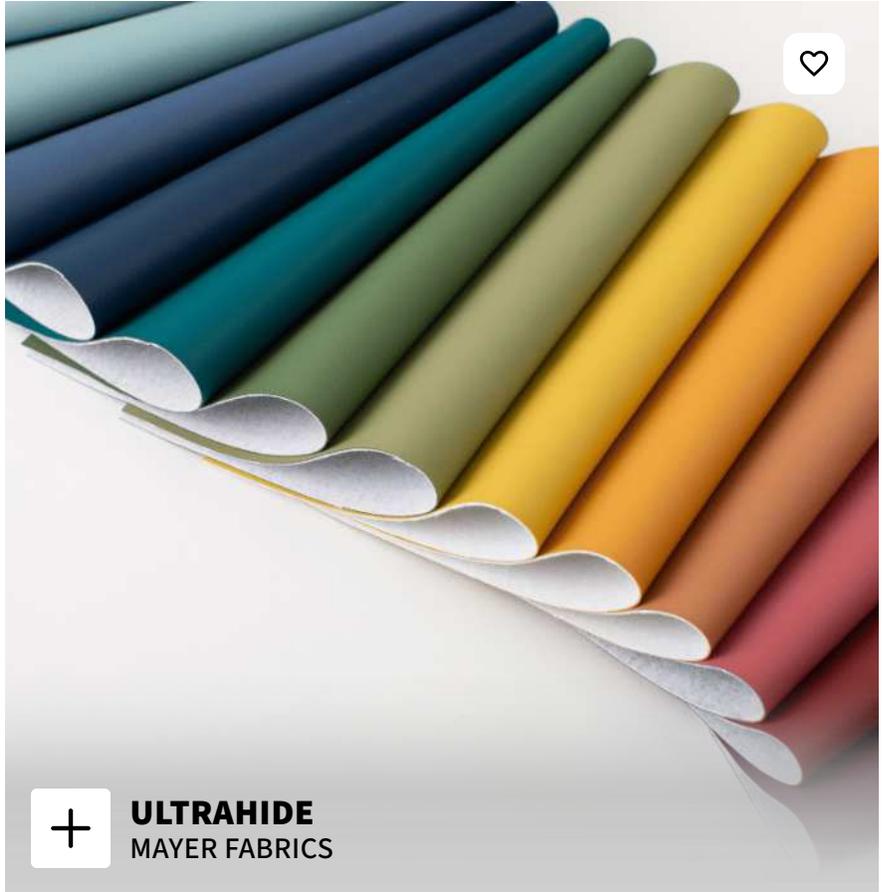
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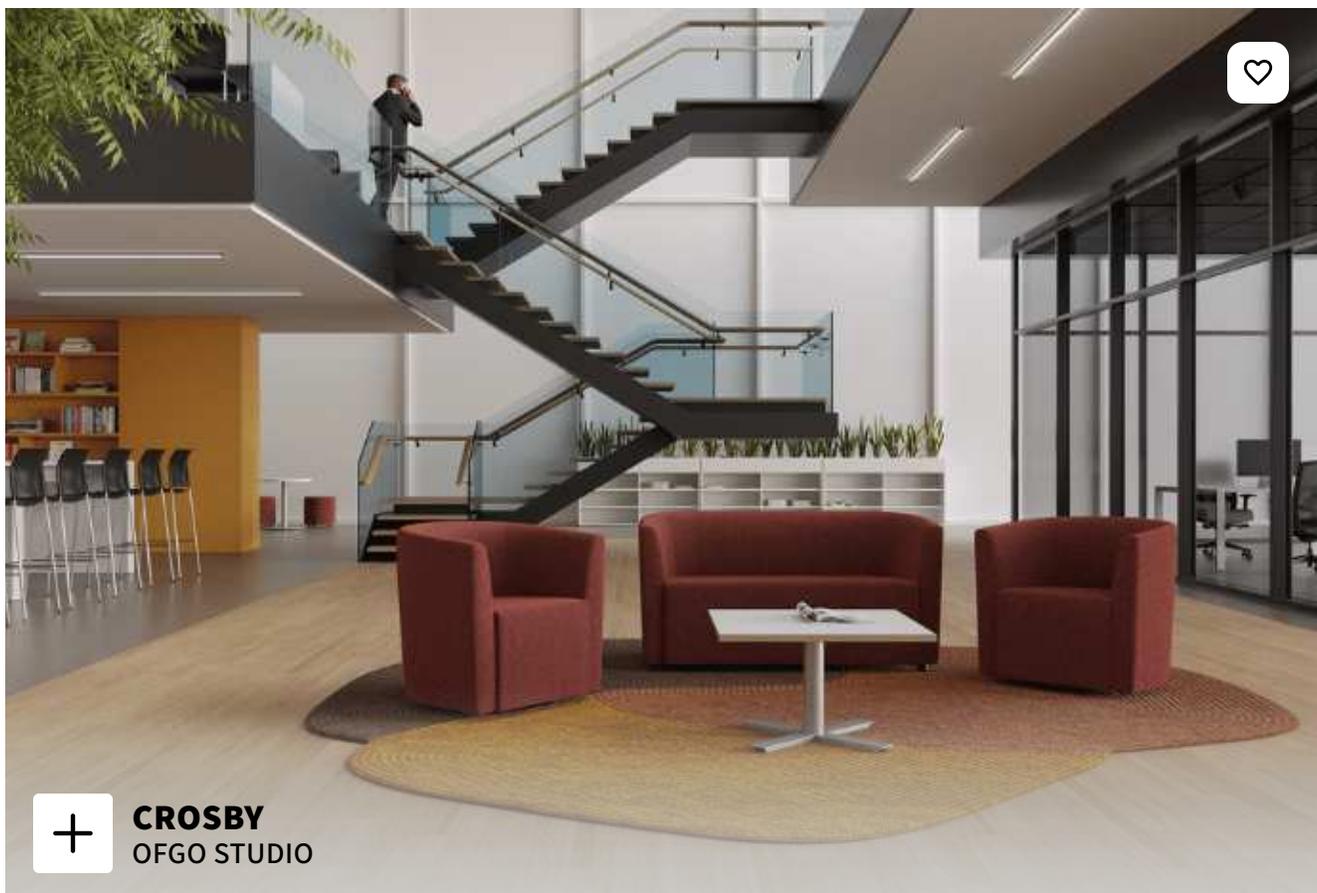


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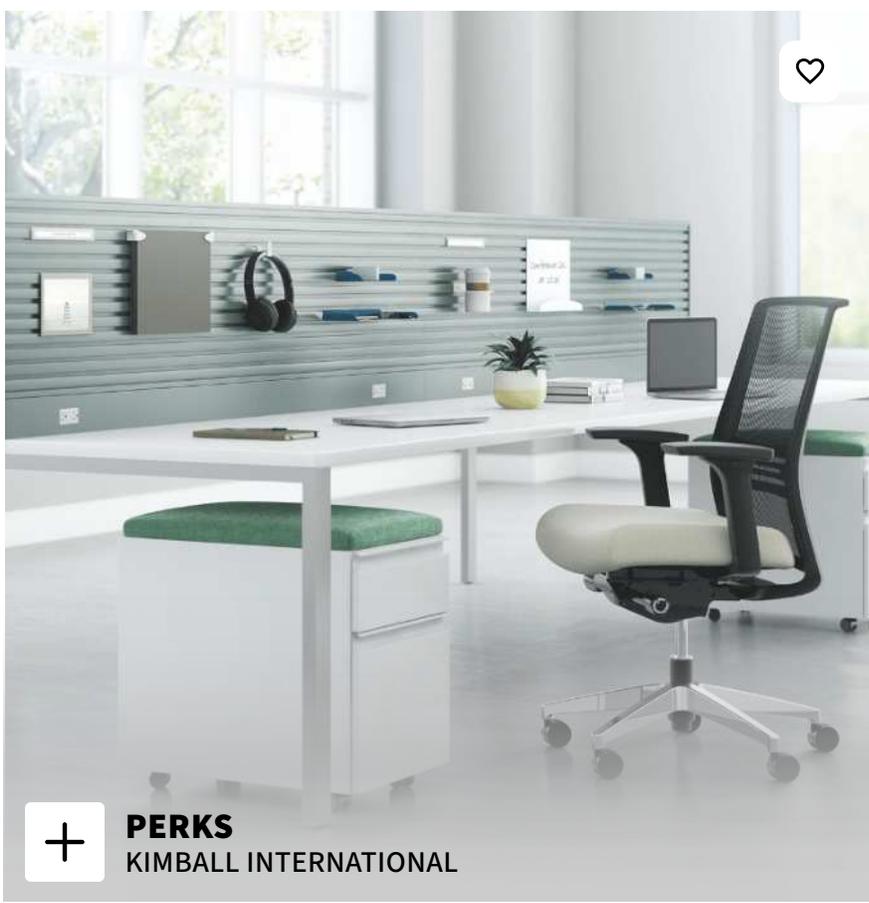
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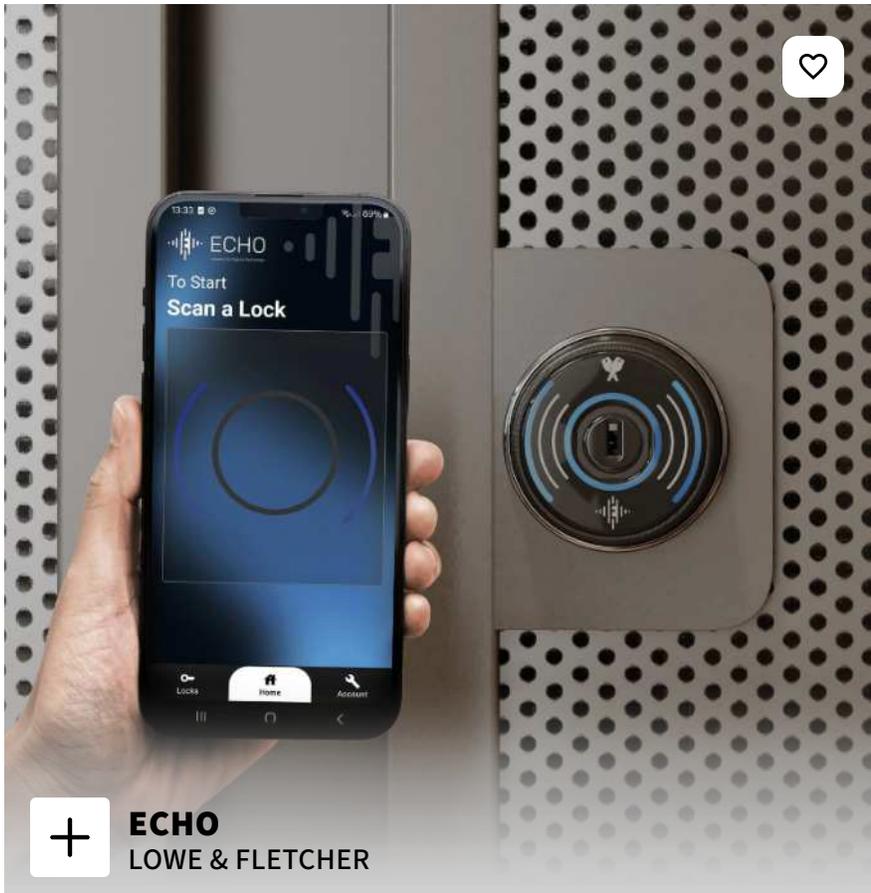
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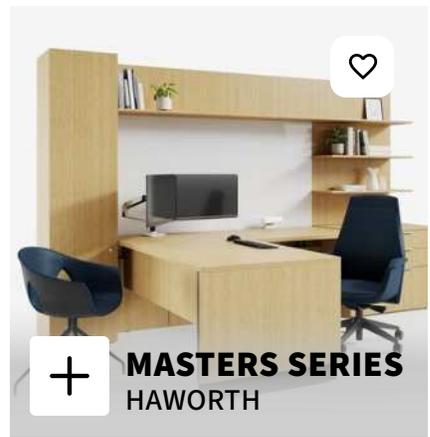
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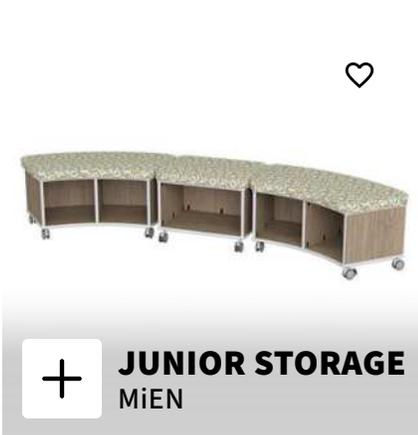
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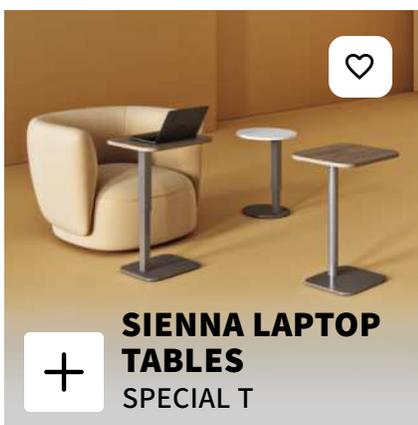
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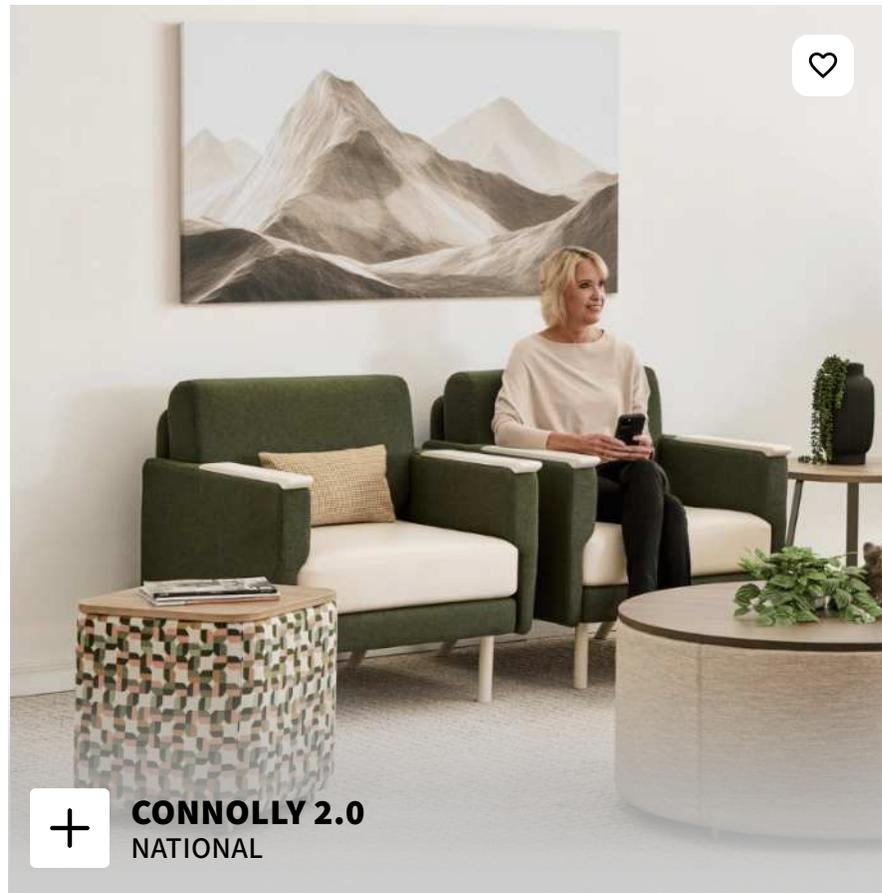
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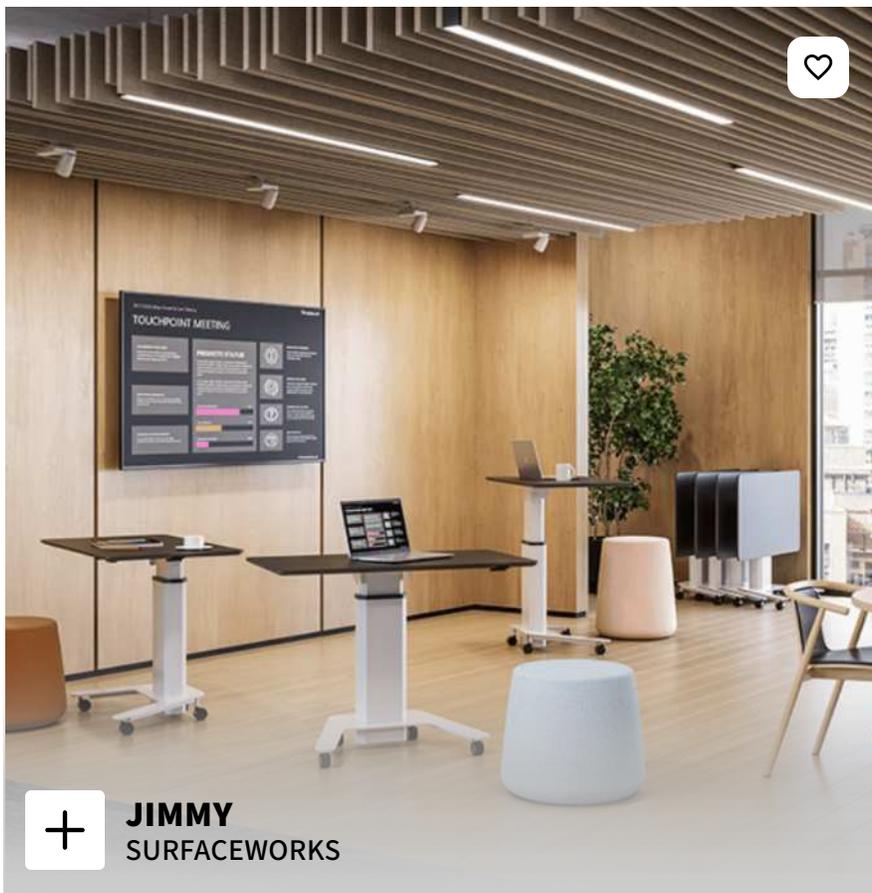
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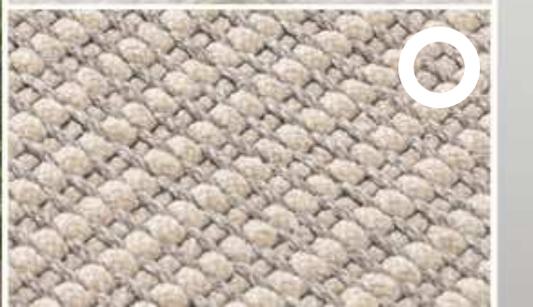
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SURFACEWORKS



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Sustainable Spaces

Inspired by Innovation





WOOD: Understanding the World's Most Important Material.

Indiana Furniture has been making wood furniture longer than just about anyone...and we want to be doing so for a long time to come. That's a large part of why we take a stewardship approach to our resources. Since 1905, we've proven our commitment to a sustainable future by supporting the standards and programs that protect the natural world and human health.

Whether it's local sourcing, domestic manufacturing, reducing contaminants, diverting waste, implementing wellness programs, or supporting community endeavors, social responsibility is a part of every decision we make at Indiana Furniture. We believe that environmental sustainability and business profits need not be mutually exclusive. They can and should exist side-by-side in a beneficial relationship. And for more than a century, we've been showing how it's done.

We live in a world where materials matter. Everything we design, specify, or build leaves an impact. We often think about functionality, cost, and aesthetics, but material selection has a much bigger impact—on our environment, our health, and the spaces we create. Think about the materials used in commercial interiors today—plastics, metals, engineered composites. Many of them aren't designed to last, and even worse, they

aren't designed to break down. That means they pile up in landfills, creating long-term environmental issues. So what if we thought of materials differently? What if we chose materials that work with nature rather than against it? That's where wood comes in. It's one of the most sustainable choices that can be made.

The world is full of excessive waste. It's estimated that in the US, we only have 8 to 25 years of landfill capacity left. And unfortunately, the furniture industry is a significant contributor. Office furniture alone contributes 17 billion pounds of waste to landfills annually. When an office liquidates, 80% of furniture and equipment goes to a landfill. As manufacturers, architects, designers, and specifiers, we play a direct role in what ends up in those landfills. If we choose disposable, short-lifespan materials, we're contributing to this crisis. But if we choose long-lasting, sustainable materials, like wood, we can dramatically reduce waste.

The good news, unlike synthetic materials, natural materials have a completely different relationship with waste. They're renewable, recyclable, and biodegradable. But to truly understand its impact, we need to look at how long materials actually last once they're thrown away. Ever wonder how long it takes different materials to break down? Let's compare a few. Cardboard? Not too bad—about 2 to 12 months. Wood? Takes longer, about 10-15 years, but it naturally decomposes and returns nutrients to the soil. Steel? About 50 years. Aluminum? About 200 years. Plastic? Try over 1,000 years, meaning every plastic chair or desk made today could still be around in the year 3025. That means the plastic components being installed today could outlive ten generations of people. That's a shocking thought.



But here's where wood stands out.

It breaks down naturally, doesn't release harmful chemicals, and even at the end of its life, it can be repurposed or recycled. While metal is recyclable, the process of mining and refining it is incredibly energy intensive. Extracting aluminum or iron for steel requires blasting, drilling, and enormous amounts of fuel—none of which are renewable. Plastic is everywhere in commercial design because it's cheap. But here's the trade-off—it's made from petroleum, a finite resource, and it will never fully decompose. That means every discarded plastic chair or panel is sitting somewhere, indefinitely. Compare that to wood. It's a material that can be regrown, recycled, and naturally broken down. So it's about finding a balance. Metal and plastic can be very practical materials but blending them with wood enhances their relativity and helps to mitigate their shortcomings.



But not all wood is sustainable, which is why we rely on certifications and forestry management practices to ensure ethical harvesting. If we want to use wood responsibly, we must make sure we're not just cutting down trees. That's where sustainable forestry comes in. The idea is simple—for every tree harvested, another is planted. Organizations like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certify wood products that come from responsibly managed forests. That means they're considering biodiversity, forest regeneration, and ethical labor practices. Indiana Furniture chooses managed wood which means we can use this incredible material without damaging ecosystems, without depleting the planet, and we're contributing to a cycle of regeneration with a material that can quite literally grow back.



In wood-rich environments, studies show that occupants record a 10% drop in blood pressure, a 15% reduction in cortisol, which is the hormone responsible for stress, a 13% boost in employee satisfaction, a 15% increase in creativity, and a 15% boost in overall productivity. The sum of these physical and mental benefits lift the entire organization. When people are less stressed and more comfortable, they can focus better and work smarter. Schools with more wood in classrooms see higher student engagement. Hotels with wood-heavy interiors report higher guest satisfaction. In retail, stores designed with natural materials see customers stay longer and spend more. So whether you're designing workplaces, schools, or hospitality spaces, wood isn't just a design choice—it's a business strategy. When you design with wood, you're not only creating beautiful spaces—you're building environments that perform better. Environments that are good for the planet, good for people, and even good for businesses.

We believe in the power of wood. It's not just a material—it's a witness to the moments that matter. From the very desk where the Declaration of Independence was penned to the workspace of inventors, like Thomas Edison, that pushed our world forward, from the tables of authors, like Ernest Hemingway, that expanded our horizons to the studios of artists, like Claude Monet, that added color to our world. When we look at life, it reminds us that wood isn't just a surface—it's a foundation. It supports creativity, captures history, and connects us to something timeless.

Every piece of furniture we create carries that legacy. Whether it's a desk in a corner office, a conference table in a meeting room, or a chair in a café, we know that wood will support the work, the ideas, and the connections that shape lives. That's why we love what we do. We don't just make furniture, we craft the surfaces where life happens. For us, wood is—and always will be—the most important material. And we feel incredibly lucky to work with it every day.



To experience what Indiana Furniture is all about, check out our website at **IndianaFurniture.com**, see products firsthand at one of our fifteen showrooms, search our 100% green portfolio at **ecomedes.com**, or simply give us a call at **800.422.5727**

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Learn more at IndianaFurniture.com.

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INDIANA FURNITURE

HAT COLLECTIVE: Accelerating Sustainability for a Greener Future

At HAT Collective, sustainability isn't just a buzzword—it's a fundamental part of our everyday process. As a leader in ergonomic office solutions, we recognize the profound impact our industry has on the environment, and we are committed to being a part of the change. From material innovation to responsible sourcing and circular design, our mission is clear: to create a more sustainable future without compromising performance, quality, or aesthetics.



A Commitment to Transparency: Declare Label Certification

One of the key milestones in our sustainability journey is the Declare label certification for our award-winning E5 Monitor Arm. Our E5 Monitor Arm is Declared Red List Free. This means we disclosed 100% of our ingredients present at or above 100 ppm (0.01%) in the final product and it does not contain any Red List chemicals. This certification, often referred to as a “nutrition label” for building materials, provides a clear breakdown of a product’s composition, supply chain, and environmental impact. By securing this certification, HAT Collective is reinforcing its dedication to transparency and responsible material sourcing, ensuring that our customers can make informed choices about the products they bring into their workspaces.

The E5 Monitor Arm represents more than just a single achievement—it represents a broader commitment to integrating eco-conscious practices across our entire product line. By prioritizing responsible material selection, eliminating harmful substances, and engineering for longevity, we are setting new benchmarks for environmental responsibility in the contract furniture industry.



A Holistic Approach to Sustainability

Sustainability at HAT Collective is woven into every aspect of our operations—from the way we source materials to how we manufacture, package, and deliver our products. Here's how we are driving change:

1. Responsible Sourcing and Material Innovation

Reevaluating the materials we use is at the core of our sustainability efforts. We collaborate with like-minded suppliers who share our commitment to environmental stewardship, integrating recycled, recyclable, and non-toxic materials wherever possible. By prioritizing responsible sourcing, we reduce waste, conserve resources, and lower our environmental impact.

A testament to our proactive approach is our early elimination of Chromium-6 (Chrome 6) from our products—more than a decade before industry regulations evolved. Chromium-6, a known carcinogen, poses serious health risks, and our decision to remove it reflects our unwavering dedication to both workplace safety and environmental responsibility. True innovation isn't just about designing exceptional products; it's about leading with integrity and responsibility.

2. Circular Product Strategies

Sustainability doesn't end at production—it extends across the entire lifecycle of a product. Each year, according to the EPA, we see almost 12 million tons of of

furniture go into landfill. We are actively developing circular product strategies that promote longevity and adaptability. By designing furniture that can be easily reconfigured as workplace needs evolve, we reduce unnecessary waste and encourage long-term usability.

We also use materials that are easily recyclable, like aluminum. Our E5 Monitor Arm, for example, is over 99% recyclable.

3. Sustainable Manufacturing Practices

Efficiency in manufacturing is a key component of our sustainability vision. We have implemented energy-efficient production processes, optimized material usage, and adopted waste-minimization strategies to reduce our carbon footprint. Every step forward brings us closer to a more sustainable supply chain and manufacturing model.

4. Eco-Friendly Packaging and Logistics

Sustainability extends beyond our products to how they are packaged and delivered. We have taken significant strides in reducing packaging waste by incorporating recyclable and biodegradable materials while optimizing logistics to minimize our environmental impact. These efforts help us reduce excess waste and ensure a more responsible end-to-end product journey.



Leading the Way in the Contract Furniture Industry

The contract furniture industry is at a pivotal moment, with sustainability shaping the future of design and production. HAT Collective is proud to be involved in this movement, demonstrating that sustainability and innovation can go hand in hand. Our customers are increasingly looking for responsible solutions, and we are committed to providing them with products that align with their values while maintaining the high performance and design excellence they expect.

Our journey toward a more sustainable future is ongoing. Through initiatives like Declare label certification, responsible material sourcing, circular design principles, and sustainable manufacturing, we are proving that innovation and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand.



Building a More Sustainable Future -**TOGETHER**

Looking ahead, HAT Collective remains dedicated to accelerating sustainability efforts, but we know that lasting change requires collaboration. We invite our customers, partners, and industry peers to join us in prioritizing sustainability, embracing responsible practices, and shaping a future where great design supports both people and the planet.

At HAT Collective, sustainability isn't just a commitment—it's a core value. And we're just getting started.



HAT
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HUMAN ACTIVE TECHNOLOGY

5 Trends in Circular Design

Exploring innovations driving sustainable practices in the furniture industry

by Haworth, Inc.

Nearly 10 million tons of office furniture end up in landfills in the US every year. This waste impacts carbon emissions, contributing to climate change. As we have seen recently, each year breaks a record for the highest global temperatures. Extreme changes in the weather are making an impact on the built environment. According to the Gensler Design Forecast—the inclusion of sustainable design is no longer an option but an obligation.

Circular Design Principles at Haworth

In the furniture industry, most pieces have a life cycle that begins with the extraction and processing of raw materials and ends in a landfill, perpetuating a linear economy. In 2021, US consumers spent **\$4 billion** more on desks, chairs, and patio furniture than they did in 2019. The problem is that most of those items were not built to last and will eventually end up in a landfill, if they haven't already. But imagine if the furniture industry were to approach product design with an entirely different mindset—one that supports the indefinite use of products and materials through a circular economy.



At Haworth, we aim to design 100% of our new products using these 3 circular design principles by 2025:

Sustainable Materials:

Using sustainable materials means excluding harmful substances and prioritizing sustainable qualities like recyclability.

Product Use Extension:

Extending a product’s useful life through repair and refurbishing is one of the best ways to minimize waste and pollution and to keep products and materials in use.

Responsible Product End of

Life: No matter how well designed, every piece of furniture will eventually reach the end of its useful life. What happens next depends on the durability and recyclability of a piece’s raw materials and how easily those materials can be repurposed for something new.

Trends in Circular Design

To get closer to our goal, we look toward the trends in circular design to help guide us now and in our future projects.

1. Long-Term Impacts

Real estate investors and businesses, themselves, are looking for workspaces and interior products that will last. When people move their homes, they usually don’t plan to move again anytime soon; they also don’t throw out all their possessions and buy new stuff. A switch in workplaces will be approached the same way: Choose a space that can adapt and longer-lasting products, so you don’t have to start from scratch whenever a change is needed.

Each choice surrounding a space's interior elements—from design and specification to use, reuse, and what happens at the end of a product’s useful life—may seem small, but together they add up to be extremely impactful on people and our planet. Today, through initial construction and tenant improvements, interior elements account for over [50% of the lifetime embodied carbon in buildings](#).

2. Smarter Materials

[Designing our products](#) with closed-loop materials as much as possible helps to extend the life of each part. We look for items that can maintain their quality through many cycles of reuse. New opportunities are available in using materials like biodegradable textiles and by-products from plants like bananas, hemp, and mushrooms. We also look for ways to give new life to used materials like post-consumer plastics. Each of our digital knit Fern chair backs are created from a recycled polyester that diverts 17 plastic bottles from the landfill, and the casters on all our office chairs are made from old fishing nets.

3. Extended Life Programs

More and more, companies are assisting consumers with repairs and other ways to extend the use of their products. Programs, such as Zara's clothing donation initiative, are increasingly popular for giving a second life to garments. [Patagonia](#) is known for providing high-quality products with sustainable materials but they also assist customers in repairing or trading in used gear to reduce overall consumption. At Haworth, we work with organizations like [Green Standards](#) to find options for our products when they no longer serve the needs of our clients. By extending the life of any product through repair and reuse, we keep them out of the landfills.

Another option for furnishing a workspace is to work with a company that offers a product-as-a-service model. Essentially, the products are leased and paid for their use over time. In this type of agreement, the service provider owns the products, which—when no longer needed—can be refurbished and used by next customer. This model has been popular for rapidly evolving businesses, such as mobile phone service companies, because it helps businesses commit less up front and adapt their spaces with more flexibility.

4. Carbon Regulations

How a company manages its carbon emissions needs to be part of their standard business operations moving forward. Regulations around reporting carbon emissions and embodied carbon are increasing. Discussions on whole building life cycle assessments are evolving to address carbon in furniture and tenant improvements. So specifiers are focusing on reducing emissions through their product and material choices. Stepping up our game at Haworth, we have now received validation from SBTi for both our [near-term and our net-zero targets](#).

5. Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way the world works in many ways, and it's helping accelerate changes in circular design. AI has been used by fashion house, Shelly Xu Designs, to help cut down on the waste created in garment making by redesigning mockups that generate [less pre-consumer waste](#). Other organizations are using AI to help design their own fabrics, create customized products to eliminate waste, and optimize textile sorting for recycling.



[Two-thirds of people globally](#) are okay with the idea of halving their consumption for the sake of the planet. This significantly impacts decisions made in workplaces. At Haworth, we want to help, with flexibility on our part, to keep adapting to the next best option when designing or decommissioning our products. Our commitment to 100% circular design is aimed at making sustainable space design decisions easier with products that can be trusted.

“ Environmental, social, governance, and carbon neutrality goals are growing in importance in the energy world. The energy sector is looking at what it means to take carbon out of the circular economy with carbon capture and sequestration. ”

Vince Flickinger
Global Energy Leader at Gensler

Learn More about Circular Design

Discover the transformative potential of circular design in the workplace with our recorded webinar, “Insights into a Circular Future.” Join expert panelists as they share valuable insights on how circular design benefits organizations and their people.

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THE HERO'S GUIDE TO
SUSTAINABLE SPECIFICATIONS:

Harnessing Your Design Superpowers

Written by: Amanda Epplin, Well AP

Specifying sustainable furniture is no easy feat. It's a battleground of certifications, material choices, and supply chain twists. One moment you're securing an FSC-certified victory, the next you're deep in the fight against embodied carbon. It's enough to make even the most seasoned designer want to trade their ergonomic chair for a stress ball.

But here's the thing: every hero faces challenges before they step into their power—and designers are no different. With your specifying superpowers, you have unique abilities to cut through the chaos, make informed decisions, and drive real sustainable change. In fact, according to ThinkLab, designers wield 40 times the specification power of the average consumer. Each thoughtful choice you make, from fabrics and finishes to furniture selections, becomes a heroic act that influences manufacturers, inspires clients, and steers the industry toward a greener future.

At its core, sustainability is about designing in a way that doesn't leave a permanent mess for future generations. That means avoiding materials (and chemicals) that will outlive us all—like Styrofoam packaging and plastics that take centuries to degrade. Instead, aim for furniture that:

- ▶ **Incorporates responsibly sourced, bio-based, or recycled materials**
- ▶ **Is built for a long, useful life (and ideally a second life through resale or repair)**
- ▶ **Can be easily recycled or remanufactured instead of heading to a landfill**

And remember, even with superpowers, you don't need to leap tall buildings in a single bound. Great heroes know that small, strategic steps lead to big victories. Enter Kimiko Green's "Just One Thing" approach: a strategy designed to make sustainable specifying feel less overwhelming and more like a series of manageable, heroic actions. The key is to focus on one incremental change at a time. Whether it's selecting sustainable material or choosing a product that's easier to recycle, each small step becomes your own heroic move. Over time, these small shifts will create a ripple effect that drives meaningful, lasting change.



Making It Happen

Ready to be the hero of your own sustainable design story? Let's suit up and get started with a few simple yet effective "Just One Thing" actions:

1. Engage Manufacturers in the Sustainability Conversation

Manufacturers are making progress, but they need to hear from designers to keep pushing forward. The more inquiries they get about carbon footprints, take-back programs, and material transparency, the more motivated they'll be to innovate. Stretch your expertise a few conversation starters:

- ▶ *"Do you have third-party certifications for material health or environmental impact?"*
- ▶ *"What happens to this product at the end of its life?"*
- ▶ *"Do you offer a buy-back or remanufacturing program?"*

2. Seek Out Third-Party Certified Products

Third-party certifications provide trusted verification that a product meets environmental and health standards. Look for certifications like Cradle to Cradle, Declare, BIFMA level, or FSC to



ensure your selections align with sustainability goals. Think of these certifications as your trusted guide against greenwashing—helping you separate true sustainability efforts from clever marketing tactics.

3. Ditch PFAS in Your Textile Specifications

PFAS "forever" chemicals are commonly added to fabrics for stain resistance, but they pose serious environmental and health risks. Think of them as that guest who shows up to the party, overstays their welcome, and keeps popping up long after the fun is over. Many manufacturers now offer PFAS-free textiles—just ask or use your researching talents to filter out PFAS on the textile websites. Replacing even one harmful textile selection with a safer alternative is a meaningful step forward.

4. Specify Recycled Content

Incorporating materials with recycled content reduces demand for virgin resources and helps close the loop on waste. Many manufacturers now showcase recycled content percentages in their product details, making it easier than ever to prioritize sustainable options. It gives old materials a chance to shine!

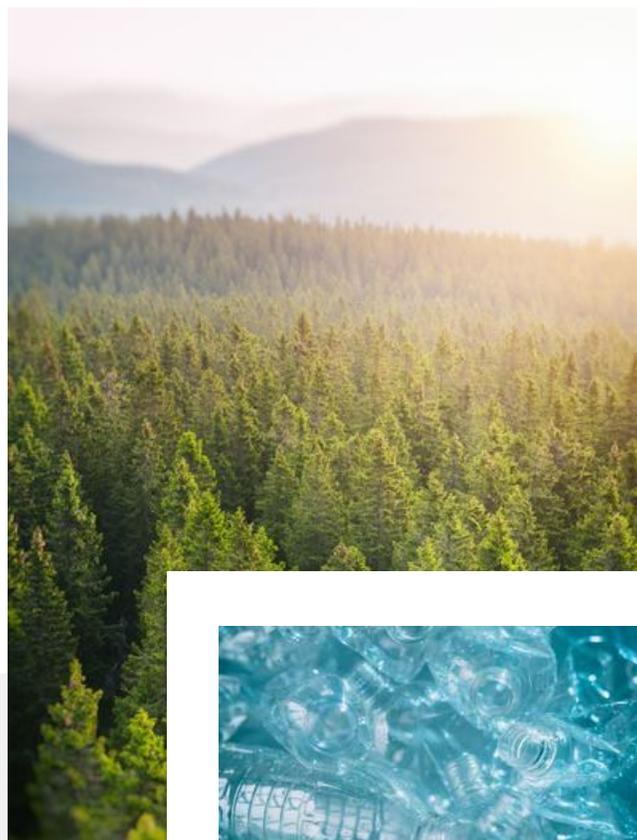
5. Prioritize Circularity Over Disposable Design

Fast furniture is the new fast fashion: cheap, short-lived, and landfill-bound. Instead of specifying disposable pieces, opt for designs built for durability, repair, and reuse. Bonus points if the manufacturer provides a take-back or remanufacturing program.

Small Shifts, Big Impact

Sustainability isn't about being perfect and getting it all right. It's about moving in the right direction. By taking a "Just One Thing" approach, you become a hero for positive change. Each thoughtful decision creates momentum, influences industry practices, and drives real impact—without the overwhelm. The next time you specify that perfect chair, you might just be designing a more sustainable future along with it. Because that's what real heroes do: use their power to shape a better (and greener) world.

To learn about materiality, certifications, and sustainable furniture specifications, download the kimiko green playbooks for a more in-depth look at circularity in furniture.



To learn about materiality, certifications, and sustainable furniture specifications, download the [kimiko green playbooks](#) for a more in-depth look at circularity in furniture.

RISE ABOVE THE REST:

The Ultimate Blend of Design, Comfort & Affordability

Specifying sustainable furniture is no easy feat. It's a battleground of certifications, material choices, and supply chain twists. One moment you're securing an FSC-certified victory, the next you're deep in the fight against embodied carbon. It's enough to make even the most seasoned designer want to trade their ergonomic chair for a stress ball.



Elevated Design Without the Premium Price

Great design should be accessible to everyone and Rise exemplifies this philosophy. With its sleek, contemporary aesthetic, this chair enhances any workspace, whether it's a corporate office, a co-working space or a home workstation. The chair's clean lines, minimalist profile and refined detailing lend it a modern sophistication that blends seamlessly into a variety of office environments.

Despite its high-end design, Rise is priced competitively, making it an ideal choice for businesses looking to furnish their offices with stylish yet functional seating without exceeding their budget. Traditionally, chairs with comparable design elements and ergonomic features carry a significantly higher price tag. Via Seating, however, has engineered Rise to deliver the same high-end appeal without the inflated cost.



Uncompromising Comfort & Ergonomics

A chair that looks good is only part of the equation. True excellence comes from a chair that delivers superior comfort and ergonomic support and Rise does just that. With its contoured seat and back, it encourages proper posture and reduces strain, ensuring long-term user comfort.

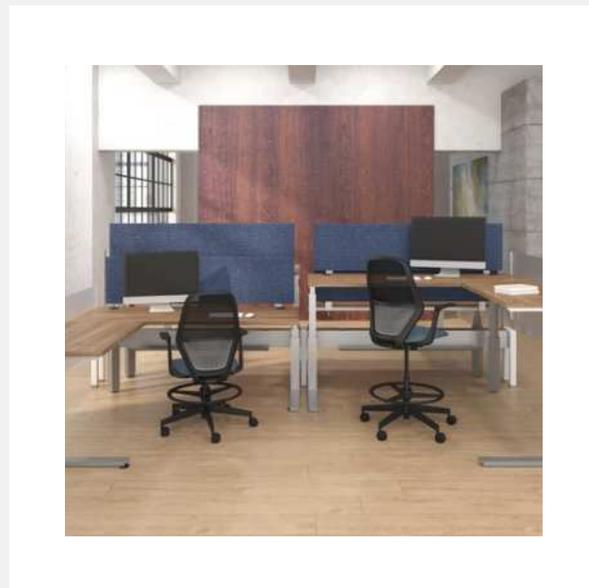
At the heart of Rise's ergonomic excellence is its thoughtfully designed seat, which provides just the right amount of cushioning to keep users comfortable throughout the day. Unlike many budget-friendly chairs that sacrifice ergonomic integrity, Rise prioritizes user well-being with an array of adjustable features designed to cater to individual needs.

Adjustable Armrests – The chair's optional height-adjustable armrests help support proper posture and relieve shoulder strain.

Synchro Tilt Mechanism – This feature allows users to recline naturally, promoting movement and reducing static sitting pressure.

Seat Depth Adjustment – For individuals of different heights, this adjustment ensures proper thigh support, enhancing circulation and overall comfort.

Telescoping Gas Lift & Stool Option – One of the standout features of Rise is its telescoping gas lift option, allowing users to customize the seat height for optimal positioning when paired with a sit-to-stand desks. The two stool version heights provides even greater versatility, making it perfect for drafting tables, standing desks and higher work surfaces.



Versatility at Its Core

One of Rise's most compelling qualities is its ability to adapt to different work environments. Whether users need a task chair for desk work, a stool for elevated workspaces or a conference chair for meeting rooms, Rise seamlessly fits the bill.

Standard Task Chair – Ideal for everyday office use, providing ergonomic support for prolonged sitting.

Stool Option – Perfect for labs, healthcare environments or offices with sit-to-stand desks, offering a higher seat position while maintaining ergonomic support.

Conference Seating – With its polished aesthetics and superior comfort, Rise also serves as an excellent choice for meeting rooms where both style and function matter.

Its adaptability makes it a go-to option for a variety of workspaces, ensuring that businesses don't have to invest in multiple seating solutions for different areas.





Built to Last with Premium Quality Materials

Affordability doesn't mean a compromise on durability and Rise proves that by being constructed from premium materials built to withstand the demands of daily use. The chair features high-quality foam cushioning that maintains its shape over time, ensuring long-lasting comfort and support.

Additionally, the chair's robust frame and sturdy base provide exceptional stability while maintaining a lightweight profile. The result is a chair that is easy to move and adjust yet built to last for years. With Via Seating's reputation for quality craftsmanship, businesses can rest assured that Rise is a long-term investment in both comfort and design.

Sustainability Meets Smart Design

Beyond its aesthetic and ergonomic strengths, Rise is also a responsible choice for environmentally conscious organizations. Via Seating is dedicated to sustainable manufacturing, using eco-friendly materials and processes to minimize environmental impact.

CLEAN AIR Certified – Rise meets rigorous chemical emissions standards, ensuring healthier indoor air quality.

Recyclable Components – Many of the chair's parts are recyclable, reducing waste and contributing to a more sustainable product lifecycle.

Efficient Manufacturing – Via Seating's commitment to sustainability extends to its lean production methods, reducing excess material use and energy consumption.

A Cost-Effective Seating Solution for Every Business

With office furniture costs rising, finding high-quality seating at an affordable price can be challenging. Rise offers an exceptional balance between cost-efficiency and premium features, making it an attractive option for businesses of all sizes. Whether outfitting an entire office or selecting chairs for a small workspace, Rise delivers top-tier performance at a fraction of the cost of other high-end ergonomic chairs.

In contrast to chairs that compromise on comfort, adjustability or durability at lower price points, Rise remains a full-featured solution that doesn't cut corners. From premium materials to customizable configurations, it rivals more expensive seating options while maintaining a budget-friendly cost.



FINAL THOUGHTS: WHY CHOOSE RISE?

For businesses seeking a modern, ergonomic and adaptable seating solution at a competitive price, Rise stands out as a premier choice. Its high-end design, exceptional comfort and versatile features make it an ideal fit for a variety of work environments. Whether used as a task chair, stool or conference chair, Rise delivers an unparalleled experience that exceeds expectations without exceeding budgets.

With its telescoping gas lift, multiple ergonomic adjustments and sleek aesthetic, Rise is proof that affordability does not mean sacrificing quality. It embodies Via Seating's commitment to innovation, comfort and sustainability, making it an excellent investment for any workspace.

Discover how Rise can elevate your office today—because every business deserves seating that looks great, feels great and lasts.

REVEAL



PETER PEPPER PRODUCTS



From Classroom to Showroom: **The IDEC Promenade Experience**

Powered by My Resource Library

This St. Patrick's Day, Chicago's iconic Merchandise Mart (aka THE MART) became a vibrant intersection of education and industry, thanks to a very smart initiative led by My Resource Library.

As the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) prepared for its Annual Conference, MRL saw an opportunity to create something bigger – a true bridge between academia and the commercial design world. Within days, MRL launched the IDEC Promenade, securing participation from nine manufacturers inside THE MART and raising over \$45,000 in sponsorships that directly benefited IDEC.

In recognition of this effort, IDEC named MRL the Premier Sponsor of the 2024 Annual Meeting, awarded them the 2025 IDEC Service Award, and selected Delve Magazine as its official publication of choice.



The Promenade is a perfect example of how MRL connects every corner of the commercial design industry. They don't just support our industry — they're actively shaping its future.

For many students and educators, this dynamic, guided experience through top-tier manufacturer showrooms was their first exposure to the real-world environments shaping today's commercial interiors. Each stop wasn't just a product showcase — it was a conversation starter. Students asked thoughtful questions. Educators explored practical applications. Manufacturers engaged with the voices of tomorrow.

“This experience reminded me why industry exposure is so essential for our students,” shared one educator. “It sparked ideas I’m bringing straight back to the classroom.”

More than a scheduled stop on the conference agenda, the IDEC Promenade was a memorable, hands-on experience that sparked inspiration, built bridges, and reaffirmed the importance of keeping design education closely tied to the world it's preparing students to enter.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR ALL OF YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

IDEC: Stephanie Sickler, Bryan D. Orthel, Ramona Hopkins, Alex Morales, and Alexander Lula

THE MART: Byron Morton and Thomas Patrick DiGiorgi

MANUFACTURERS: DARRAN, ERG International, Ghent, Global Furniture Group, Groupe Lacasse, Haworth, Indiana Furniture, Shaw Contract, Via Seating

VOLUNTEERS: Audrey Binford, Barbara Krech, Brandi Hoffman, Ian Hicks, Jeff Carlson, Jim Palmitier, Laura Carlson, Steve Sickler, and Zack Lamb





DIGITAL MARKETING *for furniture needs*



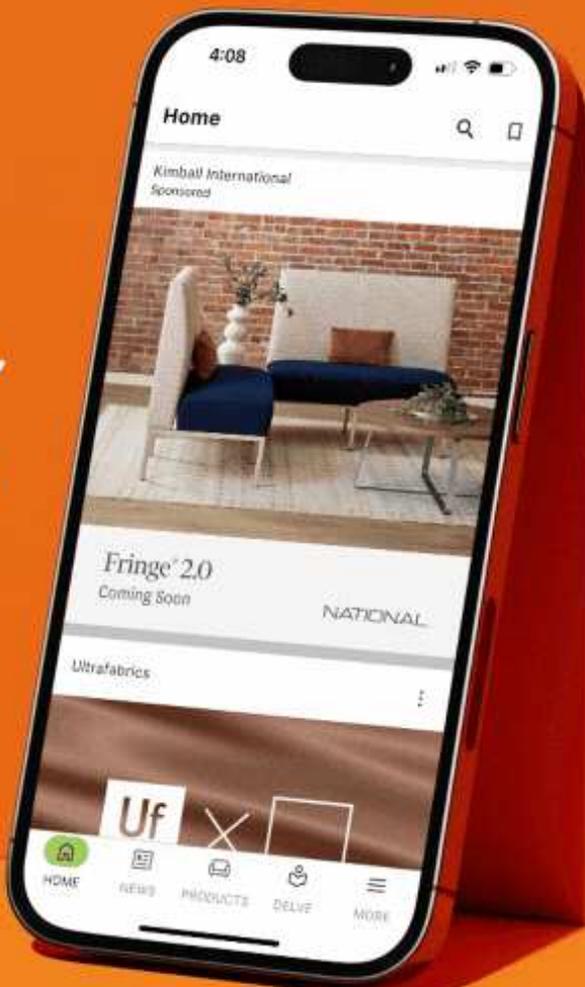
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SUSTAINABILITY

Shaping the way we approach design

Sustainability isn't just a buzzword; it's a movement that has evolved significantly over the years, shaping the way we approach interior and commercial design. Let's explore how sustainability has always been a part of design and how it has transformed over time.

Sustainability in design can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where resourcefulness and respect for nature were integral to daily life. Early examples include the use of local materials and passive design strategies to create comfortable living spaces. These practices were born out of necessity and a deep understanding of the environment.

Fast forward to the Industrial Revolution, and we see a shift. The rapid advancement in technology and mass production led to significant environmental degradation. However, even during this period, there were voices advocating for more sustainable practices. The concept of sustainability began to take shape, albeit slowly.

Frank Lloyd Wright was a visionary architect who seamlessly integrated sustainability into his designs long before it became a mainstream concern. His philosophy of organic architecture emphasized harmony between human habitation and the natural world, a concept that is inherently sustainable. One of the most exemplary projects showcasing this approach is Taliesin West, Wright's winter home and architectural school in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Taliesin West is a prime example of Wright's commitment to sustainability and his innovative use of natural materials and passive design strategies. Built in the 1930s, this desert masterpiece was constructed using local materials such as desert rocks and sand, which helped the buildings blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. Wright's use of these materials not only minimized the environmental impact but also created a structure that was in harmony with its environment.

One of the key sustainable features of Taliesin West is its orientation and design, which take full advantage of the natural light and ventilation. Wright designed the buildings to be low and horizontal, with large windows that allow for ample natural light while providing stunning views of the desert landscape. This design reduces the need for artificial lighting and heating, making the buildings more energy efficient.

Wright also incorporated innovative cooling techniques to combat the harsh desert climate. The use of deep overhangs and shaded terraces helps to keep the interiors cool, while the thick walls made from local stone provide excellent insulation. These passive cooling strategies are a testament to Wright's forward-thinking approach to sustainable design.

In recent years, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation has continued to enhance the sustainability of Taliesin West. The installation of a solar field in 2012 now provides 50% of the campus's energy needs, significantly reducing its carbon footprint. Additionally, the use of LED lighting throughout the site has further improved energy efficiency while preserving the historic value of the buildings.

Wright's philosophy of organic architecture and his innovative designs at Taliesin West demonstrate that sustainability is not just a modern trend but a timeless principle that can be integrated into architecture in meaningful and lasting ways. His work continues to inspire architects and designers to create spaces that are not only beautiful but also environmentally responsible.



The modern sustainability movement gained momentum in the 1970s, driven by growing environmental awareness and the energy crisis. Designers and architects started to explore ways to reduce the environmental impact of buildings and interiors. This era saw the birth of green architecture and the introduction of energy-efficient technologies.

One of the pivotal moments in sustainable design was the establishment of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification in 1998. LEED provided a standardized framework for evaluating the environmental performance of buildings, pushing the industry towards more sustainable practices.

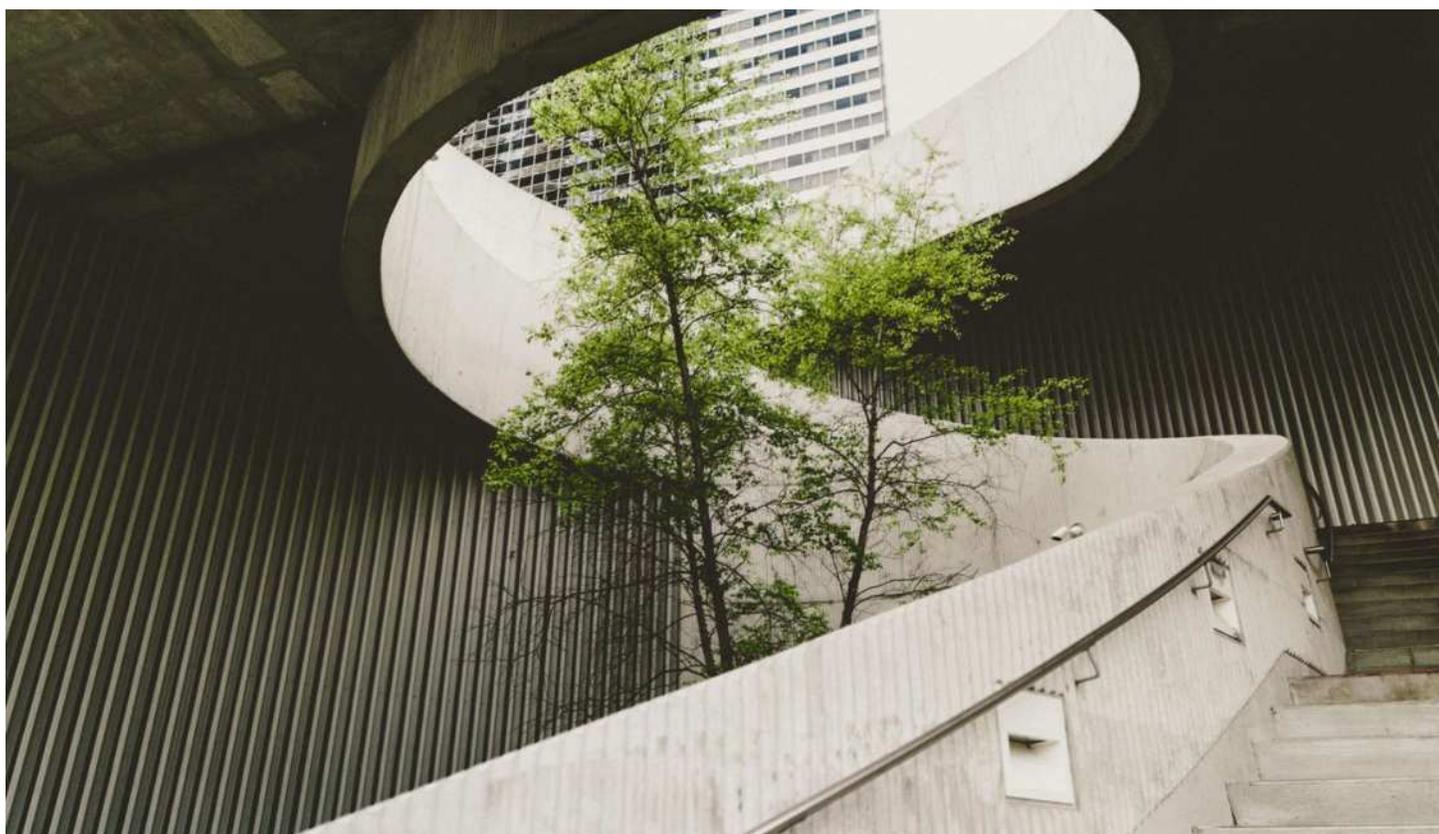
Sustainable design solutions are transforming the commercial real estate landscape, enabling brokers to upgrade Class B and C office spaces into Class A offices that meet the demands of the future. Here's how these solutions are making a significant impact:

One of the primary benefits of sustainable design is the reduction in energy consumption. By incorporating energy-efficient lighting, HVAC systems, and insulation, brokers can significantly lower operational costs. For example, replacing outdated fluorescent lighting with LED bulbs and installing motion-sensor lighting in common areas can reduce energy usage and costs. These savings make the property more attractive to potential tenants who are increasingly looking for cost-effective and environmentally friendly spaces.

Sustainable buildings often command higher market values and rental rates. Properties with green certifications such as LEED are seen as premium spaces, attracting eco-conscious companies. These certifications not only enhance the building's reputation but also ensure compliance with regulatory standards, making the property more competitive in the market. Brokers can leverage these certifications to market the upgraded office spaces as Class A, appealing to tenants who prioritize sustainability.

Sustainable design solutions focus on creating healthier indoor environments. Incorporating natural elements like large windows for natural light, interior plant walls, and sustainable flooring materials can improve air quality and employee well-being. These features contribute to a more productive and pleasant workspace, which is a key selling point for Class A office spaces. Companies are increasingly aware of the importance of employee wellness, and sustainable design can help brokers meet this demand.

Utilizing reclaimed and eco-friendly materials in renovations can significantly reduce the environmental impact of the project. For instance, using reclaimed wood for furniture and wall treatments, recycled rubber and bamboo for flooring, and eco-friendly office furniture can create a modern and stylish space that aligns with sustainability goals. These materials not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility, making the office space more desirable.



The integration of smart building technologies is another way sustainable design solutions are upgrading office spaces. These technologies include automated energy management systems, smart thermostats, and advanced building controls that optimize energy usage and improve efficiency. Smart buildings are seen as the future of commercial real estate, offering tenants greater control over their environment and reducing operational costs. Brokers can highlight these features to position the office spaces as cutting-edge Class A properties.

As the demand for green buildings continues to rise, properties that incorporate sustainable practices will remain competitive and retain their value. Brokers can market these upgraded spaces as forward-thinking investments that align with the evolving priorities of tenants and investors. Sustainable design solutions are key to converting Class B and C office spaces into Class A offices of the future. By focusing on energy efficiency, market value, indoor environment, reclaimed materials, smart technologies, ESG compliance, and long-term investment, brokers can create attractive, competitive, and environmentally responsible spaces that meet the demands of modern tenants.



As we look to the future, sustainability in design will continue to evolve. The focus is shifting towards holistic approaches that consider the entire lifecycle of a building or interior space. Designers are increasingly integrating renewable energy systems, sustainable materials, and innovative technologies to create spaces that are not only beautiful but also environmentally responsible.

In conclusion, sustainability in design has come a long way from its humble beginnings. Today, it's a driving force in the industry, inspiring designers to create spaces that are both functional and eco-friendly. By learning from pioneering projects and embracing new technologies, we can continue to push the boundaries of sustainable design and make a positive impact on our planet.



Laura Carlson

STRATEGIC EXPLORATION:

Information Literacy for Sustainable Materials Sourcing in Design Education

By Carla Galvanoni, Leah Scolere, and Laura Cole, Colorado State University

To source sustainable materials, interior designers must grasp complex and interrelated information at the nexus of the three pillars of sustainability: people, planet, and profit. However, we live in a dizzying informational environment of intricate, sometimes conflicting information. As interior design educators, we are working to address these challenges to prepare our students for positive-impact professional practice.

Information Challenge

For students new to the industry, sustainable material sourcing is a process full of information overload. As students learn about material performance and across diverse applications, they are increasingly required to address human and environmental health.

This process requires adeptness in interacting with an ever-growing ecosystem of digital databases. Resources like My Resource Library, Material Bank, and Material ConneXion provide aggregated databases for searching and sourcing materials. Gensler's new tool helps designers search by specific sustainability standards [1]. Together, these innovative tools facilitate the identification, research, and verification of material information, fostering informed decision-making for sustainable design. However, these informational environments can present a materials maze for novice specifiers to navigate.

Systems Thinking Approach

Our faculty employs a systems-thinking approach that helps students view sustainable sourcing as a holistic pursuit working across diverse platforms. Information literacy is the foundation of our approach [2]. We emphasize ‘searching as strategic exploration’ by building in learning opportunities for students to iteratively compare various digital material sources and assess information types. This empowers students to critically analyze selection and sourcing of materials for their projects. As a part of this strategic exploration, we integrate frameworks such as the Common Materials Framework [3] to help students align with industry-wide initiatives focused on developing shared language for product sustainability.

Our commitment extends beyond simply selecting FSC-certified wood flooring or verifying a Declare label. It involves evaluating raw materials, considering renewable resources, assessing transportation impacts, analyzing the life cycle of materials, considering health impacts, and exploring regeneration options. By assessing materials using these criteria, students develop a deeper understanding of sustainability, which encompasses ecosystem health, social equity, climate stability, and human well-being.



A Physical-Virtual Continuum

Our materials education is enhanced by a spectrum of digital to physical environments:

1. Material Library in a LEED Gold Building: We teach in a certified green building that houses a comprehensive design library staffed by design students and replenished regularly by industry partners.

2. Digital Platforms: Digital sourcing platforms are incorporated into our curricula, and students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate these tools as they transition into the workforce.

3. Innovative Lesson Planning: Our faculty is composed of educators and practitioners who help students weave together theory and practice. Lab assignments are designed to strategically explore and report on social health & equity, circular economy principles, climate health, and the human health impacts of material sourcing.

This continuum of virtual to physical infrastructure positions our faculty to support student material education in a rapidly evolving media landscape. We hope students leave our program with the intellectual tools to continually adapt, learn, and innovate.

[1] Gensler (2025). Gensler Product Sustainability (GPS) Standards™ v2.0 <https://www.gensler.com/gensler-product-sustainability-standards>

[2] Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (2015, February 9). Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). <https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>

[3] Mindful Materials (n.d.) Common Materials Framework. <https://www.mindfulmaterials.com/cmfr-reference-guide>

FEATURED PRO DEALER

MRL Pro Dealer

LERDAHL | INSPIRED WORKPLACE INTERIORS

Madison, WI | Milwaukee, WI | Wausau, WI | Baraboo, WI | Dubuque, IA

PRO DEALER SINCE 2024

LERDAHL | Inspired Workplace Interiors is a commercial interior construction, design and furnishings company proudly serving corporate, healthcare, education and manufacturing clients across Wisconsin, Eastern Iowa and Northern Illinois. We work with clients in over 30 different states and are a locally women owned and operated business in Madison, Milwaukee, Wausau | Stevens Point, Wisconsin and Dubuque, Iowa.

What drove or influenced your decision to go Pro?

The main selling point for Lerdahl was the Search functions as it provides new designers a great way to learn product in a manageable, efficient way. Being able to access rep contacts and get information that is current is important. We like that the manufacturers are the ones updating the information, versus managing it ourselves internally.

How do your team members use MRL?

- ▶ Sales and design use it in the same way: as a resource for product knowledge and offerings. MRL makes it efficient since manufacturers update the information and it saves us time as they do not need to go to many websites. It also supports our sales team enabling them to focus on our core products - keeping everyone on the same page.
- ▶ Accessing contracts, discounting terms and rep information is easy as Lerdahl utilizes the Internal Information tabs in each of their manufacturer binders.

PROFILE CONTRIBUTORS

Hannah Berckman
Marketing and Events Associate

- ▶ Designers like that it is consistent across all vendors and it allows you to access information in a standardized way.
- ▶ Client Services utilizes MRL to look up warranty information as it's easy to find and makes it convenient to respond to clients faster.



What key features of MRL Pro Dealer do you find the most beneficial to your daily activities?

We have our Custom Library tiered by vertical market. We decided to do that so that the designers could quickly access and search specific manufacturers if there was a market they were working in. For us, it was more beneficial than tiering by the go-to vendors. This makes it clear to our team as to which vendors have specific vertical market products. As complex projects are coming our way, this helps our team find the right solutions quickly and easily and supports our designers who work in multiple vertical markets allowing them to pivot more seamlessly to understand where to look for product.

A great example comes from one of our designers who was assigned a specific market project. She was able to see contracts and vendors associated with the market, saving her time by not having to ask around for recommended products or do multiple website searches. This also helped educate her on the options for the client and served as a reminder of all of her options to find the best solution.

The Full Product Library as been valuable as we have found some new products we did not have good access to, mostly healthcare.

Using the Enhanced Search Features helps us find things more quickly versus looking at many different websites.

Scheduling new hire and refresh trainings are easy and allows us to train new users on how we utilize MRL.



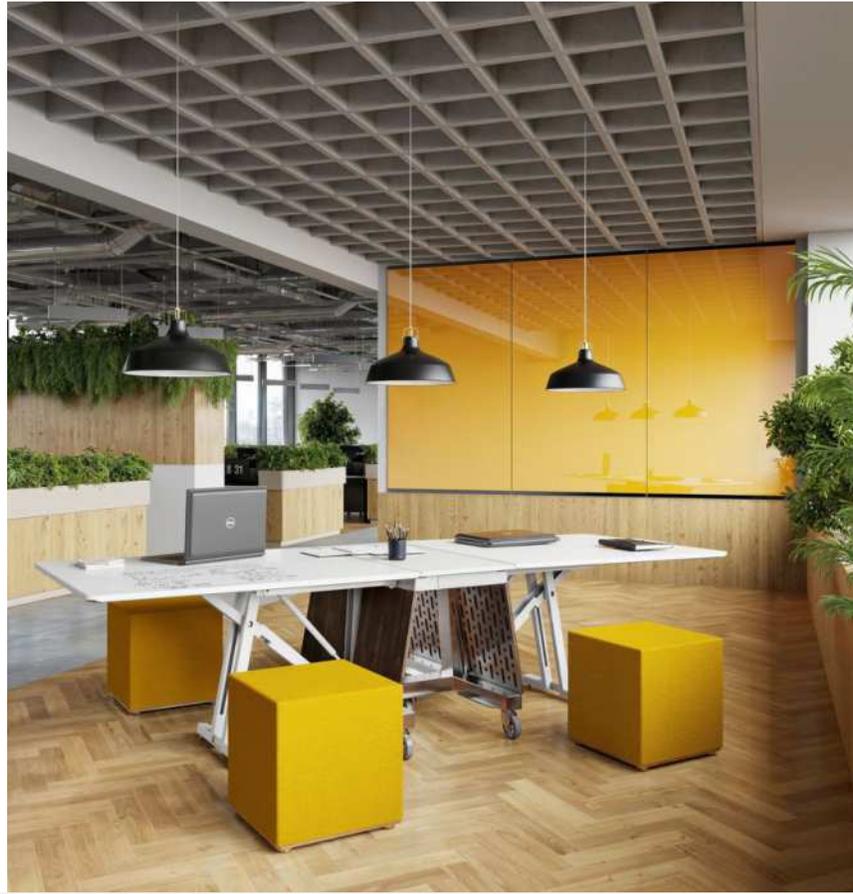
"I use MRL weekly to check products and ensure clients can continue using their preferred lines if they move to LERDAHL. The ease of use is phenomenal – it gives me instant access to contracts and updated vendor rep information, allowing me to quickly provide accurate support to our clients. Plus, it's also convenient that some vendors have links to their websites making it easy to access their own configuration tool. This is incredibly impressive, making my job easier and more efficient."

Pamela Gjersvig
Project Consultant, Central Wisconsin



A Legacy of Connection and Craft

Exploring Ghent's Path of Innovation and Purpose-Driven Design



Can you tell us a bit about the history of your company? How did it all begin, and what has the journey been like?

In December 1976, George and Mary Alice Leasure founded Ghent, a producer of visual communication products including chalkboards, whiteboards, and bulletin boards. Ghent was one of the first brands on the market to manufacture melamine dry erase boards, becoming one of the leaders in collaboration tools.

In 1986, Ghent acquired The Waddell Company in Greenfield, Ohio. The business was acquired from the Waddell family, who founded the business in 1889, and operated it until Ghent's acquisition in 1986. Waddell brought diversification and growth with its line of display and trophy cases. A strong history of craftsmanship opened new doors and brought new capabilities to the growing business.

In 2006, VividBoard was acquired. This acquisition expanded capabilities into custom visual communications for the healthcare and retail markets. In 2022 after more than four decades operating three independent brands, Waddell and VividBoard were merged under the flagship Ghent label.

Today, our core customers are Contract Furniture, A&D, Educational, Office, and Industrial markets. People have always been the focus of Ghent. From the beginning and still today, every business decision is made with our employees' and customers' best interests in mind. As we approach the end of our first half-century, we are looking forward to pursuing the next chapters of our story while inspiring communication, collaboration and learning.

How does sustainability influence your design process?

One of our core values as an organization is “Preserve the Environment”. Our commitment to that value means that we think about sustainability in all aspects of the process, from ideation and material sourcing through production. We maintain that our products are not only safe for the environment but also ensure the safety of our employees as well. We consider all of this when we select materials; they are the driving force behind our bio-based paints for our glassboards. It is not only better for the environment by reducing our CO2 emissions, but it also protects the health and safety of our workers in our facility by eliminating any unnecessary hazards.

We assess our suppliers by having them fill out our Supplier Code of Conduct which requires them to act with responsibility, integrity, honesty, and transparency. We also seek out independent certifications for our products to provide credibility to our practices. One certification we focus on specifically is BIFMA LEVEL® 2. Our Harmony glassboard was the first glassboard on the market to be awarded this certification, followed by five of our remaining glassboards.

During the design process, Ghent utilizes a standard Design for Environment (DFE) checklist, that ensures we consider all sustainability in all steps of the process, including material sourcing, energy impact, and end of life recycling concerns. Our team is encouraged to never settle, always asking the question “how can we go from good to great?”.



What is your approach to ensuring the longevity of the furniture you create? How does your company consider product lifecycle from design to end-of-life?

In our industry, longevity is key to a successful product. Our standard is to offer the best warranties in the business, with many of our products carrying 50-year and limited lifetime warranties. “We spend a lot of time anticipating all the needs and expectations for use of a product to make sure the end user has a great and hassle-free experience,” says Scott Bowers, Ghent’s Vice President of Product.

To understand all aspects of our products, our engineering department has a standard series of tests they administer, including materials testing, durability, final packaging of products, and end of life disassembly.

By fostering the right people, production can hold high standards for all departments. Ghent’s production team keeps quality in mind in every step. Production team members are told never to settle for “good enough”. We empower every employee to drive and embrace change, so we are always finding new ways to improve our processes and quality.

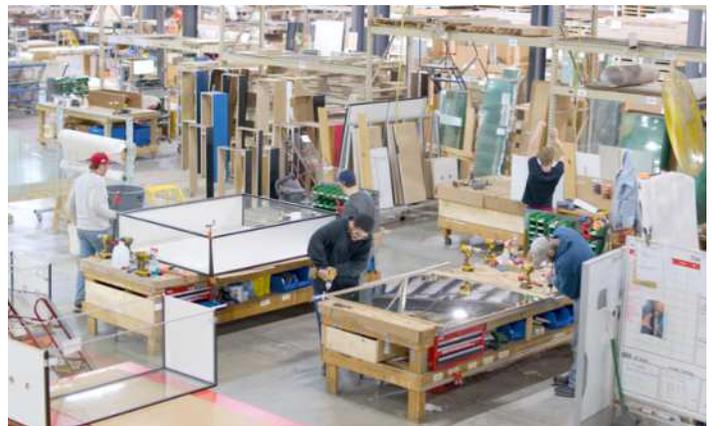
What is one of your proudest accomplishments or projects you've worked on, and why?

As a privately-owned, Ohio-based manufacturer, Ghent's number one resource is its people. We are an organization based around service: service to our customers, service to our employees, and service to the community," said Bowers. Ghent's commitment to this mission helps drive our organization.

This drive to service was put to the test during the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. We faced a lot of uncertainty, as did many other manufacturers. Many projects were halted abruptly, and there was a lot of insecurity around keeping people employed while mass layoffs happened around the country. We saw an emerging need for protective screens and other

partitioning products. "We pivoted overnight as an organization and released seventeen new products in under two months," noted Bowers, "Not only were we able to create products that kept everyday Americans safe during a time of crisis, but we did also so while keeping every single member of our team employed."

This resilience and versatility have become a constant driving force in the products we manufacture. As many people have returned to work in the past years, our products have adapted to meet the needs of the post-pandemic world.





What do you think are the biggest trends in the furniture industry right now? How do you stay ahead of these trends to meet market demand?

Today, more than ever before, flexibility is one of the largest trends in the market. With return to office mandates coinciding with the shifting demographics of people entering the workforce, Institutions must change

There is an increased desire for flexibility – flexibility in work styles, work schedules and workspaces. That was the driving force behind our GRVT® Mobile Collaboration Hub. It is not only is the first solution to combine a mobile whiteboard, table, seating and power into one unit, GRVT is designed to work for you, providing untapped flexibility and collaboration. Designed for both indoor and outdoor use, it is simple to set up and break down, and the meeting can begin almost immediately no matter what the environment.

Sustainability, while it has been an ongoing trend for years, shows no signs of slowing down as an important decision-making factor among businesses and consumers alike. Additionally, the standards for what is considered a sustainable product have risen considerably and demanded more action than ever. In the era of “green washing”, it’s important for manufacturers to understand the expectations of users around sustainable solutions and look to constantly research and improve their products. For Ghent, preserving the environment has always been a significant pillar of our process. We build and innovate our products with our future in mind. We understand the importance of credibility and trustworthiness to our success as a business.



Ghent’s goal as we continue to grow and evolve is to stay true to our roots. “We want to evolve with how the market evolves, while keeping with our core values,” comments Bowers. Trends and products may change with the times, but our commitment to our mission will stay the same. We will continue to be recognized as a leader in communication, collaboration, and learning tools.



Getting to Know **PRINGLE WARD**

of New York

Tell us a little bit about how your rep group got started?

In the industry for over 28 years with most of my previous experience had been working directly for large manufactures, with my last stint being a regional Mgr. A now-former manufacturer had reached out to me to become an independent with their line, taking it away from an aging principal. But the timing wasn't right. So over the next 2 years, we kept in touch until the previous owner had decided to let his manufactures know that he was retiring. They called me up, connected the 2 of us and we struck a deal.



How has the company changed over the years?

Since I first took over Pringle Ward in 2017, we have grown the company from 2 manufactures to our current 13. We also went from 2 employees to 5.

What do you think is the secret to your rep groups longevity and success?

Expanding our package, so we can better serve our customers. We have expanded our offerings. I think it is important to have diversified offering, not only to encompass more of a project but to also withstand downturns in different markets



What makes you most excited about working in the contract and hospitality industry?

What makes me most excited about working in our industry is the opportunity to connect to so many various types of business as well as the people who work in those sectors. As much as we are not solving world peace, we are helping people by creating a space that is not only functional but is hopefully inspiring as well.

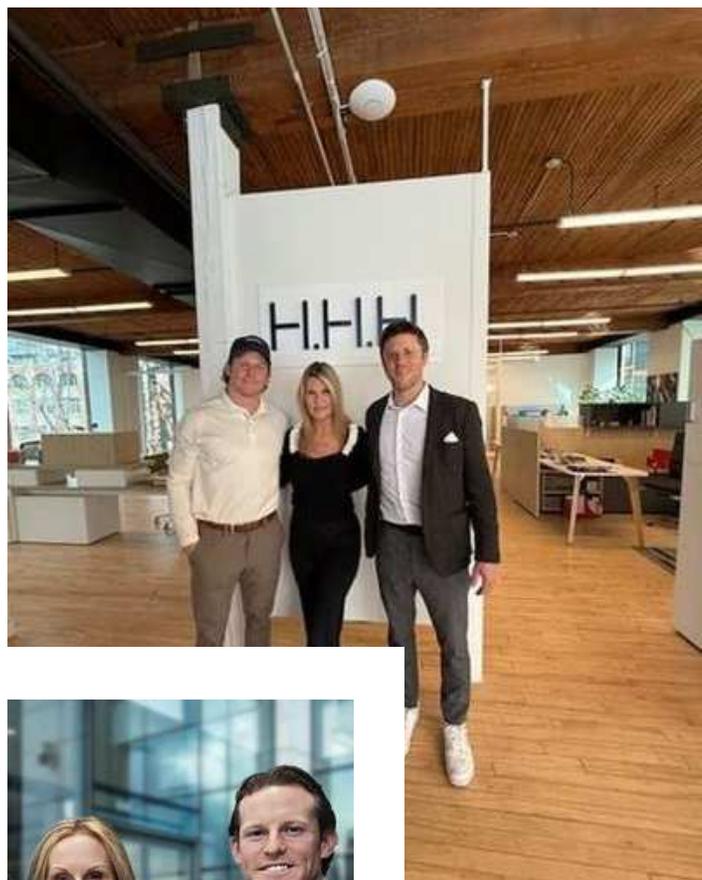
How do you think your group will evolve over the next 5-10 years?

We are opening a new 5,000 sq ft showroom early spring. This will provide us the opportunity to engage with more clients by being able to host events as well as showcase our products. I see us continuing to refine our package always trying to keep up with the ever-changing needs of our customers.

My son who has recently joined the firm is introducing fresh ideas and technology to our day-to-day business. I believe we will be using AI more and more moving forward. By embracing AI and having a younger perspective will certainly help in connecting with a diverse audience and streamline our operations

If you could use just one word to describe your rep group, what would it be?

STEADFAST



MRL STAR OF THE MONTH



NAME:

Kevin Ace Astala

DEALER:

**Ace Office Furniture Denver & Houston -
Offices by ACE**

TITLE:

Owner

LOCATION:

Houston, Texas & Denver, Colorado

HOW LONG WITH ACE OFFICE FURNITURE:

10 Years

HOW LONG IN THE CONTRACT FURNITURE INDUSTRY:

10 Years

GET TO KNOW ME:

What's one thing that's always on your desk? One thing that's always on my desk? A coffee mug (or maybe on your desk, I lose my coffee cup daily). It's usually half-empty (or half-full, depending on the chaos level). Better question - What's NOT on my desk? Any type of organization, free space, or any hope of ever finding that one important paper I swear I just had a second ago!

Do you have any pet colleagues? Yes! We have 3 of the best Frenchies in the entire world as our company mascots, Napoleon, Paris and Brooklyn, AND we welcome all pet visitors! We love animals, if we could only get them to buy some furniture!

What popular song could be a theme song for My Resource Library? Help by The Beatles - MRI is here to HELP! Perfect song!



What's a cause or charity that means a lot to you? We have always been proud supporters of the Hope Center, an organization dedicated to helping the homeless and those working to get back on their feet. While not a shelter, they provide essential resources such as showers, clean clothes, internet access, and assistance with obtaining documents, licenses, job resources, and other necessities for reestablishment. Their work is invaluable in helping individuals regain stability and move forward. We are honored to help and support this great organization.

What's your favorite way to spend a day off? On my days off, I love being outside taking care of my 200+ potted succulents, cacti, and bonsai. When I'm not caring for my plants, you'll find me outdoors, especially fly fishing, enjoying some time by the water and exploring the mountains... And, of course, I'm guilty of my passion and love for binge-watching Netflix!

How would your coworkers describe you in five words? I don't know but some probably something like "Love him or Hate him" BUT I would hope they would say "He is funny and fun!"

What advice would you give to someone new to the contract furniture industry? "Learn to Love Helping People" If you focus on this, I believe you will find success in any industry and in life.

What's your favorite thing about working in this industry? 100% Meeting new business owners and helping design and inspire a workspace that goes with their company goals. I drive around all day and it puts a smile on my face whenever I drive by a customer location or even better when they call and are growing and expanding and need more furniture! We all grow together!

What's your go-to music or background noise while working? Symphony, Gangster rap, 90s country or who knows maybe some soft jazz, definitely some hard rock if we are grinding away on a project. I like it all and it all depends on the activity. Something is always playing in our workspace and usually someone is telling me to turn it down.

What's the most memorable moment in your career so far? There's one project that stands out as one of the largest furniture projects I've ever worked on, and, well, it didn't go the way we hoped. I'll leave out the names and companies to respect everyone involved and also they are still or now friends. You gotta love this industry. Here's the story. It was a huge project, an entire floor filled with very high-end office furniture, majors lines I had not sold before. It was all meticulously planned and measured down to the last detail. I put everything I had into it, working around the clock with our small team and reps to make sure everything was perfect. The sting was that this was a previous customer, one we'd worked with for a long time, so when things fell through, it hurt that much more. Unfortunately, the project didn't go as planned, and we lost it. But here's the thing - it turned into one of the most rewarding projects of my career. I realized that, like my long-time friend and Jiu-Jitsu Coach always taught - "You either Win or Learn. There is NO such thing as Losing, Win or Learn" And in this case, "Learning" was the more valuable takeaway and in life often is. The challenges were tough, but the lessons we learned along the way shaped us into stronger, more resilient professionals. It was a humbling experience, but one I'll carry with me forever as the best "Learning" experience deal that I did NOT Win.



What's the best work-related book you've read?

I have probably read every sales book ever written over my life. However, after I started my office furniture career, I found out something pretty amazing—I'm actually a 5th cousin, on my Finnish side, to the renowned designer Eero Saarinen. It was a fun surprise, especially given how much I now know and admire his work. I've since immersed myself in his legacy, reading and collecting all of his books and design materials I can find and afford. His influence on modern furniture and architecture has been a huge inspiration to me, and now, knowing we share that distant connection, it feels even more special. One thing that really stands out to me is the incredible influence of his wife, who was the true backbone of his success. It reminds me so much of the immense support my own wife has given me throughout my career. Without her, I know I wouldn't be where I am today. Aline, Eero's wife has a book written about her called "When Eero Met His Match" by Eva Hagberg which explores the relationship between the two, highlighting her significant role in his career and even more important after his death. The book delves into the struggles women face in architecture, especially those married to architects, and emphasizes how Alvaro's influence helped shape Saarinen's public image. The book blends love, architecture, and the complexities of personal relationships.

What's the biggest misconception about your job?

2 answers 1st (and I say this with a smile and a laugh. "Quality furniture we can get for you the next day and I promise there will be NO damage and the install will go absolutely perfect." 2nd answer and my REAL ANSWER - I personally think the majority of people or companies do NOT know the process and how to buy commercial furniture. The misconception I think is that it is easy and quick and oftentimes an afterthought. I feel my job is to not sell furniture but help people navigate the design layout, purchasing and installing.

If you could design YOUR perfect office, what would it look like?

This is a funny thing to say and write considering my line of work but I don't like my office or really care and I am very rarely in there. I am that person that is always running around and always in someone else's office. Sometimes working with them but more often than not bugging and distracting them.

What's your favorite quote or mantra that motivates you at work?

"WIN OR LEARN and now on to the next one!"





What's the most fun project you've ever worked on

and why? This might sound different but my most fun projects, I have 1000s of them. We started off as a used dealer and the customer that came in and just needed a single chair or a file cabinet or just one desk to start their business. The big projects are fun BUT the real gratification for me was helping the little guy/gal who was passionate about their new company but still on a shoestring budget as they started their entrepreneurial journey. THEN seeing them come back a year later and buy a floor of office furniture because they grew and were successful. There is no better feeling in this industry than watching your customer succeed. That is FUN! The real story though of ACE Office and the MOST fun project is how this all started and how my father Ace and I accidentally won 55 full 18 wheeler loads of new and used office furniture and decide to go for it and open an Office Furniture store with zero industry experience or knowledge and name it after my father Ace Astala. Working with my family has been the best blessing in my life.



What's something we'd be surprised to find in your workspace?

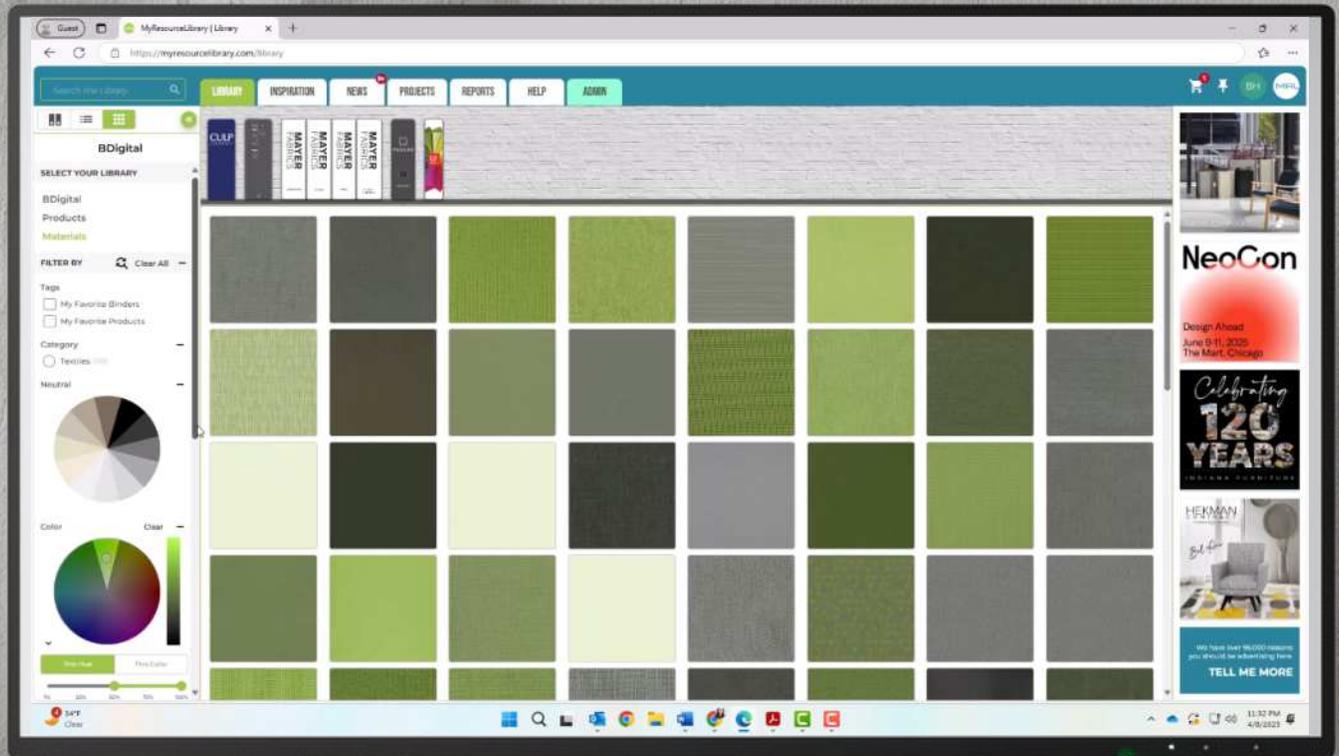
The mass of weird collectibles. I have some of the most strange, unique and weird collectables from crazy finds and auctions. You would have to see it first hand to understand the chaos and see how crazy I really am. We do have a full size alligator A Game of Thrones Chair with a Conan Sword that has become kinda famous for customers to take their photos with. A one of a kind WoodShop made completely of recycled desk tops and reused furniture.



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UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS



EFA Conference + Expo

April 26-29 | Lexington, KY

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The Environments for Aging Conference + Expo offers the latest strategies and ideas for creating functional and attractive living environments that meet the needs of our aging population. Immerse yourself in CE-accredited educational sessions and insightful keynotes that expand your knowledge, inspire new ideas, and break down some of the most significant issues facing senior living environments. Explore an expo hall to source new products and partners. Then, connect with various senior living professionals at networking events to enrich your network.

HD Expo + Conference

May 5-7 | Las Vegas, NV

LEARN MORE

HD Expo + Conference is where hospitality innovation meets collaboration. Designers of hospitality spaces, from lifestyle hotels to trendy restaurants to luxury resorts, meet directly with suppliers, view products, learn from industry experts, and create connections with impact.



April 26-29
EFA (Environments for Aging)
Lexington, KY

May 5-7
Hospitality Design
Las Vegas, NV

May 18-20
ICFF (International Contemporary Furniture Fair)
New York, NY

June 9-11
Fulton Market Design Days
Chicago, IL

NEOCON
June 9-11 | Chicago, IL

September 17-19
IFMA World Workplace
Minneapolis, MN

September 28-30
Connexions

October 10-13
ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects)
New Orleans, LA

October 14
ACT Conference
New York, NY

October 25-28
Healthcare Design
Kansas City, MO

October 7-9
CET Experience
Orlando, FL

November 9-10
BDNY
New York, NY

November 3-8
ISG meeting
Denver, CO

November 5-7
EDspaces
Columbus, OH

MORE EVENTS



MRL MIXERS

A bi-monthly webinar series designed to connect our community, provide updates, and engage in casual, informative conversations—don't forget to bring your own drink!

Next Sessions:
May 20 and May 22

[LEARN MORE](#)



BIFMA LEARNING SERIES

BIFMA is providing live virtual learning opportunities on the 4th Thursday of the month at 12:00pm ET for designers, buyers, members, and anyone interested in topics that connect furniture to the built environment. There is no fee to attend.

Next Session: April 24
Topic: Why Standards Matter
(Accredited CEU)

[LEARN MORE](#)

MAY 2025: MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE



In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, our May issue will shine a light on mental health in the workplace — with a special focus on how thoughtful design and innovative products can support employee wellness.

Mental health is an essential part of the workplace conversation, and the design industry plays a big role in shaping environments where people can truly thrive. In this issue, we'll explore the many ways furniture, finishes, lighting, layouts, and more can influence how people feel at work — from reducing stress and encouraging focus, to promoting movement, connection, and calm.

Got something to share? If your team has designed a wellness-focused space, launched a product that supports mental health, or has insights on how to create a more supportive work environment through design, we'd love to hear from you!

Share Your Ideas

You can also send your suggestions via email to Abby Koesterman at abby@myresourcelibrary.com.