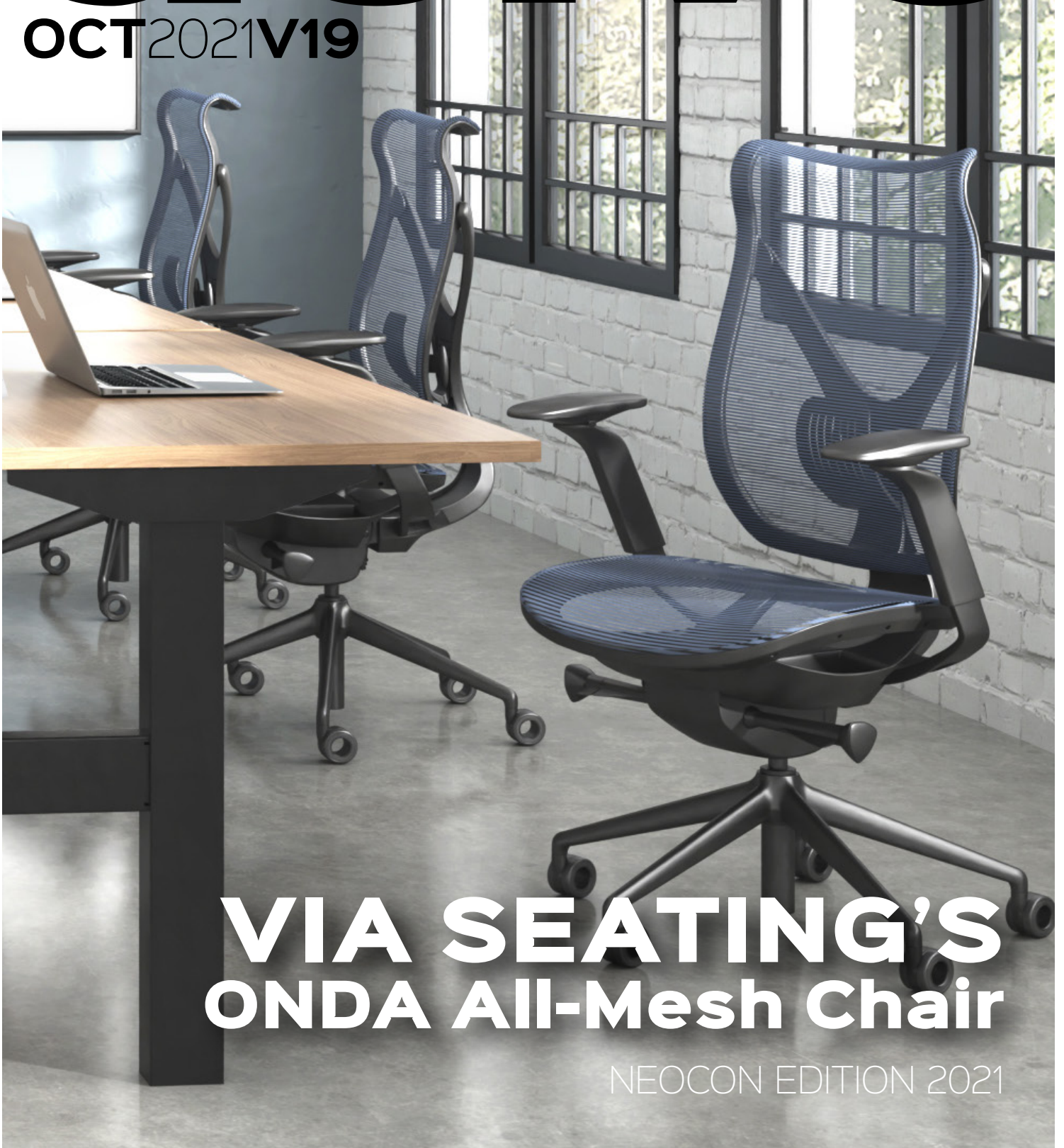


# delve

OCT 2021 V19



## VIA SEATING'S ONDA All-Mesh Chair

NEOCON EDITION 2021







**via**<sup>®</sup>  
SEATING  
viaseating.com

**Via Seating on floor 10, showroom #10-148**

Discover captivating, award-winning chairs from the seating experts in person or through our social media channels, live streaming and more during NeoCon '21:

📷 @via\_seating 🌐 @via-inc or "Via Seating"



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# contents

OCT2021V19



07 **WHATS NEXT?**  
BY COURTNEY SMITH

13 **Q&A WITH  
CONCENTRIC**

23 **PRODUCT  
ROUNDUP**

45 **THE DESGIN POP**  
BY ALEXANDRA  
TSEFFOS

49 **CUTTING EDGE OF  
DESIGN**  
BY SUSAN MULHOLLAND

61 **LOVE, MARRIAGE  
& NEOCON**  
BY SEAN CRONAN

29 **KEEPING PEOPLE  
AT THE HEART**  
BY ERIN CORRILL

21 **PRODUCT  
ROUNDUP**

35 **FUELING THE  
FUTURE**  
BY JASON LUND

64 **THE MART AND  
NEOCON**

65 **DESIGNING FOR A  
DIGITAL WORLD**  
BY MARCELO PONTES

73 **THE NAIRC MAKES  
A SPLASH AT  
NEOCON**



## editor's note

Dear Reader,

The last 18 months has been a whirlwind to say the least! BUT as we celebrate the biggest industry event of the year (NeoCon), we are thrilled to see manufacturers working hard to push out new and exciting lines that represent their commitment to excellence and their capacity to be adaptable.

In this issue we cover a wide range of new product releases and focus on topics that range from memories of NeoCons gone by to what's next in Contract Design.

It's an exciting time to be a part of the Contract Design Industry. We invite you to dive into this issue of Delve Magazine!

Enjoy!

The My Resource Library Team

For advertising opportunities within Delve, please email us at [industrynews@myresourcelibrary.com](mailto:industrynews@myresourcelibrary.com).

GET DELVE  
MAGAZINE  
STRAIGHT TO  
YOUR INBOX  
FREE EVERY  
MONTH!



Scan Me



# what's next?

By Courtney Smith  
Designer at  
Braun & Steidl Architects

## NEOCON & THE FUTURE OF DESIGN IN 2021



As we emerge from a year filled with uncertainty, I have found that one thing has remained constant and unwavering -- the desire to create. As many of us have spent a considerable amount of time in our homes due to the lasting effects of COVID-19 this past year, the monotony of quarantine has, in some cases, manifested itself into a newfound sense of purpose. Since we all settled into the

"new normal" in March of 2020, I along with many others have come to learn that decreasing our levels of human face to face interaction can have a lasting effect on the ways in which we communicate -- not only with one another, but with the world around us. Where we might typically turn to family or friends for a sense of refuge, we have since had to redirect this energy elsewhere.

When faced with such a dire need to express creativity, we may be surprised to see what happens when we finally find a way to meet those needs. Against all odds, we as a society have experienced an extraordinary influx of resourcefulness and ingenuity from people of all interests and creative mediums. From film, to music, to fine arts - the visionaries of the world have truly used this time to their advantage. Even I felt the need to develop a new creative outlet as I found myself struggling with the concept of retreating into quarantine and removing myself from active public life. However, I was able to find some hope in the knowledge that those around me had not yet abandoned their ability to solve difficult problems with thoughtfulness and originality.

I began wondering how everyday life would change due to the pandemic -- and how those changes would affect Interior Design. The fact of the matter is, Interior Design is based largely upon the studying of human experiences. Knowing how we interact with one another is at the very foundation of how we approach designing space - and as human experience and comfort levels shift, so will the way we study and practice Interior Design. While it may not always be apparent or obvious, Interior Design is an integral part of our daily lives. We spend approximately 90 percent of our time indoors, and that time has a major effect on our overall mood and quality of life. Even the smallest details can significantly affect a user's experience -- and as we begin to see an increase in desired personal space between one another, the

way in which we study proxemics may be affected as well. Other aspects of design like indoor air quality & ventilation, space divisions, and bleach cleanable surfaces will all come to the forefront as we find new and dynamic ways to ease the growing concerns of the future.

For over 5 decades, as a cultural and social hub for innovation, NeoCon has provided a space for giants of the industry to address concerns just like these. At its birth in 1969 and for decades after, NeoCon played a vital role in establishing Interior Design as a legitimate profession and a valuable component of everyday life. NeoCon has also played a part in streamlining the integration of ergonomic furniture and rapidly growing technology in the workplace and in other market sectors. Now in 2021, our concerns look a little different. As NeoCon approaches in October, those who work in the design industry seem to share one common and overarching question, "What is the next step in the evolution of Interior Design -- not only as a profession, but as an increasingly essential and dynamic facet of our everyday lives?"

While this question is not an easy one to answer, I believe we can start by taking some cues from our surroundings. As Interior Designers, the power of observation is one of our greatest abilities. While the world enters an era of change, it is our responsibility to adapt to those changes and continue to protect the health, safety, and welfare of those who enter our spaces. This includes ensuring that we are providing opportunities for everyone to feel comfortable in the spaces we design regardless of age, gender, or background. However, in order to fully accomplish this, we must begin by seeking out and identifying what makes a design uncomfortable. How are certain spaces difficult to use now that we are hyper-focused on things like infectious disease and proximity to one another? Sometimes, knowing what not to do can hold the key to understanding best practices moving forward. And while it may seem overwhelming to consider every single change Interior Design might see moving forward, one thing is certain -- those at the forefront of the industry will continue lead the way as we embark on this collective voyage into the unknown together.

So, as we look forward to NeoCon this year, it is important that we use this time to unite with one another as an industry filled with hope and excitement for the future. NeoCon is and will continue to be a safe space for designers and tradespeople alike to come together and share new ideas, cultivate creativity, and participate in conversations centered around solution-based critical thinking. I have no doubt that together, we can use this renewed sense of purpose to overcome the challenges we now face.

# DAVIS®



Quad Lounge + Lift Table by jehs+laub



# IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO THE OFFICE WITH TAYCO

## Here's How to Plan for it!

As employees begin their return to the office, many companies are re-thinking the way their office functions. Some are encouraging their teams to be in the office full time, others have gone entirely remote, where a large number seem to be considering something in between. The hybrid work model is a hot topic when it comes to returning to the office amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that employees have had a taste of working from home and their employers have seen productivity maintained, many companies see the benefits of a flexible working environment. So, what does office furniture look like for those choosing a hybrid model? For some, it means hoteling.

With fewer employees in the office at a single time, employees no longer need a dedicated desk, rather they require a touchdown spot they can work at for a few hours at a time. Here is where hoteling comes in, offering rows of compact work areas with minimal storage. Sounds like a great solution but only when done right.

At Tayco, we understand that a desk is more than a desk. It is a place to increase productivity, collaborate with others and, to put it simply, get work done. We know that creating a functional and aesthetically pleasing environment creates more efficient and happier workers, boosting employee morale and employee retention.

Are you thinking about offering hoteling to your clients? Here are Tayco's tips and tricks for using hoteling effectively:

### 1) Use it Strategically

Be intentional about who sits at a hoteling station and who has a permanent desk. Hoteling stations are great for employees who are on the road or who work remotely more than 70% of the time. Consider a dedicated space for team members who work in the office most days, so they feel like they have a place they can call their own.

### 2) Keep Job Functions in Mind

Some jobs require more confidential tasks. Ensure those who require privacy have a private office. Tayco's Cosmo tall panels, available up to 109" high with segmented glass, are a great, cost-effective way to add extra privacy without losing natural light. Tall panels and segmented glass are also coming to Tayco's Switch systems line in November!

If you have employees on frequent phone calls, use divisional panels with acoustical properties to help block out noise. Our Cosmo monolithic panel system will help keep the noise down.



SHIELDS COLLECTION



SHIELDS COLLECTION IN GLASS



HALIFAX CASEGOODS COLLECTION





### 3) Ensure Power is Accessible

With people coming and going it's vital to outfit each station with power at surface level. Team members will need to plug in phones and laptops, and you don't want them struggling to find a place to connect. Solutions such as our clamp on power available in the Switch panel system line can easily be outfitted to any worksurface.

### 4) Provide Thoughtful Storage Solutions

Do your team a favour and ensure they have a space to lock away their personal belongings. Dedicated mobile pedestals or credenzas with lockable drawers can be brought out when employees arrive and locked and put away once they leave. Tayco also offers custom laminate lockers as a part of their ever-expanding cabinetry line.

### 5) Get Collaborative

Your team is home most of the time, so when they get to the office they want to socialize. Ensure collaborative areas are available to them for impromptu meetings and catch-up sessions. Check out Tayco's Kip Community Table and Kip Laptop Table for the ultimate collaborative setup.

### 6) Keep it Neutral

As floor plans get smaller it is important to keep the colour palette clean and simple. Choose neutral colours like whites, blacks, greys and nudes to make the space feel larger. Mixing too many colours in a tight space can be overwhelming to those working in it. Tayco has created go-to colour palettes to help make the decision easier! Visit [Tayco.com](http://Tayco.com) to check them out.

The hybrid work model is a solution many companies are exploring and hoteling is one way to compliment an employee's flexible work schedule. However, it is important to keep the above tips in mind when assisting clients in revamping their offices. While hoteling will work for some, it is not a one size fits all solution.

For those who want to retrofit their existing office furniture to stop the spread of germs, check out Tayco's Shield Collection, the most comprehensive offering of divisional screens in North America. With a wide range of products including freestanding, clamp, worksurface and panel mounted screens there is a solution for every environment. Tayco is also the only manufacturer to offer the patent-pending panel shield, which easily attaches to virtually any panel system!

Tayco would like to work with you on your next project! Visit [tayco.com](http://tayco.com) for more information on our products and complementary commercial space design services.



**tayco**®



Performance + Cleanability  
**Showroom 1173**

**MAYER FABRICS**

[MayerFabrics.com](http://MayerFabrics.com)



# Q&A WITH CONCENTRIC

Concentric is a collaboration of talented individuals with diverse backgrounds in design, specifications, customer service, manufacturing, and more. They partner with manufacturers who are passionate about creating vibrant, client focused interiors in the Pacific Northwest, Bay Area and beyond. This allows them to be the go-to independent rep firm for design forward products in the market.

Concentric's team approach allows them to be anywhere you need them to be, no matter the project phase. The ultimate goal is to service all facets of the process with designer, distributor, contractor, and end user partners to create unique tailored solutions. Their team is constantly striving to blaze the trail for innovation, high design, and challenge the norm.



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

**A:** I started Concentric about 5 years ago with a vision to be a true game changer in the industry. My passion resides in solving end user's problems through unique product applications, high design, and customization with sustainably sourced materials. I had worked for a couple different manufacturer's leading up to going out on my own, and felt confident I could find the right people, with the right product mix to make a great impact on the marketplace. It never really felt like a risk to take the leap, and it's been a wild ride ever since!

**Q: How has the company changed over the years?**

**A:** We have been in full growth mode over the past 5 years and there is never a dull moment with Concentric! The foundation has always been to find the right people, with the right manufacturers to help our dealer, contractor and design partners shine for their customers. We have grown from two to eight people and have expanded our reach from British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest down to the Bay Area and I couldn't be more excited for what the future holds. We couldn't have gotten here without our amazing manufacturing partners who have shown patience through the growing pains and total support as we consistently evolve in an ever-changing world. I have the best team in the industry who is obsessed with differentiation, always challenging how we do things to set us apart in the industry.

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

**A:** 100% the secret to our success is our team approach. Our team is built on individuals with experience in all facets of the industry that collaborate and help our clients with each specific need. We each have our own unique superpowers that will be called upon at any given moment to assist with a project, no matter the geography. We truly have a selfless bunch that wants each of us to succeed, grow, and ultimately have balance in our lives. We celebrate each other's wins and pick each other up when times are tough. The goal is to have a healthy

work environment that enhances our lives to make us a better partner, parent, friend, and neighbor. The team is always there for a "reality check" when one of our priorities get out of whack. It's that great feeling of accountability that keeps us moving full steam ahead!

**Q: What makes you most excited about working in the contract design industry?**

**A:** The incredible sense of community this industry brings. I am so blessed to have stumble into it 13 years ago while looking for a way to support my wife and (then) future children. Relationships truly matter and we can make such an impact working together, creating a better environment on a local level.

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

**A:** The industry is changing so fast, it's on us to consistently re-invent ourselves to keep up. As we continue to grow, I think a greater emphasis needs to be put on giving people information in their preferred method. Not everyone needs an hour presentation to glean what is most important from our manufacturing partners. We are focused on unique ways of messaging and presenting through videos, emails, social media, one-on-one interactions, etc. that keys in on what's most important, in the most efficient manner for our clients. As we evolve, we can share resources throughout the territory and make a huge impact whether our clients are in Anchorage or San Francisco. Our goal is to make our territory feel like Concentric is right next door, even if our physical location states otherwise. Stay tuned because the next 5-10 years is going to be a wild ride!

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

**A:** Dream-Team.





**LEXY** This striking family of Lexy tables brings both sophistication and functionality to breakout spaces, agile working areas or places where you simply want to connect for those 'away-from-desk' activities. Available in two height variations and a selection of footprints and finishes, Lexy is at home in any working landscape. The elegantly angled legs are produced in solid wood with an option for cleverly concealed cable control. Worksurfaces have softened corners and can feature integrated power modules that bring all necessary services to each user.



# GRESHAM BY NEVINS COLLECTION

Is it possible to create impeccable design solutions while still focusing on providing a wide range of choice in furniture? Nevins believes the answer to this question is a resounding 'YES,' and they have been doing just that for more than 40 years. Founder Brian Nevins started the company on this principle, "Solutions by choice," which still drives this family-run business today.

A standout attribute of Nevins is their sheer breadth of product offerings. Tables for conferencing, training, and dining in addition to comprehensive public seating and creative lounge setting seating and accessories make their collections truly stand out within the contract furniture industry. Through their constantly updated product line, they are able to consistently stay at the forefront of product innovation.

This commitment to quality and customer service drives innovation at Nevins and ensures that they'll anticipate their customers' needs and be ready to serve them no matter what. Their mission is clear: deliver the most comprehensive furniture solutions to their clients, solutions which promote increased productivity and creativity in the workplace. They achieve this mission by focusing on designs that are clean and functional, offering a multitude of material options, and integrating technology seamlessly into their product lines.

It is in this spirit that Nevins announces its partnership with Gresham Office Furniture as they launch their new line, the *Gresham By Nevins Collection*.





**CECI**

Ceci is a playfully stylish, compact tub chair characterized with its broad winged back. It lends a little bit of retro flare with its upholstered structure and its bold distinctive design. The Ceci chair is the perfect tranquil spot to sit and relax or catch up on some work. Its ergonomic armrest allows you to comfortably prop your arms up and connect without getting that dreaded cell phone elbow.



**COLT**

Colt is an inverted triangular bench design that is visually eye-catching and comfortable. The leg frames and tabletops are manufactured from engineered hardwood that are made up from fingerjointed staves, which provides a block board appearance. The square lines of the base, typical of the mid-century modern, are anything but typical.



**FUSE**

This retro-modern family of stools offers the perfect solution when wanting style with substance. This casual stool and bench bring people together to share food or simply sit and meet, collaborate, or work. The four-legged framework is produced in solid Ash wood and finished using a durable satin lacquer.



**HARPER**

The Harper table is a beautifully crafted oak table collection. The wide tabletop is supported by sturdy leg posts and is available in a range of dimensions to accommodate your needs comfortably, with plenty of room for all. The Harper's chic silhouette is well-suited for employee lounges, meeting rooms or collaborative workspaces and can be fitted with cable management.

*"I believe with Gresham's Approachability, Flexibility and Quality products partnered with the Nevins marketing, distribution network, customer service and in-depth knowledge of the North American market will make us a formidable partnership."*

**- Julian Roebuck, Managing Director & Current Owner of Gresham Office Furniture, Ltd.**

The **Gresham by Nevins Collection** consists of a 17 product series for the North American market. This extensive collection allows for ultimate flexibility while providing the very best in quality construction. It truly represents the very best of both companies and honors each of their strong manufacturing histories.

Nevins' commitment to creating clean, yet functional designs that inspire creativity is evident in this new collection. Each piece brings its own unique style that can stand alone as a centerpiece of any room, or easily be mingled with the other products in the collection. With such a wide range of products and materials to choose from, designers are truly only limited by their imaginations.

The gorgeous, sleek designs of the **Gresham by Nevins Collection** are enough to entice any discerning eye, but looks aren't the only aspect of the collection that set to impress. The extraordinary craftsmanship you've come to expect with any Nev-

ins product is very much a cornerstone of the new collection. While innovative functionality and technological integration ensure that the collection fits seamlessly into the breadth of Nevins' offerings.

Nevins also has a long-standing commitment to minimizing their impact on their environment during the manufacturing process and beyond. These efforts include waste reduction, recycling efforts and the use of eco-friendly materials. The **Gresham by Nevins Collection** fits perfectly into their vision of creating environmentally products in a sustainable way. The 'Renew' product in particular is a testament to Nevins' commitment to sustainability. Made with a majority of recycled materials, 'Renew' is setting a new bar in environmentally-friendly office furniture.

There's no doubt that the **Gresham by Nevins Collection** is sure to have something to fit every design need!

**ELOISE**

Eloise is a playfully stylish chair or sofa collection, with sweeping curves and a selection of six stylish frames with the capability of adding two-toned upholstery. The Eloise family can be used throughout corporate environments where comfort and light-weight visual style is key. The base, typical of the mid-century modern, are anything but typical. *(Below)*







### LILO

This modern family of stools offer visually light-weight models in two height options. With an integrated foot ring, sit on the high stool comfortably at a standing height work surface or use the low stool with a coffee table or lounge area to create a contemporary break away space.



### MOXIE

Moxie is a contemporary high backed lounge chair, available in 3 base style options. This stand out piece is most at home in receptions, waiting or lounge areas, where comfort is essential and style is everything.



### RENEW

In keeping with our social responsibility, we introduce this sustainable chair design; a simple, but unique chair made of recycled felt. Renew is a multi-use chair that can be stored into stacks (5 high). The seat consists of ergonomic triangular plates, allowing comfortable sitting by adapting to the body. Renew is made up of recycled felt, 60-70% (980g) recycled plastic bottles and 30-40% non woven textile and does not contain any glue or adhesives.



### ROSCOE

Roscoe is a simple modern lounge chair with various seat and base styles to chose from. The concave formed shell holds you in place for a relaxing fit. With your choice of widths and heights, Roscoe makes it easy to specify throughout your working landscape. The Roscoe table with its open, airy base and perfect height, is ideal for any lounge, reception or break out area. Roscoe is the perfect blend of form and function.



### SENA

Sena is an easily reconfigurable modular block seating system, perfect for informal meetings and work activities in a relaxed comfortable setting. The organically shaped rectangular units can be used individually, laid out in structured patterns or scattered throughout the space to create adaptable seating arrangements.



### SILHOUETTE

The Silhouette table is an industrial inspired table collection with a steel tube frame. Its sturdy, slim profile taps into the current trend for all things industrial. Available in two different heights and depths, to use as a sofa end table, or a sleek coffee table.



### FLEET

Create your own environment with this acoustic, high-backed booth system. Perfect whether needing privacy, wanting to socialise or function within a considered environment. Available in three height options, with and without arms and integrated tables, this modular system offers endless configuration possibilities.



### SILO

Silo is designed to support the dynamic, ever changing workplace, each item is modular and re-configurable to suit your changing needs. The versatility in the design is endless; as items can be built in any number of combinations. Silo can not only meet your storage needs for conference rooms, but offers storage solutions for collaborative spaces.



### TREAD

Tread is characterized by a single piece shell with a choice of mechanism, which is concealed within the seat and simply adjusted by semi concealed triggers. The weight activated Synchronized Mechanism versions offer height adjust ability with both seat and back angle adjustment. The Visitor Mechanism provides a fixed height seat with free float movement.





## VON

This simply styled, fully upholstered stool brings creative form and a sense of fun to the workplace. With its light-weight construction, self leveling glides and ability to stack vertically up to five stools high, the Von Stool offers true agility for any environment. (Left)

Nevis invites you to explore the *Gresham By Nevins Collection*, and find creative solutions that are built to the highest quality standards.

The *Gresham By Nevins Collection* is exclusively available through Nevis in North America. Visit their website at [www.nevins.co](http://www.nevins.co) for more information.

**GRESHAM**  
by  
**nevins**



# product round up

6 MRL FAVORITE PRODUCTS FROM ACROSS THE LIBRARY

The following products represent 6 of our favorite products currently on My Resource Library. The products are listed in no particular order. Can you guess the theme?

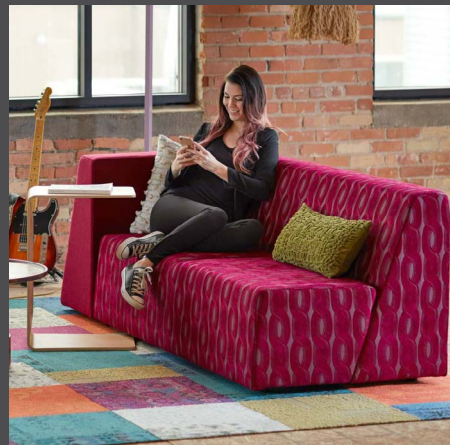
## NUCRAFT-PERFORMANCE CREDENZAS

Performance Credenzas feature a variety of convenient options to address a wide range of application needs, from technology to food service and storage. Amenities include refrigeration, technology accommodations, trash and recycling, and general storage options.



## TRINITY SAVOYE

Inspired by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye located just outside of Paris, France, the Savoye Collection embodies many of those same modern architectural characteristics. The design portrays a delicate floating body supported by an almost vanishing base. Both lounge & table units consist of simplified, clean forms scaled and proportioned to give a light, very spatial and minimalistic aesthetic. Savoye compliments almost any interior whether adjacent to walls, or floating in the space.



## TURNSTONE CAMPFIRE

The Campfire collection makes it easy to create flexible, inspiring spaces. Pair things together to create collaboration zones, or pull them apart for solo work. With Campfire, the configuration options are endless.



## MARTIN BRATTRUD ANACAPA

A modern interpretation of the classic club chair, Anacapa presents a fresh visual with new material possibilities. A sculptural shoulderline wraps the seat, while the canted baseline hints at relaxation. Bold geometry is tempered with a compact scale, welcoming Anacapa to a wide range of lounge environments.

## TAKEFORM PPE STATIONS

Custom graphics can make your PPE Stations truly your own. Direct print potential lets you connect with the people moving through your space. It's a recurring way to make little positive brand connections every time you provide the protection they need. Our design team is ready to help.



## SCANDINAVIAN SPACES FENDO

The aim with Fendo was to create a cosy, comfortable chair that provides maximum comfort without taking up a lot of space. The gap and division between the seat and back are the elements that give this chair its distinctive character. And that's also the reason for the name of Fendo, a word that means slit or gap in Esperanto. The idea behind the design of the chair was for it to work just as well around a dining table as the conference room, lounge, waiting room, or lobby, either on its own or in a group.



## High Performance and Value in Furniture Installation and Related Services

Facilities Services Network (FSN) unites the best and some of the biggest independent commercial furniture installation businesses in the United States, Canada and Australia in an approach stressing professionalism, best practices, and optimal customer value.

Find an FSN Installer @ [FacilitiesServicesNet.com](https://FacilitiesServicesNet.com)



# Sit Test Via Seating's Onda All-Mesh Chair.

**TEST DRIVE ONDA THIS NEOCON  
ON FLOOR 10, SHOWROOM #10-148.**

ONDA—Italian for “Wave”—is Via Seating's first all-mesh chair designed by Studio V. This multi award-winning chair delivers incredible comfort, ergonomics, function, durability all in a stunning design. It is offered in a range of styles including mid back, high back, and stool options in forms in a monochromatic matte black or light grey frame color with a wide range of beautiful mesh colors. ONDA won a 2021 Platinum Award for Design Excellence (ADEX) and was featured in Design Journal's Best of 2020 Products.

This chair has new innovations throughout. From the single rotation ergonomic synchro control, the 6D 360 degree rotating arm cap, the reverse locking safety casters, to even the unique “fabric feel” 4-way elastomeric mesh ONDA also offers Via Seating's Patented Proprietary Copper-Infused Mesh available in black or natural striped patterns. This award-winning mesh solution is naturally biocidal, anti-viral & anti-bacterial. Using 0 additives, Via Seating's Copper-Infused mesh, destroys harmful microorganisms upon contact, delivering a truly sustainable, self-sanitizing mesh seating solution.

ONDA is the next generation chair that is taking the industry by storm.







### Dynamic Adjustable Arm

These arms have a full range of adjustments to support multiple postures, different body types and the way you work. Our inhouse development team, Studio V, equipped this chair with 6D height adjustable arms allowing for a 360 degree armrest pivot with 6 locking positions, forward and backward arm pad movement, and 9 height adjustment with 4 inch travel. The armrest under palm can be either wider or narrower depending on preference. So, no matter what device you use—phones, laptops, tablets and traditional desk tops—you are supported in any position you choose to work. These optional arms are only available on the ONDA chair and integrate beautifully with the design lines of this stunning chair.

### Intuitive & Adjustable Lumbar

The ONDA vertically repositionable lumbar mechanism is integrated into the beautiful sweeping lines of the chair design adding ergonomic back support for increased comfort and healthy sitting for multiple body types. The unique wave shape of the back intuitively supports the natural lower lumbar, the middle thoracic and the upper cervical curves of the human spine utilizing the advanced 4 way elastomeric comfort mesh. The added adjustable lumbar feature allows for fine tuning for any additional needed support.

### Proprietary Synchro Technology

ONDA comes standard with the newest technology proprietary ergonomic synchro control with seat slide and forward tilt options available. We worked closely with our Italian control supplier to develop a quick tension adjustment for proper support and comfort that is easily achieved. This is the most advanced ergonomic control you can buy with an incredibly smooth and comfortable ride. This high-performance mechanism offers a perfect synchronization between the back and seat at a 2:1 ratio, which reduces pressure points, allows for healthy blood circulation and keeps the feet firmly on the ground when tilting back. It is unique in that the adjustments for back tension & 5-position back tilt lock deliver the full range of adjustment capability all within a single rotation of the knob. This eliminates endless cranking required on most chairs for this adjustment, which is painful on the wrist. The technology also offers seat height and seat depth adjustment and long with forward tilt with paddles that are easily accessed and intuitive. All of these adjustments work in harmony to create a sit customized to the individual. ONDA also offers auto-adjust body balance technology options available for chair & task stool models.



**via**™ SEATING





# Keeping People At the Heart of the Customer Experience

## A Look Back at 2020

By Erin Corrill  
With Project  
Matrix

None of us could have guessed that the year 2020 would turn the world upside down in the manner in which it did. Many of us were hoping for a repeat of the Roaring twenties of the 1900s. A time of economic prosperity, innovation, and growth throughout the world. Some of us were even hoping for the return of Jazz Music and flapper dresses. However, the reality of the situation was more of a repeat 1918 when the Spanish Flu ravaged the world. Or the 1930's when the majority of the population was unemployed.

### COVID-19 Spread Throughout the World.

Countries closed their borders, schools closed, and business sent their employees home. There wasn't a single person that COVID didn't affect. In January 2020, this virus started spreading throughout Asia, and many of us didn't think it would spread as fast as it did.

By Mid-March, the United States saw the beginning of the effects of the virus. Many businesses, including ProjectMatrix, would send employees home to work. We didn't know when the world would reopen, and many people were scared for their health and jobs. Children never returned to school after Spring Break, and life as we know it was flipped upside down.

On March 18, 2020, ProjectMatrix moved all of their employees out of the office and into this new "Work From Home" Lifestyle.

Mark, the President and founder of ProjectMatrix, has always taken the health and well-being of his employees seriously. To Mark, we are family. When Covid began, Mark immediately started working on how to take care of his "family." Employees packed up their entire desk, took home their desk phones, work computers, monitor mounts, and everything we could think of that we would need to work efficiently. Many of us were quick to return to the office to grab our computer chairs after sitting in a dining room chair for a few days for 8+ hours.

Within a few days, we were all set up and working in this new setting. No one could have predicted that this was going to be the new normal. As we continued this new way of working, there were three ways our customer experience evolved.

### Support

After a few weeks, we noticed that things were changing, that this was going to be the way we would work for a lot longer than initially anticipated. So, ProjectMatrix does what it does best; we adapted.

Technical support went from answering several phone calls a day to taking many more chats than ever. Many people used their cell phones in this new WFH lifestyle and felt uncomfortable about calling in with all the background noise. We realized that tech support was quickly overwhelmed with all the chats, so we hired

additional employees. We saw that emails were sent at all hours of the evening, night, and early morning, versus the standard 8-5 we were so used to seeing. Talking with customers, technical support determined that people needed more documentation and quick videos because they forgot how a particular tool worked. ProjectMatrix once again answered the call and began publishing user guides, tips and tricks videos, and technical support videos for users to watch before school started and after the family went to bed.

We noticed that many people would be slow to respond during a chat because they were busy handling their crazy quarantine life while working. We responded by accepting appointments so people could plan around their kid's zoom calls and toddler nap times.

### Training

Not only did the support team need to adapt to this new way of working, but so did the training department. A change came when all onsite training was canceled and moved to all online. We have always done online training, but never in the same format as onsite training, nor for 6-8 hours straight. Not only did users struggle with doing a 6-hour training online, but our trainers struggled with keeping users engaged during such a lengthy time.

We realized that the way people worked was different now. Many of us had kids at home, and kids had to do remote learning for the first time ever. No matter your child's age, the schooling was different and required a lot of bandwidth and parents' assistance.

If you had young kids, you were both working and an employee and teaching your child simultaneously. Getting an elementary-aged kid to sit still for 8 hours a day to pay attention to class is almost impossible.

### In Summary, it Was Rough.

The bright side is pets were happy to have us at home. However, they wanted to be let out; they would bark, they would walk across your keyboard and type random gibberish. We also noticed many more distractions at home, and many people would miss critical aspects of training due to those distractions. Once again, we needed to adapt.

We started by scheduling what was usually a 6-8 hour training into 2-hour time blocks. We began recording sessions so users could re-watch them if they missed a section because their 3rd

graders needed help with math homework. Then we started recording general training so people could watch them after hours when their bandwidth requirements weren't being taxed so much with zoom calls and Netflix binging. Users responded well but had even better suggestions. Instead of several 2-3 hour recorded training to watch, we broke each video into chapters and recorded them in small 5-10 minute increments. These changes made it easy for a user to watch a particular video on what they precisely needed help with. They also helped tech support point users quickly to a specific video when they needed help.

Today, we schedule training sessions in 2-hour increments, with a max of 1 session per day.

This has helped to prevent users from learning burnout. Since the sessions are recorded, users can feel safe to walk away, put their baby down for a nap, or let their dog out and come back and know they can re-watch a section or go to a YouTube video for extra help. We have even created after the training practice. Users who take training with one of our trainers can dive into the program, create a project from start to finish, and really get a good sense of how everything works before working on real projects.

### Connection

We noticed during this challenging time the crazy amount of support people gave each other. Working parents gave each other sympathy in their new work/life situations. People gave grace to those who needed to let a dog out or change a diaper real fast.

Many training calls were performed with kids doing homework next to their parents, babies on laps, and cats blocking cameras. Whenever we started a phone call with people, the first words spoken during phone calls were "how are you all hanging in? Is everyone over there safe" not "I'm having an issue with my software." In general, people became kinder, softer spoken, and more understanding of crazy life situations.

We learned that people learn differently. That being able to see each other was important, that what worked for one person didn't work for everyone. We knew that smaller, quicker, easier-to-navigate programs and training were desperately crucial for everyone. ProjectMatrix continued to ask through the pandemic how do we make things more efficient, more customer-friendly, and easier to learn.

Covid taught us Kindness, patience, and grace. It has allowed us to recognize different ways of working and quickly adapt to people's needs. One thing that didn't change at ProjectMatrix, we have always been about improving the customer experience. Even when everything in the world changes, that is something that will never change here.



# Now PRO-DEALERS & PRO DESIGNERS USE MRL

My Resource Library (MRL) is the first virtual library of its kind focusing on the contract industry. MRL collects everything available in a furniture manufacturer's binder and compiles it into one searchable place.

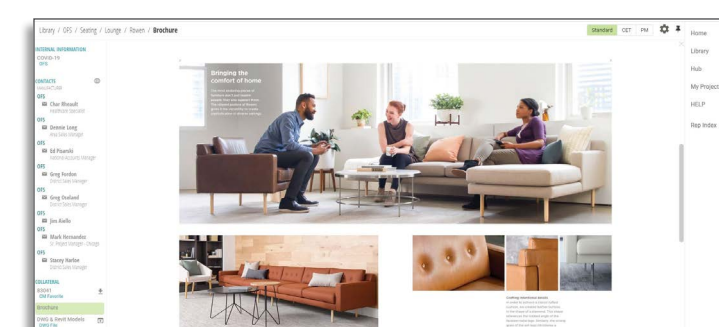
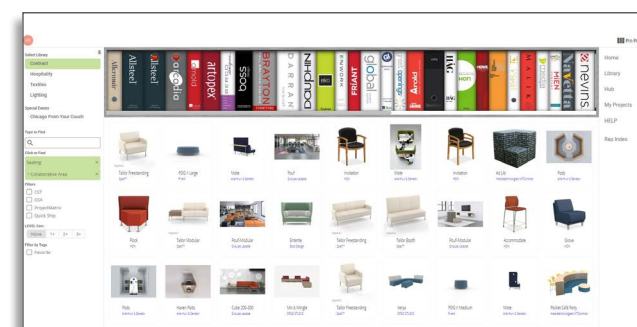
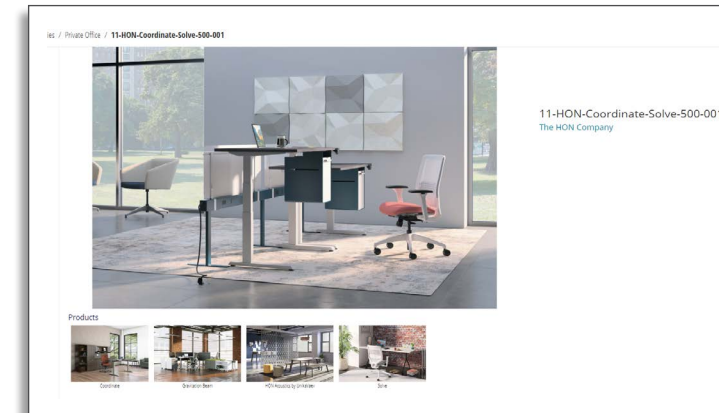
In three clicks you can search for desking, and narrow down the search to private office, with a height adjustable option; you'll get a variety of manufacturers and hundreds of desks to choose from.

The tradition in a design firm is to have a physical library, where you can wander the space and look at manufacturer binders and get dreamily lost among the soft samples of a creamy leather for an executive chair to the upholstery textile samples for a cozy breakout room.

The biggest problem with the physical manufacturer binders is how quickly the information becomes obsolete. One of the greatest challenges MRL solves is keeping the information accurate; we can quickly update and get the correct information out to you.

MRL can also replace your physical library shelves (saving you expensive real estate costs); we can set your firm up with a (Free) Pro Design account and interior designers can have their own individual accounts. Your team can access MRL's virtual library from anywhere; their desks in the office, to a conference room, to their workspace at home, to anywhere in the world. Coming soon, you will have the ability to request samples directly from our website and sent right to you!

Adapting to a new technology can be challenging but we are here working alongside you. We can plan a webinar with your team to get everyone up to speed, in 30 minutes. You'll also have access to a library of training videos, as well as our experts at MRL. We are here to help you.



## Pro Design Features:

- Enhanced Search: Search by keyword and/or use our filters to distill down to exactly what you're looking for.
- A Custom Library: You can choose which manufacturers to display on your library shelf, which allows for not only a one-stop-shop library but also quick searches.
- The Hub is an organized inspiration gallery of images; all images are categorized and information links back to the manufacturer's binders.
- Custom Projects is a feature where you can create, share, and publish a custom project both internally with teammates as well as via a link with your client, regardless of file size. For example, you can create a custom proposed furniture plan for your client, you can send and share a link with them. They can access the link at any time, and you can seamlessly update it.
- CET Integration allows for you to drag and drop CMFAV files out of the library and the Hub and into CET.

## Pro Design & Pro Education is ree for:

- Interior design designers who work at an interior design/architecture firm or company.
- Independent/Contract designers
- Students
- Faculty and instructors at schools, colleges, and universities
- Facility planners and designers who work at a school, college, or university

MRL serves 115 universities,  
650 design firms, 872 dealer  
locations, consisting of over  
85,000 active users;

PLUS 6,000 LOGINS PER DAY!

CREATE YOUR FREE BASIC ACCOUNT NOW!  
Go to [MyResourceLibrary.com](http://MyResourceLibrary.com)



## HOW SCHOOLS USE MRL

### LIBRARY

- Search the library for products by Manufacturers, and you can use both keyword search and filters at the same time.
- Use the library to familiarize yourself with brands and products.
- Read about the latest industry trends with MRL's Delve digital magazine.
- Access Manufacturer Rep information to start building Industry Partners.
- Use our library to search, specify products, and gather CMFAV and CAD/3D files for project use.

### PROJECTS

- Using the Project tool instructors share their syllabus or other documents for each class.
  - You can house information, in one central and editable location with unlimited storage capacities.
- Utilizing Projects tool as a collaboration tool among the students.
  - To share mood boards & ideas
  - Vet their project with their peers
  - Research can be compiled and shared amongst the students.
  - Using it like file sharing but with the purpose of communicating the design intent, project specifications, and project selections on their project.
  - Use the Projects tool for final project submissions or use it to create a presentation for your final project and submit it to the instructor.
  - Use Projects like you would file share. Instead of sending an email with several attachments, you can drag and drop right into the Projects tool and share the link. You can also organize your files into "buckets" using the Projects tool.
- For a class project instructors share the project specs, and students compile the information for project submission, and submit a link to their instructor with their final project.
- When giving a presentation you can use the Project tool as a central location for presentation research; you can embed a link to the MRL binder in the presentation (PowerPoint) including all the visuals, the specifications of products, finishes, and materials. You can then share this with the attendees, and add any additional documentation, websites, or external links too.
  - The information is never out of date, if you make a change, it automatically updates.

## HOW DESIGN FIRMS USE MRL

### LIBRARY

- Search the library for products by Manufacturers, and you can use both keyword search and filters at the same time.
- Research furniture and specify products for clients.
- Access Manufacturer Rep information in a central location.
- Use our library to search and gather CMFAV and CAD/3D files.
- Read about the latest industry trends with MRL's Delve digital magazine.

### PROJECTS

- Create and share a compilation of furniture and products using the Projects tool, to be shared both internally with colleagues and externally with clients.
- Design mood boards with images from the Hub and share with the Projects tool.
- Put together a presentation such as an inspiration to installation to share with colleagues or clients.
- Prepare an RFQ/RFP with furniture options.

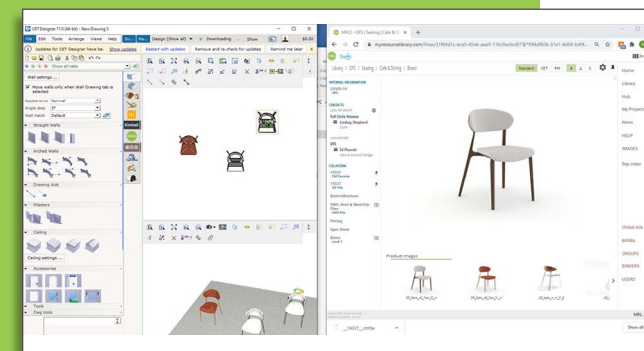
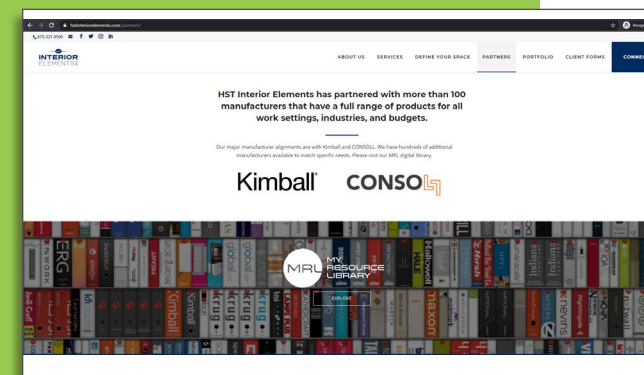
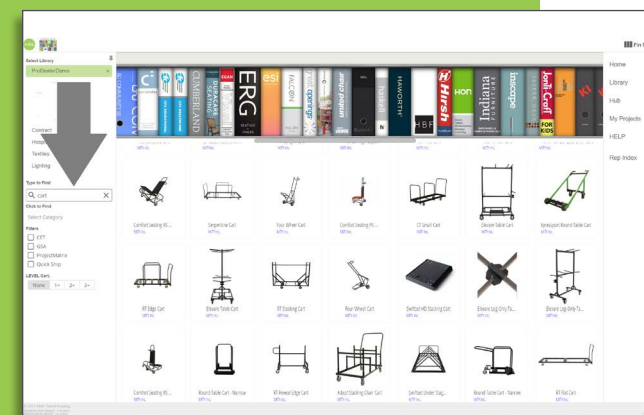
### HUB

- A visual inspiration library:
  - Search imagery by Manufacturer or by Type of space.
- Identify products in images and have access to all the detailed information about the specific product.
- Use the Hub to create mood/inspiration boards.
- Search the Hub to ignite ideas for your projects.

To upgrade your firm to a Pro Design account, free for interior designers & students, please contact

Vera Reinke  
vera@myresourceclibrary.com

Shelley Garner  
shelley@myresourceclibrary.com



# MRL

## DEALER PROGRAM

- Custom Library with just the manufacturers each dealership would like to see on the shelf
- Enhanced Search Engine to search by keyword and category
- Dealer Left Tabs in each binder for dealers to load their dealer specific information in each binder (discount, freight, spiff etc)
- Custom Projects Tool to create, share and publish custom projects with clients or publish to their library shelf
- The Hub Inspiration gallery with inspirational images tagged with products. In addition, every aligned dealer will have a section with all of their manufacturer renderings and typicals along with associated files. They can then drag and drop CMFAV files right out of the Hub and into CET. Many dealers are also creating a section of the •
- Hub with their Blended Solutions or Budgetary Typicals.
- CET Integration for drag and drop of CMFAV files out of the library and the Hub and into CET.
- Website Integration for linking your library into your website or sharing your anonymous library with customers.
- Sub-Library additional custom shelves for specific vertical markets or contracts. For Instance many dealers have an education shelf or a state contract shelf or even a preferred shelf
- A&D Sponsorship program allows dealers to sponsor A&D firms. The firm then receives their own custom library with access to the search engine, Hub and Projects Tool

Ally Minnis- [ally@myresourceclibrary.com](mailto:ally@myresourceclibrary.com)

Nicole Farragher- [nicole@myresourceclibrary.com](mailto:nicole@myresourceclibrary.com)

Kim Woods -[kim@myresourceclibrary.com](mailto:kim@myresourceclibrary.com)





## Fueling the Future of Innovation: Can Commercial Furniture Dealers Lead the Way?

By Jason Lund

For companies that intend to remain relevant, the term “office” has been redefined into a blend of physical and virtual assets designed to connect and empower workers to contribute their best no matter where they’re working from. The age of cramming the maximum number of people into the smallest footprint possible to maximize those commercial real estate leases or justify large on-premises technology infrastructure investments is over, at least for companies that want to succeed long term.

Companies like 3M are leading the charge on adopting this new approach to work. According to Senior Vice President and Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Denise Rutherford [1]:

*“It’s not about where you are or how you’re working, the number of hours you are putting in, it’s about the work output that we agree together is important for us to get done,” Rutherford said, “it’s a trust-based system, and the pandemic life slowdown has fast-tracked their employee appreciation.”*

How will commercial furniture dealerships evolve to meet this change? By encouraging thought leadership.

Tech providers aren’t going to win clients by showing off exciting FAX technology in 2021, and you won’t win clients by showing the same old big box office or bench seating solutions that were commonplace in the 90s. Like tech providers, ever-shrinking margins on hardware (furniture) are going to push dealers into making more money through service offerings, which requires developing your own intellectual capital to showcase. To be credible, you need to embrace and support a geographically diverse team and blend great workspace + technology products and services in ways that will give you compelling insights to offer clients.

Those that invest in your services want a credible thought leader in the industry, not just another chair or systems furniture box pusher.

Historical under-investment in their own technology is going to haunt dealerships in the coming months and years. Beyond the immediate threat of hacking and ransomware, dealer principals are dumping what seems like an endless stream of money into what are often hopelessly outdated and unaccountable technology practices. This leads to treating IT as a cost center to be continually budget cut rather than a contributor of business value. This cycle of cost-cutting amplifies the problem of underinvestment over time, draining productivity and capacity for innovation from dealerships.

I’ve seen countless dealers who will spend a fortune on showroom technology to impress clients on tours that will balk at investments in the most basic technology improvements to make their teams more productive and secure because “it doesn’t help sell.” These same businesses showcasing giant video walls, VR renderings, and sensor mapped space perform their daily business on a fragile and error-prone collection of Excel spreadsheets, freeware web tools, and archaic/siloed business systems. They leverage design tools that de-standardize the basic file formats that construction, architecture, and design firms have used for decades and require bizarre hardware/software configurations to work properly. It’s not sustainable, it’s not secure, and at a macro level, dealers’ unwillingness to invest in technology has led to limited outside investment by tech providers in developing new tools to support the industry. Large dealers or manufacturers may be willing and able to invest in better and more scalable products to support their specific needs. Still, these often lead to their own proprietary dead-ends or specialized products of limited interest to other dealerships.

For many dealers, the “paint by numbers” approach to business by making minimal intellectual investments while leaning on their manufacturer partners for innovation and marketing support has led to a loss of autonomy and continual pressure on margins.

This leads to arbitrary cost-cutting and an unwillingness to present innovative ideas. Their internal workers scramble to make the best of poorly performing, badly managed tech systems even as they are being squeezed for efficiency improvements to make up for margin loss that is primarily out of their direct control. This is not an environment where great insights and credible innovation that your clients are looking for will be found.

### What’s the solution?

First, stop “cuing the deer” (watch *Funny Farm* if you don’t get the reference) if you will be showcasing capabilities that your own business hasn’t embraced and can’t demonstrate credibly. People see through the dog and pony show, particularly when an IT or AV person must trail the tour group to make sure things work on-demand in front of a client. It’s a giant credibility killer.

Your IT practice should be assessed by an outside firm (not just the CFO checking budget compliance) annually to understand not only your likely security and cost/value positions but to understand the effectiveness of your team/vendor partners and how it compares to modern technology best practices and the industry. This tends to be positively received by good, progressive tech leaders focused on the value of innovation but maligned by those hiding their own outdated skills, poor prioritization skills, or even ethical issues.

Redefine the sort of business you are in and realize that the most valuable thing you sell is NOT furniture; it’s your own innovation and insights. These drive trust and encourage clients to invest in your services (where you control margin) in addition to the physical stuff you’re ultimately installing. IT providers have pivoted in the past decade from selling hardware to selling services, commercial furniture, and workplace service providers that want to protect or grow margin need to sell more services and solutions, not just furniture.

Quit allowing influence peddling and SPIFFs in your business, most commercial furniture product vendors large and small in this industry have some sort of program to influence and reward product placement based on payoff vs. actual merit, and it’s gross. The fastest way to break trust with a client is for them to figure out that your team is pushing products and solutions tied to a personal financial interest paid to members of your team, an apparent conflict of interest that is illegal in other industries. This practice also sets a terrible precedent within your company that can lead to the normalization of influence peddling among your own staff with vendors serving you.

The same problem exists in technology business relationships. Your staff and vendors are likely being assaulted with offers for free lunches and events, gift cards, conference trips, and other rewards to influence buying choices. I’ve seen a dealer running three backup solutions because each vendor offered lunch/happy hour options that the IT manager liked, so it gave them free lunch variety... a decision that would haunt them years later during a ransomware attack. It’s not only hurting your credibility



as a paid service provider; it may be having a direct and negative impact on the performance of your technology investments which is bad for your security, your bottom line, and the performance of your entire staff.

Finally, quit parroting the same “research and insights” coming from product manufacturers who often copy each other’s talking points and delivering sales pitches all start sounding the same. Don’t present technology or other products you aren’t using and wouldn’t invest in with your own money as an end-user. Nobody cares if it were cheap with a great showroom discount offer, it would only be worth a dime on the dollar in a year anyway. The fastest way to show a prospective client that you are a simple upsell commodity player rather than an innovation partner is to give them the same pitch they heard from the last dealer that met with them.

Living a culture of transparency and innovation within your own business by constantly testing, improving, and showcasing the way you work more effectively than you did yesterday will set your business apart.

It will help you support your own users better and be a more valuable partner to your clients. You can’t do this with a hopelessly outdated technology environment without accountability or adequate investment, and you can’t do it by simply following paint-by-number furniture applications recommended by a manufacturer. You need to showcase YOUR value to a client by figuring out how to connect and empower your workforce across office, co-work, and home offices across the globe utilizing great combinations of technology, process, and workplace products. Figure out how to share these solutions with your clients who are looking for credible examples, and your win rate and margins will skyrocket.

Innovate, credibly. Be the canary in the mineshaft that shows your client that new workspace concepts are safe and worth their investment.

Quit trying to figure out how to return to a “pre-pandemic” world and figure out how to thrive where we are today and will be in the future.



**About Jason Lund**

*Jason has specialized in commercial furniture dealer technologies for over 13 years, and worked professionally in IT for over 25. His business model is simple, help dealerships and manufacturers make the best use of their technology assets and investments without any external influence or paid lead-sharing nonsense that is commonplace in the tech services industry. Jason can help you discover how technology can fundamentally change the way your dealership operates to make your teams more effective, your technology investments more valuable, and your business more innovative and easy to do business with. In the past few years, he’s helped dealers recover from the worst ransomware/security emergencies the industry has ever faced, developed award winning showroom tech/AV designs, and helped dealers become NIST DOD compliant in order to gain millions in new top line business opportunities. Connect with Jason on LinkedIn, or email him via [jason@plaidanvilconsulting.com](mailto:jason@plaidanvilconsulting.com) to see how he can help your dealership or manufacturer today.*



On the surface, it’s difficult to not be impressed by the sheer size of Humanscale. The company – a leading designer and manufacturer of high-performance ergonomic office products – boasts 4 manufacturing facilities and 37 offices and showrooms in 18 countries. It works with 153 suppliers worldwide and has sold over 7 million products; statistics definitely worth noting when you consider its commitment to not only decrease its negative environmental footprint but to also create a positive impact.

Environmental sustainability is a heavy feat for any company to accomplish even on a small scale, let alone a company the size of Hu-

manscale and at the level they’ve achieved it. Humanscale has not only made sustainability a primary focus of its products and manufacturing facilities, but has committed its sustainability goals to achieving a net positive impact – an intention realized through its 25 products certified climate, energy, and water positive by The International Living Future Institute under their Living Product Challenge.

Humanscale is the first company to offer any product – let alone 25 – that is certified net positive. The Living Product Challenge (LPC) is considered the most advanced sustainability standard for products. The LPC certification verified that the manufacturing processes for each of





Humanscale's certified products has a positive environmental effect – taking the concepts of footprints and handprints and translating them into a net positive impact.

This concept of footprints and handprints is at the core of Humanscale's sustainability philosophy. Footprints represent damage we create by consuming resources and emitting pollution – even the smallest of footprints still have a negative impact. In comparison, handprints are positive impacts. Combined together, footprints and handprints tell a story of whether more good is being done than harm. Footprints are a great starting

**Humanscale's sustainability + net positive story**

With sustainability as a core value from its inception, a new Corporate Social Responsibility Report (CSR) Report from Humanscale underscores the company's commitment to achieving a net positive impact and lays out a corporate sustainability roadmap raising the bar for the manufacturing industry. The new CSR report reveals several areas of focus, including material transparency, responsible manufacturing and

handprinting and highlights Humanscale's progress as it works toward its own ambitious goals. Continuing a decade-long trend of reduction, in the past year alone, the company reduced normalized energy by 10% and reduced greenhouse gasses by 12% over the baseline year.

Chairs, sit-stand desks, and monitor arms, specifically. Products that improve the health and comfort of work life.

**Humanscale's Size**

- 28% of Material Sourced from Recycled Sources

**Humanscale's Impact**

Humanscale partnered with Bureo (boo-ray-o) to prevent ocean plastic pollution. Bureo makes skateboards out of recycled fishing nets through its own 'Net Positiva' program in Chile which aims to prevent harmful materials from entering the ocean – protecting wildlife and supporting local fishing communities through financial incentives.

Fishing nets are collected via Bureo, recycled into pellets, and formed

into chair parts. One chair is equivalent to nearly 2 lbs of fishing nets.

Humanscale, along with global corporations Dell, General Motors, Interface, Trek, and Van de Sant, is a founding company of Next Wave Initiative – a collaboration to keep plastic out of the ocean.

- BIFMA LEVEL 3 (highest level of furniture sustainability)
- Humanscale's BEAM program will divert product from landfill when the customer no longer needs it

**About Piscataway Facility**

- 91% of the electricity required for production at this facility is supplied by 2,585 solar panels.
- Captured rainwater provides 100% of the water Piscataway uses in manufacturing. The rainwater capture system at this facility is part of Humanscale's commitment to becoming a net positive organization. Precipitation rates in New Jersey suggest that captured rainwater alone should be enough for production.
- The Piscataway facility produced 255% of the energy (980,010 kWh) used to manufacture different Smart Chairs and Float Tables.
- Over 90% of waste from factories is diverted from landfill by recycling or reusing

**Material Transparency**

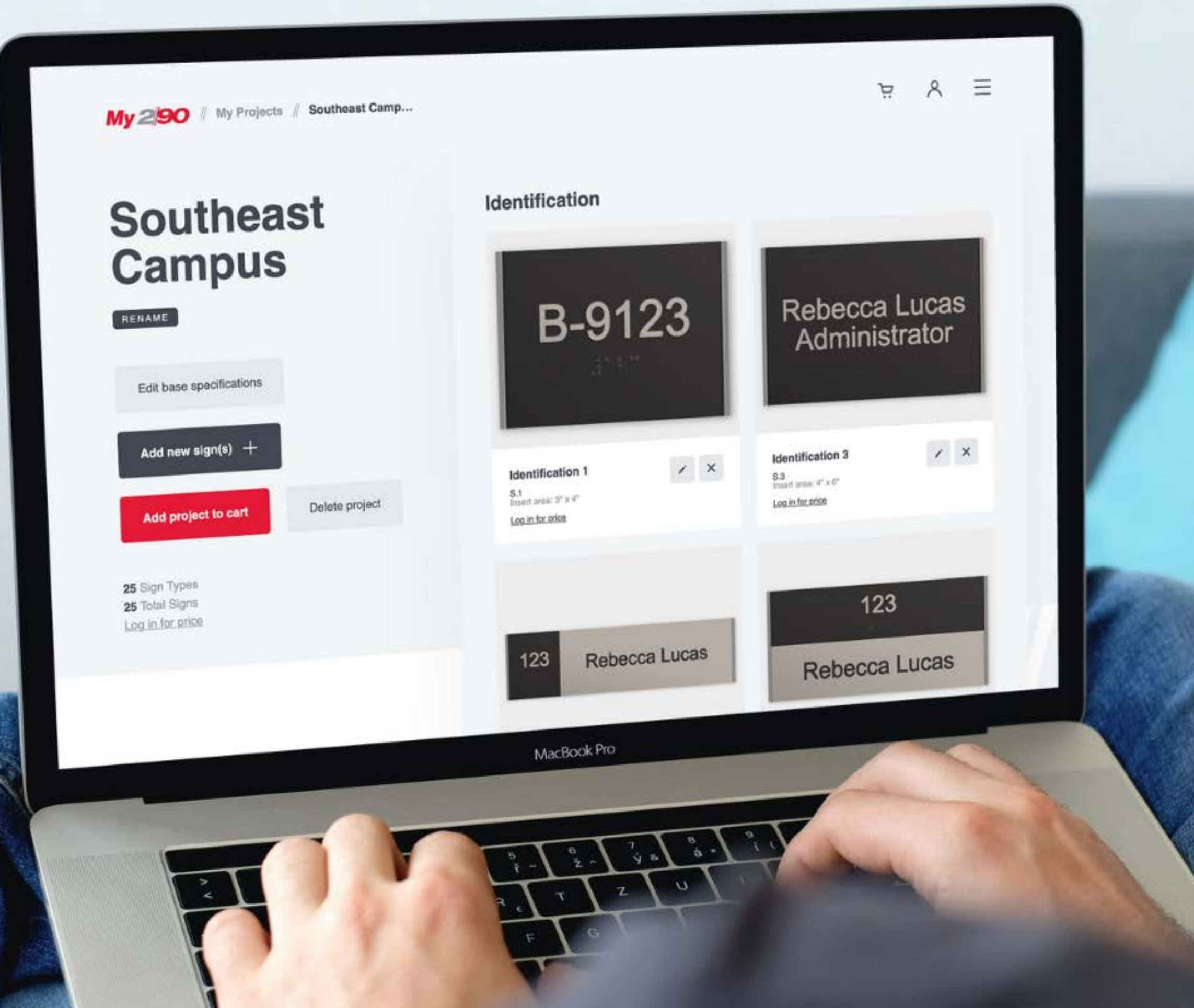
Consideration of material ingredients going into our products – most material is manufactured vs. natural which impacts our health as the materials degrade over time.

- Health Product Declarations (HPDs): Transparency is important to Humanscale – the company includes at least 99% of ingredients in HPDs and Declare labels. To date, they have published more hpds than any other manufacturer in the industry.
- Free of harmful toxins and 'red list' ingredients, including Chrome 6, PVC, Formaldehyde, and HFR flame retardants
- SCS Indoor Air Quality Gold certified (highest level—showing no off-gassing)



LIBERTY TASK + BALLO BY HUMANSCALE. CERTIFIED NET POSITIVE PRODUCTS





# Design It. Order It. Love It.

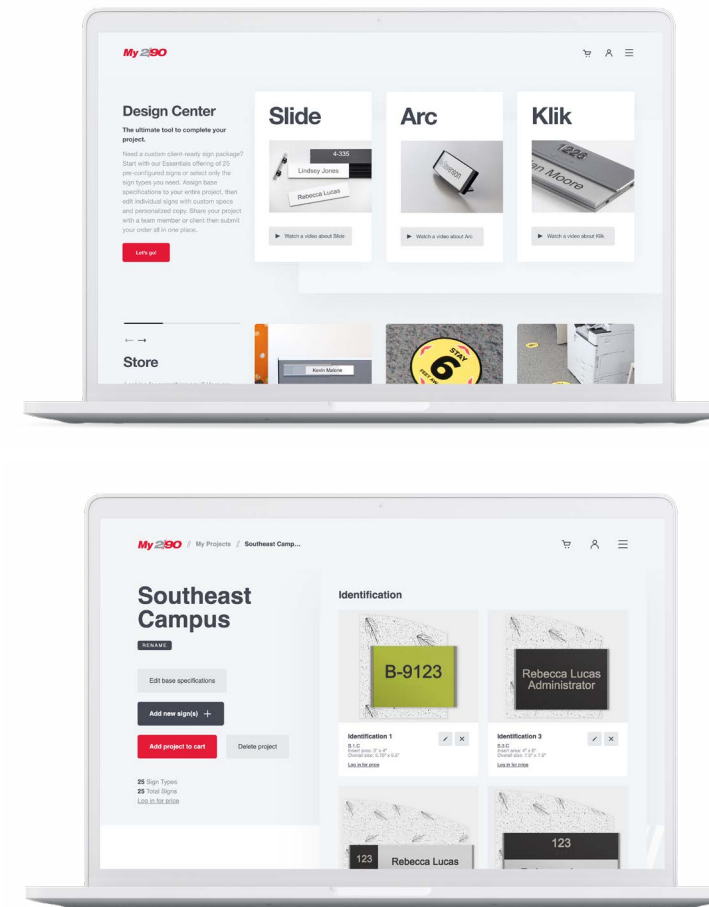
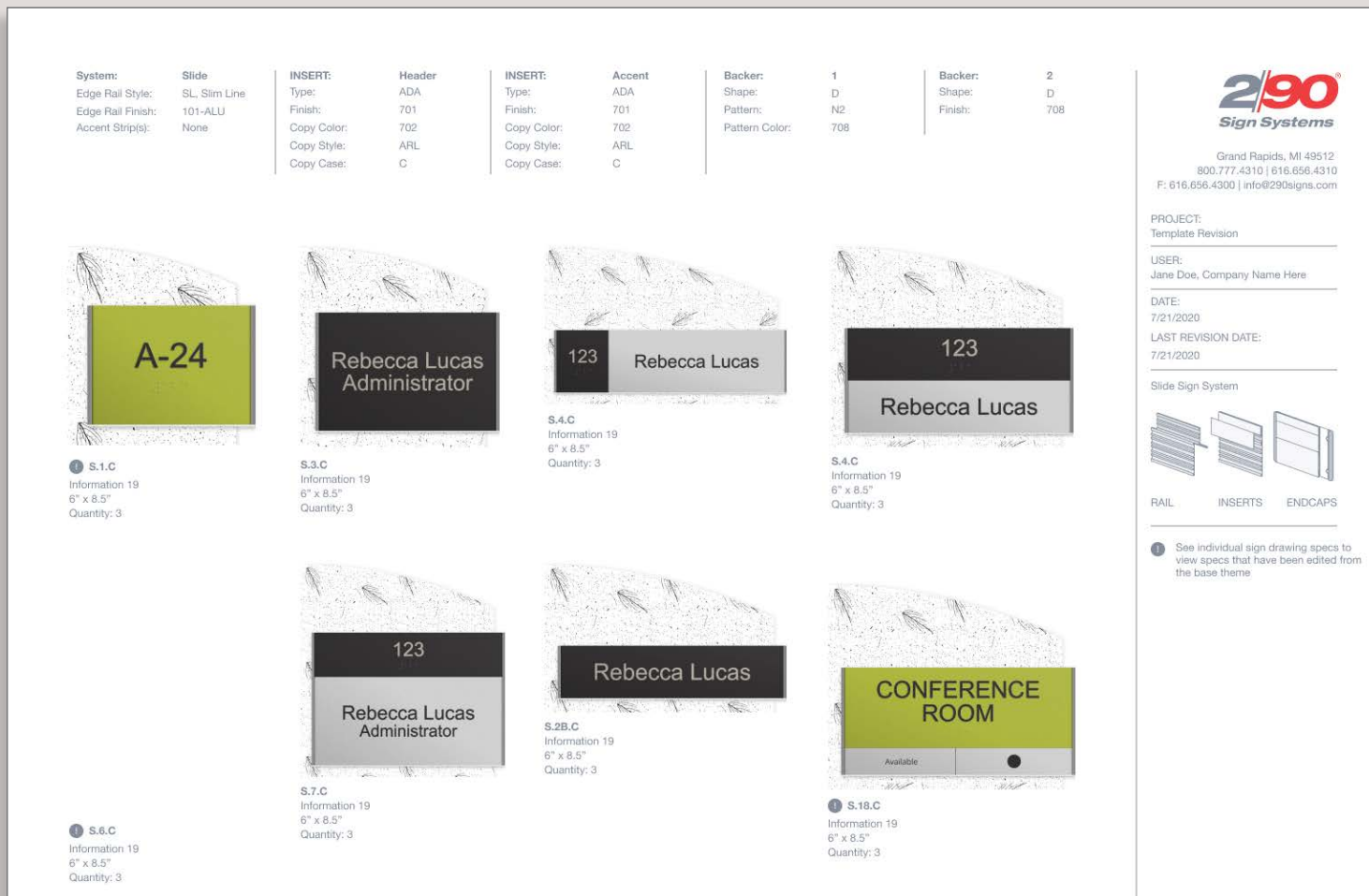
WITH 2/90 SIGN SYSTEMS

By MRL Staff

Wouldn't we all love to make our lives just a little simpler? Whether you're working from home, or back in the office, we can all appreciate the extra minutes saved by implementing a simpler process. Well, this is exactly what 2/90 Sign Systems had in mind when they created their new Design Center.

The **My290 Design Center** not only makes it easier to specify all your wayfinding and directional sign needs, but it also makes it easier to visualize your customized final product.





*“We know how important signage is to our clients and we wanted to create a seamless process that would allow anyone to create, customize and visualize signage that is perfectly crafted to meet their needs,”*

**- Rebecca Tyke,  
2/90’s Marketing Director**

# Design it. Order it. Love it.

*“I usually struggle with online product builders. They always seem more complicated than they’re supposed to be! But the new My290 Design Center is incredibly easy to use. It was actually fun!”*

- Jacquelyn Pastor, My Resource Library

Signs are such an essential part of successful design, and they needn’t be an afterthought. Now with the new Design Center from 2/90 Sign Systems, anyone can quickly and easily create the perfect sign at the push of a button. When ready, users can request to be connected to their organization to place orders.

## Intuitive + Easy to Use

Have you ever attempted to learn to use a new online tool only to feel frustrated by what was supposed to be an “easy” process? It can be overwhelming to integrate new technology that we may not be familiar with, and ultimately have the opposite of the intended effect. Luckily, the My290 Design Center is simple and completely “goof proof”. The system has been designed to seamlessly lead anyone through the process of creating their perfect sign without any prior software knowledge. It’s intuitive and takes all the guesswork out completely. You simply start by selecting your desired sign system and your required sign types from their Essentials offering of 25 pre-configured signs. Next, save time by assigning base specifications to all the signs within a project

at one time. Then, customize signs individually by overriding base specifications, adding quantity, or personalizing copy and mount option. Lastly, generate a printable version with detailed specifications and sign drawings to view and share.

## Instantly Sharable

The **My290 Design Center** is also perfect for teams or anyone that needs a collaborative take on their signs. Once you have selected your options, simply download sign package, and share away! The best part is that even the shareable project is also completely customizable to meet your unique needs. You can share a project with your team with pricing or remove the pricing if you’d like to send the information to a client. The easy-to-use project system also makes it simple to keep different projects organized and easy to access.

## Pay Your Way

The beauty of the new Design Center truly is customizability. Even down to how you complete your order can be customized. For those that need to submit a purchase order, the process is

simple and will fit right into the purchasing process you already have established at your organization. If paying by credit card on the spot is easier, there’s an option for that too!

## About 2/90 Sign Systems

2/90 Sign Systems has been helping people find their way for more than 40 years! Their commitment to product quality and above all, customer service, has helped make them leaders in their industry. As an employee-owned company, each team member is highly dedicated to a high level of service. Their diverse and talented team are master problem solvers and are ready to take on any challenge. Wherever wayfinding products are needed, 2/90 Sign Systems is ready to help design professionals, facility owners, and more with our unparalleled products, knowledge, and service.

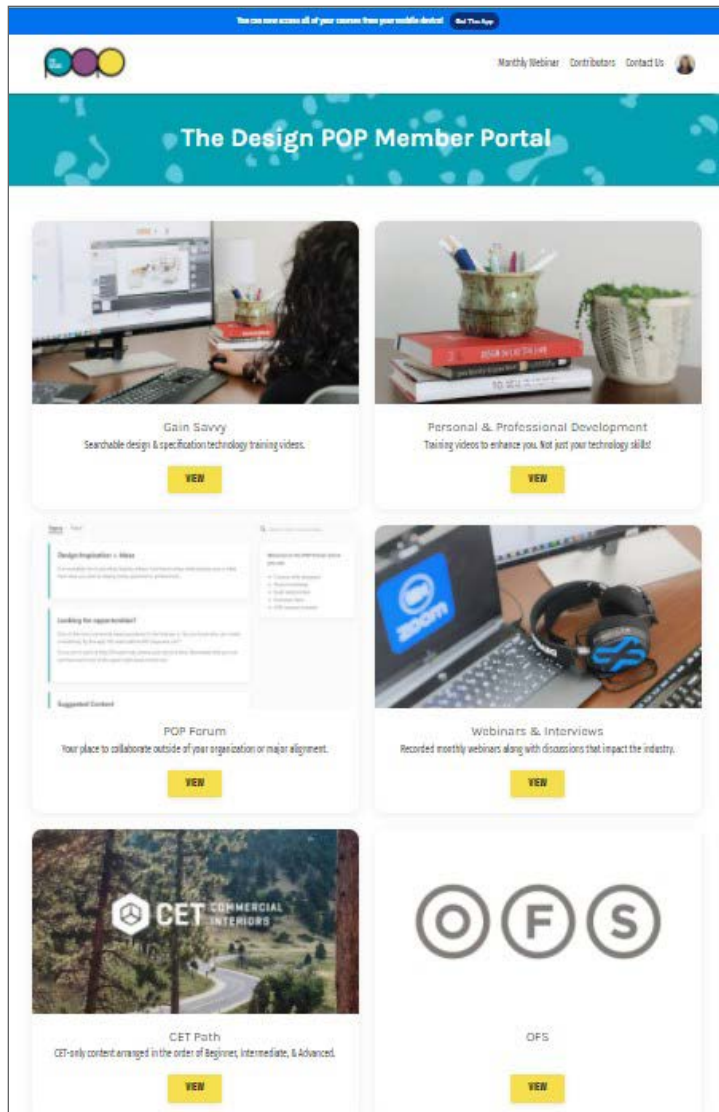
Whether you’re updating an outdated wayfinding system to meet current regulations, or you’re implementing a system in a new, refurbished, or expanding facility, 2/90 Sign Systems will be there to help you find the perfect sign solution.



# Connecting The Dots:

The Design POP Provides On-Demand Design Education

By Alexandra Tseffos



**Why did I create The Design POP? I wanted designers to be successful, and the need to access knowledge on-demand is one that I felt nobody had tackled.**

It's no secret; the commercial furniture market is under intense pressure to become more efficient and profitable. Some of the challenges standing in their way: design directors struggle to onboard new designers in a timely and affordable manner, training budgets are constrained, classroom training is costly and not geared to the individual's needs; questions or lack of training leaves designers searching multiple internet sites for answers causes efficiency to plummet and revenue sacrificed.

A good friend of mine sums up the life of designers as, "There is so little consistency in how each manufacturer handles specification. A designer's job of specifying many lines is equivalent to having a designer get in a new rental car every 15 minutes. They know where the gas and brake are, but god-forbid they have to turn on the air conditioning." I feel that is an excellent analogy as even the simplest of CET extensions have their quirks which leaves a designer worrying: did they do something wrong, or is the extension faulty.

*The most common set of questions that I get from dealer designers is: What's your background, and how did you come up with The Design POP?*

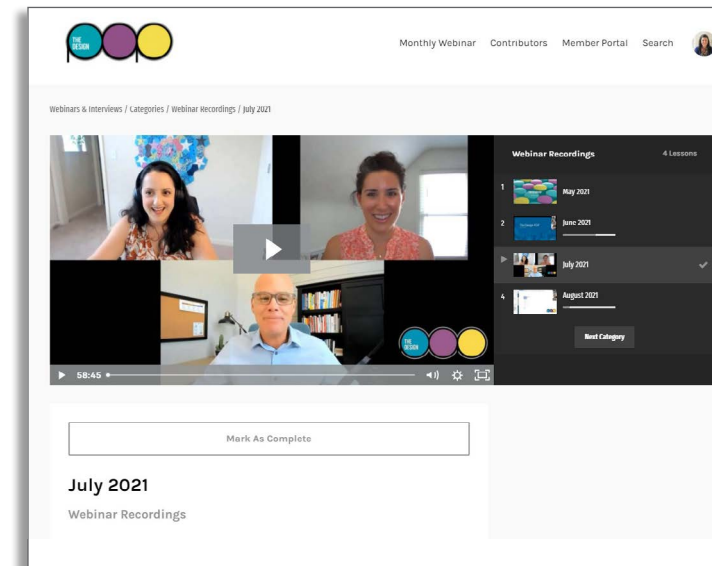
I have used CET – Commercial Interiors (previously CET Designer) for most of my career, either at a dealership or as a trainer. There have always been great trainers in this industry, including Configura's training team, which I was proudly a part of, along with some fabulous independent trainers.

I started my first company, Silent T Consulting, to work with dealers and manufacturers on strategic business initiatives. However, most of them know me as someone who does custom CET training. I have traveled all over America's doing hands-on classes. I always knew there was a better way. I just had to find it.

One of the most impactful lessons I learned managing Silent T Consulting is that it takes a community to succeed. And as I started formulating a business plan for The Design POP, the first thing I did was approach my network of consultants.

In July of 2020, I was talking to a friend Rob Langejans (AlwaysStrategic), about industry needs. He had an excellent idea around something I'm passionate about, deploying design resources in the modern age. I called a good friend who also had dealer experience and is an entrepreneur, Kari Anderson (UX&Kari). Kari and I collaborated and researched for weeks. We concluded that this idea wouldn't work because we needed better design education that didn't previously exist.

Throughout the pandemic, I began to test my theory. I had been doing online training and recorded everything I did. I would

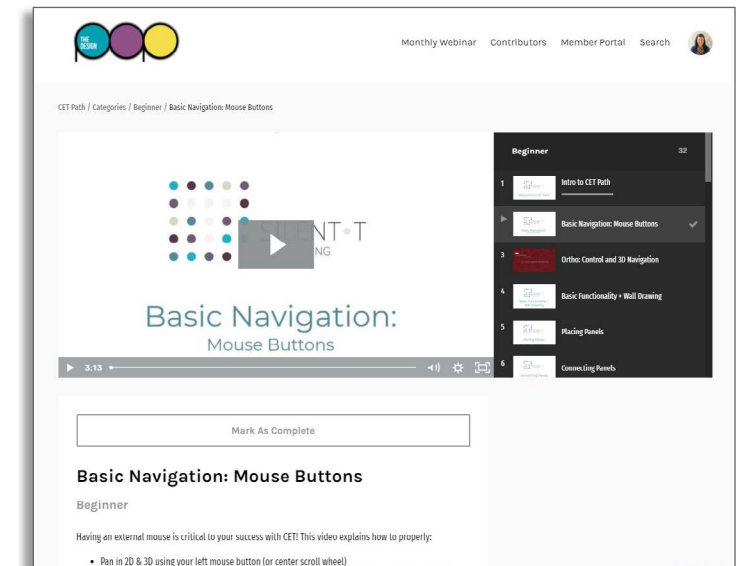


send the dealer my video clip for future viewing. I discovered that many dealers were not watching an hour-long class. They didn't have time for it. That's when the idea of a searchable library of solutions began to take shape. Bring the designer what they need, when they need it, from anywhere in the world. I also conceived the idea of the step-by-step training program from beginner to advanced that would allow a designer a path to proficiency, consuming content at their own pace when they had free time—but also driving bottom line profits by not taking a design staff off the job to take a formal class.

A few months later, I was working on developing The Design POP's platform, business concept, and branding when I called another friend in the industry, Kaylie Tucker (Konvergent Solutions). She saw the power of the platform and immediately started making short (approximately 5 minutes) videos the next day. I launched The Design POP in early April 2020 with 35 videos that Kaylie and I had created around CET Commercial Interiors. Shortly after, Rob sent me personal/professional development content. To create a single source site for designer resources, my friends at Configura, ProjectMatrix, MRL, and Yulio allowed me to add their content to our resource library. My dream of a new way to train was taking shape faster than I had anticipated.

My community was growing, but I wasn't done yet. It was time to get real! I started to have deeper discussions with Jeff Carlson about how he began building MRL. In many ways, our websites were similar – we both save designers time searching multiple sites for content. If The Design POP was to be successful, I needed to hear more about what I was up against. Jeff has been very open with his experiences, and we see that there is a need for more innovation in our industry to drive designer success.

Another conversation I had was with the CAD Trainer Guy (as he is known), Michael Beall, an institution in our industry. I was



initially worried that I might offend him by creating this platform because of his hands-on training approach. We've had a good working relationship in the past, and our business models are complementary. Once I presented The Design POP, he immediately understood the magnitude and impact of giving designers an on-demand training resource. We both saw the importance of creating a community approach to education and agreed that his content would contribute significantly to our dealer network.

Many of the conversations I had with my consultant network and most of my dealer and manufacturer friends brought me to one conclusion; community communications are the key to success. So, I needed to create a Forum section to The Design POP to share knowledge. I also envisioned a monthly webinar that is free to any designer to enhance our community regardless of being a member. I felt both features would help us identify the future needs of our user base.

In May, I started talking to manufacturers about adding their training content to The Design POP in late spring of this year. From my time working at Configura, I knew there was a huge gap between product knowledge and specification/technology training for designers. Very few manufacturers have combined both of those topics into one.

In June of this year, OFS said, 'we hear you!' They started adding content to The Design POP and made a unique strategic decision: they left their content unlocked. I was initially floored because this goes against the typical line of thinking in the industry to protect the knowledge of CET extensions. I believe in what they are trying to do by embracing more transparency as it's in the best long-term interest of the users they serve. It seems their desires are for extensions to work together to help guide and support the natural evolution of CET and learning. Our industry gets new competition all the time. New innovative companies



*So my dream was born. The Design POP consolidates training, knowledge, and community into one simple and easy-to-use resource.*

are looking to create disruption. It's OFS's belief that we need to aim for more open dialog as a community to set common practices while allowing innovation to take place.

However, my challenge continues. I have had many discussions with other manufactures about why they need to join The Design POP. Some still don't see the point because they have their training videos on their internal websites, or management feels the designer should be naturally proficient in specifying their product based on the published price list. I disagree. If you are an aligned manufacturer, chances are your dealers are specifying your products every day. If you are an open line that is specified once a week, once a month, or once a year – we need to do better in helping designers have searchable content in one location for when they are in a crunch and need to know how the product and technology go together.

Imagine you (a designer) are asked to specify a new, budget-friendly product with a 2-week lead time, but you have never specified it before. How much time do you waste with our tradi-

tional process of reading a price list, searching the internet, asking coworkers for help, and praying you don't lose the company any money because the spec is incorrect? To go to market faster and keep up with customer demands, we need to give designers the tools they need to succeed.

With over 200 searchable training videos on design platforms such as CET (along with extensions like MRL and OFS), e-manage|ONE, ProjectMatrix, and Yulio, designers can access training when it is best for them – anytime, anywhere. The Design POP also offers personal and professional development. Think of it as a designer book club! All of this is provided by our 11 contributors, who are incredible examples of collaboration. Besides our on-demand library, we offer a forum and free monthly webinar. The Design POP will continue to grow its offerings as industry needs evolve.

If you are a dealer or manufacturer who would like more info on The Design POP, please reach out to us at [info@thedesignpop.com](mailto:info@thedesignpop.com). Education takes a community. Join us!



*Alexandra Tseffos started her career as a dealer designer before joining Configura's Training & Support team where she assisted dealerships and manufacturers across the Americas. Alexandra took her dealer knowledge and CET skills (including her most coveted skill of designing live for clients) and joined a dealer business development team, calling on end-user clients in the commercial real estate market. That was her first introduction into real estate before joining CBRE Minneapolis to head business development efforts for a tenant representation team.*

*Her businesses, Silent T Consulting & The Design POP, are a culmination of all this experience. This is not just about furniture application and design. This industry is about service and adding value is a necessity!*



unika vaev  
Jazzy  
Collection

Bringing design to life

[unikavaev.com](http://unikavaev.com)



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue sleeveless dress and brown sandals, stands in a doorway. To her left is a large potted plant with long green leaves in a blue and white geometric patterned pot. To her right is another potted plant with long green leaves in a dark purple pot. The doorway is made of dark wood with a small window above it. The background is a light-colored stone wall.

# NeoCon:

## The Cutting Edge of Contract Design

By Susan Mulholland

The Contract Design Industry doesn't always facilitate exciting transformations like an episode of HGTV does. Many, even in our profession, tend to think that commercial design is pretty boring. Let's be honest; the next task chair design is not going to get anyone that excited. But those of us who genuinely love our profession of commercial design and contract furniture know better- it is exciting, and it doesn't always involve the next generation of task chairs or high traffic carpeting either. What makes our profession exciting is the fact that what we do every day has an impact on how people work and live.

*Nothing is more important than having the right space designed to support the tasks we do every day-it doesn't matter if we are working in an office or our homes.*

Furniture, including other finishes like flooring, lighting, textiles, and wall treatments, needs to address more than just aesthetics; they need to meet fire codes, performance specifications, and sustainability requirements to be specified for any commercial or public building project. Because we are in the business of design, it doesn't mean that commercial design is based on just function-form counts just as much or more so. Because form is what gets our adrenaline pumping-we all like to see beautifully designed materials and furniture.

Ask any seasoned designer, manufacturer, furniture dealer, or sales representative why they keep coming year after year to NeoCon, and they will tell you it's because it's the most energetic and chaotic place to be in our industry. For three days, we are immersed in all things related to commercial furniture and design. What you see at this show goes beyond just another overly complicated task chair-this show is for anyone in our industry or just a curious chance to see what we do at our best.

The best in commercial furniture and product design is always shown here. This is when ingenuity, research, and craftsmanship

are on display for the world to see. When a manufacturer announces that they will be bringing a new product to market, they always want to show it first at NeoCon. That is why this event is so special.

Every year in June since 1969, NeoCon has been held at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago- except in 2020. The uncertainty and fear of this past year during COVID pushed many in our profession to the brink. No amount of Zoom meetings or "virtual" sales presentations will ever compare to the excitement of seeing, touching, and sitting in a newly designed chair. Interior design is about utilizing all of our senses to create the ultimate interior environment. NeoCon is an event that we need to have more than ever. We need it to revitalize our vision of a better world and help us to recover our sense of creativity and purpose.

I have been a fan of NeoCon since the first time I had the opportunity to attend when I was a young designer. Only a few years out of college, I worked in an Allsteel furniture dealership in Tucson as the design assistant for sales and marketing. The year was 1995. I was asked to attend NeoCon and work at the showroom. I spent a lot of time reviewing the catalogs and other presentation materials so that I could be knowledgeable enough to show someone around and answer questions- All of that preparation had an impact on me, but what I realized is that what was being shown wasn't in the catalogs - yet. The reason is that at NeoCon, everything is new. Sometimes the furniture or textile, wallcovering, or flooring being shown hasn't even been put into production at the factory; the thrill of seeing a new product before anyone else does is pretty exciting.

Since then, I have made a point to go every 3-4 years; I plan my trip well in advance to take advantage of the great city of Chicago while I am there. I often encourage other designers who have never been to go. Every time I am there, it amazes me how many first-timers there are that come from all over the United States and world. When I ask them why they decided to go to NeoCon, the answer is always the same because nothing beats going to the best design show to get your creative juices flowing, expand your knowledge and meet some wonderful people from all over the world.

Yep, NeoCon is not just an American furniture show-it is a global furniture show. Just like the city of Chicago- NeoCon is just as diverse. Many manufacturers make their North American debut here. When they do, it usually opens the door to more opportunities to introduce their company and products and gain awareness and acceptance throughout our industry.

Since my first trip in 1995, I have found that it is new and different every year I attend. Although there have been a few years where the show had to overcome the challenges of world events that made it difficult, the organizers always kept the energy going nonstop.

The past year's events have made many of us hit the pause but-



ton on moving forward, especially when it comes to how we work and where we work. NeoCon is where we will discover new ways to move forward. The energy generated at this place goes beyond just a few days- it transforms us and energizes us after we go back to our hometowns and design studios. Designers are drawn to events like NeoCon because we all need to feel connected. There are so many available opportunities and lessons to be learned that sometimes I think we forget just how important being here is.

Some of these lessons I learned early on in my career from my mentors had nothing to do with design. It can be overwhelming if you are going to NeoCon for the first time and you are by yourself. Just figuring out where everything takes some time and patience. Navigating the showroom floors is probably the most challenging. I learned early on how to manage the elevators, what floors you can get to by taking the stairs, and where the best places are to eat by just meeting people attending the show.

This is where young designers learn that design does not happen in front of a computer screen or by looking at posts on Instagram. Instagram-they learn that design is about meeting, talking, and above all, asking questions about design and learning from others face to face. It is about interacting with those who produce and create the products we use to create fabulous interiors for

our clients and being there when new products are introduced for the first time to the world.

I realize that for some, this is a very challenging and stressful place. Some designers and other industry professionals find it more of a chore to attend than being excited to be part of such a spectacular event. I will be honest: I am exhausted every time I come home from NeoCon. It does drain you but in a good way. Our profession thrives on passion, and creativity sometimes comes from exhausting experiences, especially when that exhausting experience allows you to see and learn so much it makes it worth the effort.

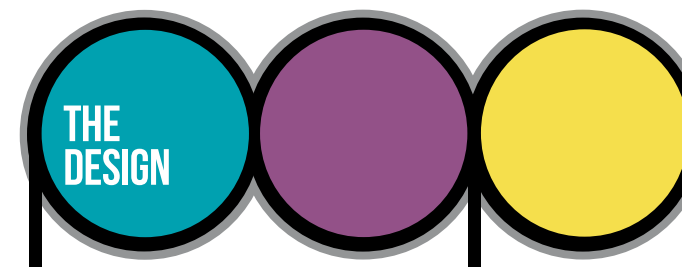
At least when you are here, whether it is the first time or the 50th, you know that you are expanding your design horizons, and after you regain your energy, you can share that newfound vision with your colleagues but, most importantly, your clients. NeoCon has and will always be a benchmark for Commercial design-whether it is held in June or October as long as it is in the city of Chicago- it will always be the most important show for those of us who work in the contract design world. Take a deep breath, make sure you are wearing comfortable shoes, get your current version of the exhibitor map, and be ready to be inspired by every creative minute, because finally, you are here -It's time for the best commercial design show to begin- It's time for NeoCon 2021!



*Susan Mulholland has 30 years of experience in the built environment -specifically in the field of commercial interior design. Throughout her career her goal has been to share her design experience and expertise with her clients. She believes the purpose of interior design is to be human centric, focus on wellbeing and environmentally sound building practices. As a WELL AP and a NCIDQ interior design professional, she takes time to educate her clients and colleagues on the value that professional interior designers can bring to any project. Her design projects include corporate office spaces, hospitality, healthcare, and senior living. Her passion for the commercial interiors industry goes beyond just creating great interiors, she shares her expertise through writing about design. Her articles are featured in various design publications and online blogs. For every project she is involved in she brings her creative eye and style along with her knowledge and experience no matter how big the project is. Her passion has and always will be for the focus of each design project to have a purpose for working, living and wellbeing.*

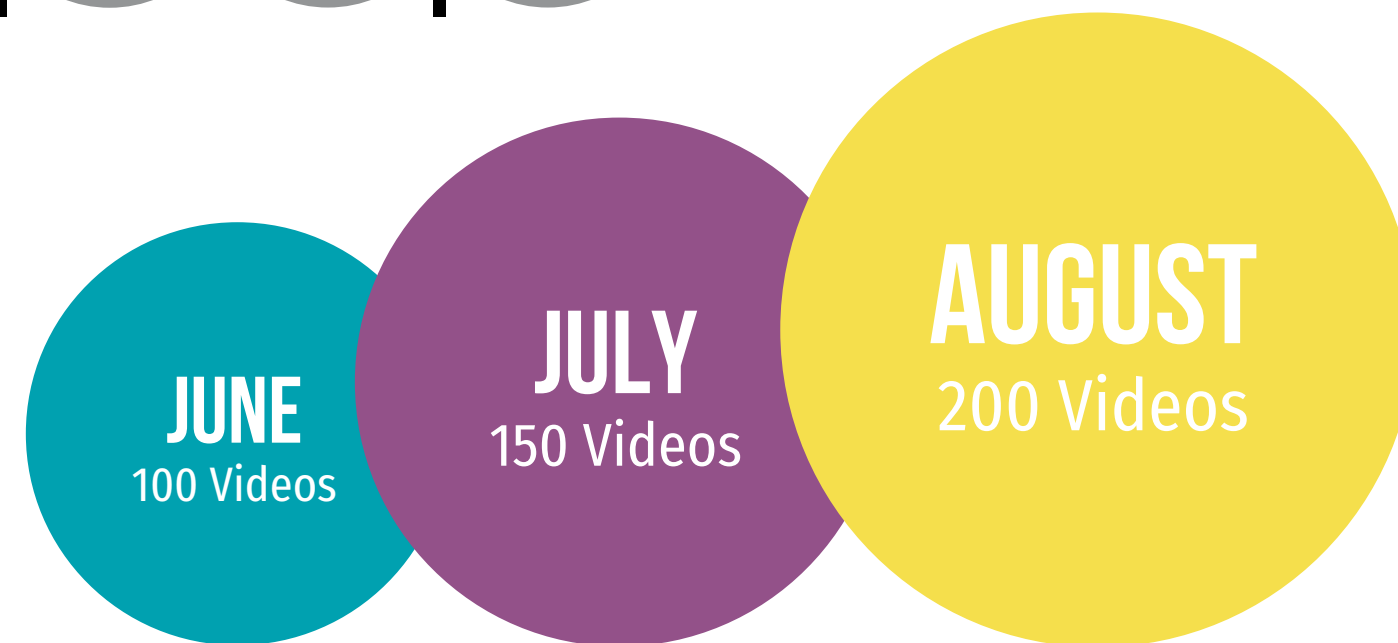
Feel free to contact Susan directly if you'd like to learn more about her design studio and what she can do for your next project. <https://www.madciaz.com/>

We're on a mission to bring you as many relevant educational videos as we can, **all in one convenient location.**



**thedesignpop.com**

**YOUR SAVVY COMMUNITY**



**Are you a designer looking to learn CET at your own pace or a manager working to onboard a new designer? CET Path is for you!**

We make it easy to learn! Our average training video is 5 minutes long and organized by level so you can consume the information as it was intended to be learned – anytime and anywhere. We know designers need resources around the clock.

**Join thedesignpop.com** to access 185+ searchable training videos to enhance technical skills & personal development, monthly webinars, and a community forum.

**POP CONTRIBUTORS**





# SPOTLIGHT ON OFGO STUDIO

## INNOVATING FOR FLEXIBILITY

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the abrupt closure of many workplaces ushered in a new era of remote work for millions and began a significant shift in the future of the workplace. During this upheaval, OFGO STUDIO has continued to become a force within our industry by staying true to its mission and innovating for flexibility.

"We are a group of people who are passionate about everything we do", says Nicole Shamir, the Executive Director at OFGO STUDIO. "We believe the sky is the limit and that is why we have placed a large focus on batch customization and made-to-order design capabilities. Investing in automation and technology has allowed us to design a manufacturing facility that runs off a parametric system."

In 2019, OFGO STUDIO relaunched its brand with a simple new vision, **Premium For All**, and is creating a splash in the furniture industry by taking unique and premium options and making them universally accessible. OFGO STUDIO delivers on this vision through superior construction methodologies, including: **INVISA edgeband technology, DURATEK construction, Premium TFL, and SURFACE+**.

 **OFGO STUDIO**





*“Our job is to make sure they love their space and provide furnishings with the flexibility to really make it theirs.”*





**INVISA™ Edgeband Technology**

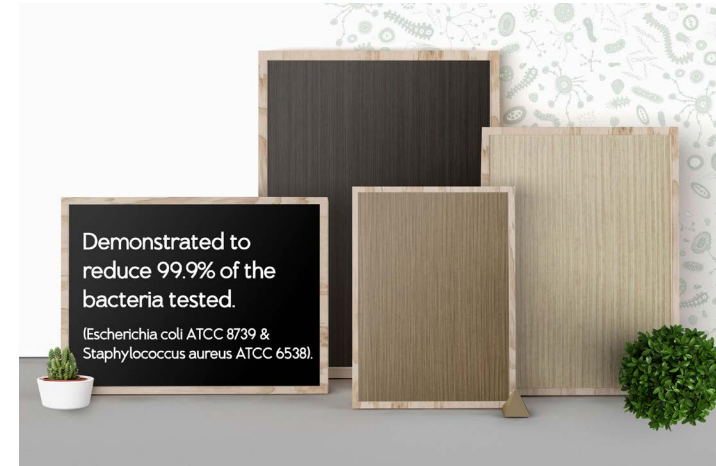
The INVISA edge offers a clean edge finish with high-performance characteristics. It features a permanent bond that is resistant to heat, water, and many chemicals and solvents.

The INVISA edge thermosetting character offers excellent performance properties. Thus, while conventional woodworking adhesives provide mechanical bonding, INVISA provides both mechanical and chemical bonding with superior creep resistance. The INVISA edge is solvent-free and meets Indoor Air Quality certification standards for healthier interiors.

**DURATEK™ Construction**

The DURATEK construction method involves utilizing steel as a replacement to traditional hardwood construction. Steel has the highest strength to weight ratio of any building material, allowing for superior durability. The frame developed for OFGO STUDIO's DURATEK construction method is inorganic, fire-resistant, and will not rot, split, crack, twist, or warp over time as a typical hardwood frame would. Best of all, the DURATEK construction method allows for true modularity with easy parts replacement.

Each DURATEK lounge seating product allows the feet, arms, seat cushion, and back to be attached separately. If a replacement part is required, there is no need to spend additional resources on ordering a completely new item; instead, you can simply order a specific part. The DURATEK construction method utilizes 100% recyclable material and meets Indoor Air Quality certification standards for healthier interiors.



**Premium Thermally Fused Laminate**

Aura & Embossed-In-Register (EIR) Premium TFL finishes by OFGO STUDIO capture and replicate the natural characteristics of wood through embossed surfaces that match the wood grain pattern of each finish. These finishes emulate the elegance of wood in all of its natural beauty.

The embossed LINEA collection features a directional texture complementary to linear wood grains, allowing for the luxury of wood veneer with a subtle, narrow grain structure pressed into the board. The LINEA collection adds depth and texture to any space.

**SURFACE+™**

SURFACE+ by OFGO STUDIO is a decorative thermofused surface panel that is non-porous, making it an inhospitable environment for microorganisms to grow and live. SURFACE+ decorative panels have been tested by a third-party laboratory and demonstrated a 99.9% reduction of the bacteria tested. SURFACE+ is ideal for high-touch applications where the surface is more likely to be exposed to microorganisms. SURFACE+ thermofused laminate panels have also been tested according to BIFMA HCF 8.1 Health Care Furniture Design Guidelines for Cleanability.

Available in 11 standard finishes. SURFACE+ panels are manufactured with a commitment to meeting wood supply needs without compromising the environment for future generations. SURFACE+ uses wood materials recycled from the construction and demolition sector in its composition and wood recycled throughout the production process. SURFACE+ thermofused laminate panels have been tested to pass IAQ certification for healthier interiors, is FSC®-certified, and Eco-Certified Composite (ECC).



“The special properties that define our design and construction philosophy are proving to be significant difference-makers for our channel partners and customers,” says Jacob Markowiak, OFGO STUDIO’s Vice President of Sales. “More and more companies are turning to OFGO STUDIO in search of our fresh new ways of thinking.”

With a focus on locally sourced raw materials, OFGO STUDIO builds their manufacturing practices around the process of made-to-order design flexibility, giving the company the ability to stay adaptable while managing projects of various sizes. Many of OFGO STUDIO’s products are built around the premise of allowing for infinite space planning possibilities, focused on a made-to-order design philosophy that allows their customers to create a space that embraces their individual corporate culture.

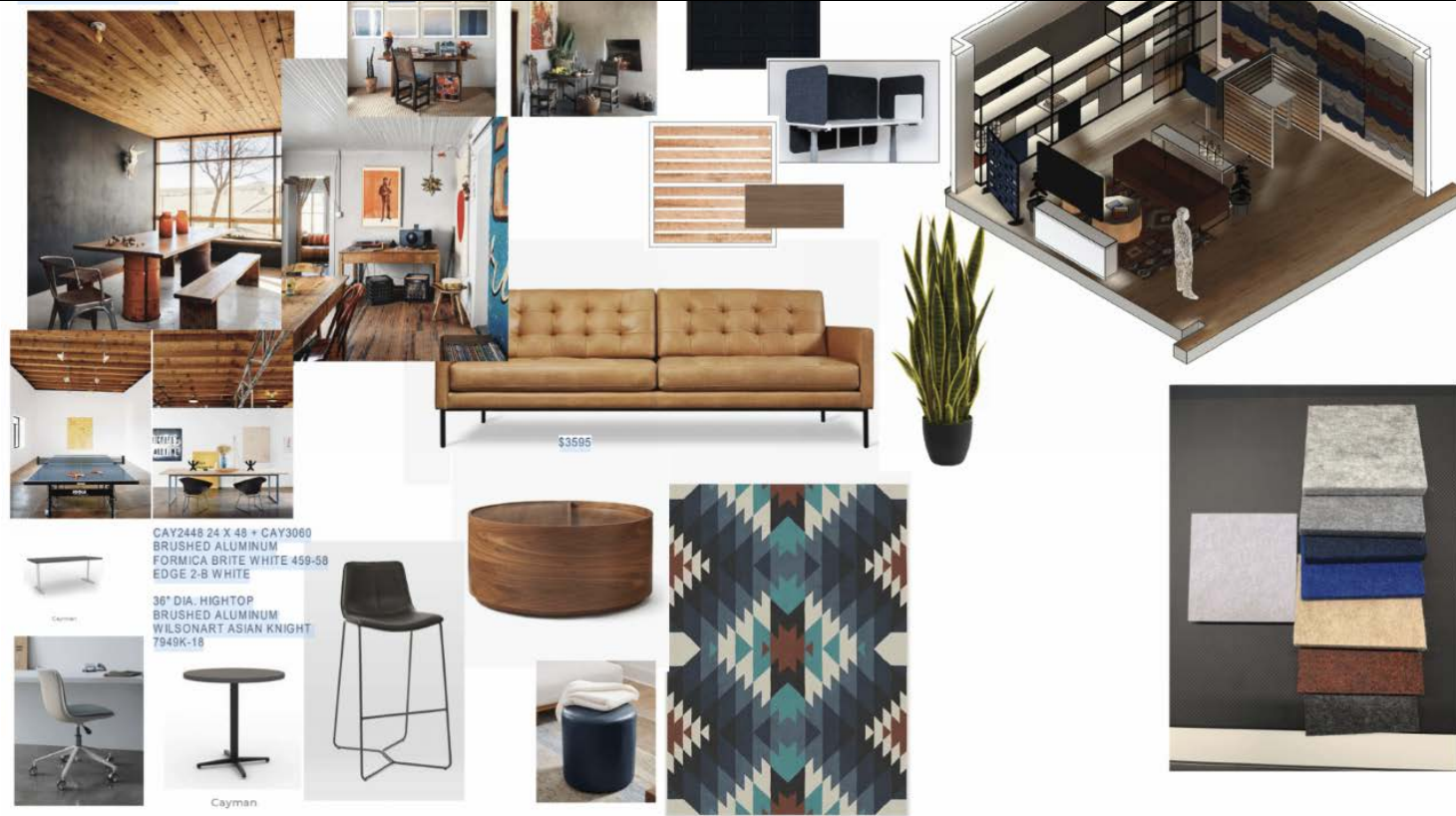
OFGO STUDIO’s corporate philosophy encapsulates the idea that its people define the shape of an organization – and that the shape of the environment in which they work is defined by the way it is used. As an organization, OFGO STUDIO believes in communication, a cohesive nature, an inclusive culture, and building relationships; they design their products in the same way: to be cohesive, inclusive, and promote a sense of community. This is accomplished through the vision of design compatibility; the abundance of free-flowing customizations allows various OFGO STUDIO products to work together to provide a high level of design flexibility.

**Explore OFGO STUDIO today as they continue to evolve, inspire, and innovate for the future of the workplace.**





# This Better Work The Journey to Opening Our Company's First Showroom at theMART



It was February of 2020, and our business was just getting into a groove. Our pipeline was strong; we had a couple of great new rep groups coming on board and a handful of A&D-friendly products that were close to launch-ready. Although we were a small brand, we felt like it was the right time to take a swing and prove we belonged in the industry.

And in February of 2020, the most logical way to do that was to secure a permanent showroom at the Merchandise Mart (theMART) in Chicago. I remember the day we signed the lease - a feeling of pride and trepidation about what the space could mean for us. What I didn't know at the time was that just 30 days later, I would deeply regret the decision.

This is the story of one manufacturer's journey from the temporary seventh floor to a permanent space in theMART. It wasn't linear, it required more than a few leaps of faith, and the jury is still out on if it was the right decision. But if you're anything like me, you enter one of the hundreds of spaces at theMart and completely overlook the thousands of micro-decisions that got

the brands, their people, and their products to the space you're entering.

## The Debate

Contrary to popular belief, a permanent space in theMart isn't 10x more expensive than the square footage on the temporary floors. So for purely financial reasons, it wasn't difficult to see the value in going permanent. Anyone who has exhibited on a temporary floor can understand the frustration of being lost in a sea of me-too's and Chinese suppliers who are at the show to try and knock off our designs.

At the time, we remarked to our team that the only way this wouldn't be a great return on investment is if "magically NeoCon doesn't take place." Insert your favorite expletive here because that turned out to be uncomfortably prophetic.

But our debate wasn't about if we should get a showroom, but more about the how, where, and when. I'll be the first to admit our experience may not be like others. But if you had given me

a firsthand account of the showroom negotiation and opening process five years ago, I would have been thankful.

Over the years, theMart has consolidated smaller showrooms to accommodate larger brands. That meant that there were only a handful of showrooms under 1,000sf in theMart (coincidentally, this was our price range). So right off the bat, we were debating if this was enough space to share our story.

The short answer was "no," it isn't. But in a heated discussion of pros versus cons, we decided that being permanently in theMart with less space was better than being on the seventh floor or not at the show entirely. So as of February 2020, we signed a lease on what has to be one of the smallest permanent showrooms in the entire building.

## The Deserters

Our decision came smack in the middle of "the Exodus." A couple of industry giants (Herman Miller and Knoll, before they got hitched) made the move to Fulton Market. We were getting inquiries if we'd consider doing the same. Opening a showroom for our brand in Chicago seemed risky enough in a building as established as theMart. But doing it in a relatively unproven area like Fulton Market? That seemed crazy even to me. Ultimately, we felt like we had little chance to stand out in a new area that people wouldn't be used to visiting. So we stuck with Plan A.

## The Delay

Remember when I said the only risk in the decision was if a NeoCon show didn't happen? Well, that became very realistic just after the ink dried on our contract. Now we're like every other manufacturer, trying to claw back expenses and commitments. It was our single worst investment in a year that we grew 4x, moved headquarters, and our headcount ballooned. In an otherwise banner year, it was like a blister that we refused to acknowledge.

The show was delayed, then canceled, and the next iteration was set 28 months after NeoCon 2019. Now the ball was in our court - would we be ready?

## The Details

Most of our products define, separate, and maximize space. We like to tell dealers and designers that we're obsessed with privacy. So the task of making a showroom feel intentionally designed with privacy in mind, while less than 700 square feet, was admittedly ambitious. You know what makes it even trickier? When you launch a product, that takes up a huge footprint in the process.

That's right; we launched Rooms in the months leading up to NeoCon 2021. Rooms is a "space within a space" solution that answers the question "what do I do with all this unused space in an office where people constantly complain that they can't focus?" Even if it were the only product we brought to the show, Rooms wouldn't fit in our new showroom. So our ambitious plans got even loftier in the summer before the show.

Our solution? We convinced theMart to rent us the entry space on the first floor near the Kinzie/Wells entrance (yes, the one with the escalator). Our thought was that we now get two chances to tell our brand story at NeoCon. If we were in deep with our showroom commitment, we were "all in" now that we purchased the sponsorship space on the first floor.

That kicked off weeks upon weeks of design and detail meetings. Should the two spaces feel related? Showcase different capabilities? How many people should we expect to visit both spaces? How many people were even coming to this version of NeoCon? Most of these answers weren't possible to determine - so we were back to crowdsourcing opinions and trusting our collective gut.

## The Conclusion

Our permanent showroom will officially be "open" on October 4th, when NeoCon kicks off. Since the last time we exhibited at the show, our brand has grown leaps and bounds, and we've launched in the neighborhood of 20 products. We'll be juggling how to tell that brand story across two dedicated spaces while thousands of visitors navigate the show. If there's one lesson in all of this, it's that nothing is guaranteed. We're deciding to step up to the plate and take a big swing (for a modest company). I'd love for you to stop by and see if we can hit a home run together and solve some privacy problems.

# LOFTWALL

*Bryce Stuckenschneider is a passionate contract furniture advocate and the CEO of Loftwall, a Texas-based manufacturer of products focused on bringing privacy and division to the workplace. He has written for Delve, Business of Furniture, Inc. Magazine, Interior Design, Marketscale, and numerous other publications on the intersection of commercial furniture, technology, and global trends.*





# Love, Marriage & NeoCon

By Sean Cronan

It was early June of 1991, and as a 25-year-old newly graduated student (on the six-year plan) from The University of Texas, I was already in my 4th year in the office furniture industry. I had been introduced to the industry by my Aunt and Uncle, Marilyn and Mike Cronan, who ran a rep group out of Houston. I had attended Neocon a couple of times already up to this point, and I was preparing for another trip to Chicago for the Big Show. At the time, I was on the dealer side of the business. I was a one-person dealer that officed out of my bedroom in a three-bedroom house that I shared with two roommates. I sold almost exclusively one line of ergonomic seating. My little business, Ergo-Concepts, was doing well. As I was preparing for this Neocon trip, another thing weighed on my mind...a Girl. Lisa and I met at a party in Austin

during my first semester of college. She was attending UT, and I was attending The University of Houston. We had an interesting introduction at a birthday party that I co-hosted at a friend's house in Austin. My main job in planning this party was...to bring a keg of beer. I informed my friend Joe (the other co-host) that we would be charging a cover because I was a poor college student, paying my way through school, and I certainly didn't have an extra \$150 to waste on beer. He agreed, so we charged \$5/head. Lisa was in one of Joe's classes at UT, and as she approached the front of the line at that party, Joe yelled to Lisa to come through the line, and he very publicly told her that she and her friend did not have to pay. Joe and I almost fought over that statement because I was not about to let anyone in for free. I was going to

*"I approached the horse and carriage ride, and Lisa asked where I was going. I told her that we were going on a horse and carriage ride. Her response? "No, we are not!.."*

recoup my money. And that was my introduction to "The Girl."

While Lisa was attending UT, she also worked in the accounting department of a small jewelry store in downtown Austin. As I prepared for this Neocon trip, I thought about how Lisa and I had already been dating for six years. Her parents had been asking me for some time about my "plans for the future" (i.e., when was I going to ask her to marry me). I had struggled with that long-term commitment but knew that she was "the one." I told her parents that I really needed to focus on finishing college, and I couldn't even think about marriage until I got my degree. Well, I graduated the month before that '91 Neocon trip, so I was out of excuses. So, I decided that I would take her on this Neocon trip and finally ask the big question. I went to the owner of the jewelry store that Lisa worked for and laid out my plans. I hoped that he would cut this poor college Boy a deal on a wedding ring. He did, so now I had to figure out where and how I would pull this off in Chicago. Lisa and I went up on the Saturday before the show. I had the ring box in my front pocket on the flight. The entire day, as we walked through Windy City, I repeatedly checked my pocket to make sure that I hadn't lost it. I had dinner planned at a great little restaurant off of Michigan Avenue. As we walked to the restaurant, I thought about how I would make this proposal. I didn't really want to pop the question in a restaurant. Then, I looked up, and it came to me...a horse and carriage ride!

The dinner was great, but I was getting really nervous at this point. After dinner, I approached the horse and carriage ride,

and Lisa asked where I was going. I told her that we were going on a horse and carriage ride. Her response? "No, we are not!... what are you thinking?...that costs \$20!!!" The accounting major was as frugal as I was, but I told her that I wanted to make this a memorable experience, so she finally went along with it. I pulled the driver of our carriage aside before the ride and informed her of my plan to propose during the ride. I handed her a digital camera (it weighed about 27 lbs back in '91) and instructed her that I was going to tap her on the shoulder, and at that point, I wanted her to take the picture right as I proposed. She did, and it captured the moment perfectly. We ended up getting married the following June, shortly after Neocon '92. We then moved to Dallas, where I ended up partnering in my Aunt and Uncle's rep group for eight years before forming Cronan & Associates in October of 2000.

Today, Cronan & Associates is an independent rep group covering Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. We have been in business for 20 years, we have a 20 person team, and we have showrooms in Dallas and Houston. Not to mention, we represent the absolute best manufacturers in the industry!

Cronan & Associates see a tremendous value in Neocon. It is a place where we can meet with our customers to show them the latest product offerings and share each of our manufacturers' unique cultures. Neocon is a place to see, a place to learn, and a place to bond. We have so many great memories and stories from Neocon over the years. And, Neocon has served as a place that started many business relationships that have turned into lifelong friendships. Although it makes for an exhausting three days (or six days in the case of an independent rep group), there is honestly no industry event that even compares to Neocon. Not to mention, it will always stand out in my memory, as the place where "The Girl" said yes to me 30 years ago. And, in case you were wondering, although Lisa will deny it, she did pay the five dollar cover.





# CHICAGO

OCT 4-6, 2021

# DESIGN

# A NEW

# NeoCon

NeoCon® is a registered trademark of Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc.

PRODUCED BY  
**theMART**  
A VORNADO PROPERTY



## theMART + Neocon An Iconic Pairing

Spanning two whole city blocks and rising 25 stories into the Chicago skyline, theMART is an icon, and in 2021, theMART is revving up for its first NeoCon since 2019. Let's take a look at where it all started and what big things to expect this year and beyond.

When theMART was opened in 1930, it was the largest building in the world. Today, the art deco structure is still the largest commercial building in the United States and encompasses 4.2 million gross square feet. theMART is interwoven into the fabric of Chicago – an epicenter of business, technology, culture, art, and media. It is one of the world's leading commercial buildings, design centers, and a retail and wholesale destination, hosting an average of 30,000 people each business day and nearly 10 million people annually.

theMART is home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative manufacturers and design-forward showrooms. Since 1969, it has been the home to the annual National Exposition of Contract Furnishings – now known as NeoCon.

NeoCon is the product launch platform and the most important event for the contract interiors industry. It serves as the annual gathering place for the commercial design world's manufacturers, dealers, architects, designers, end-users, design organizations, and media. Outside of being a 3-day showcase for innovative products and services from nearly 500 leading and emerging companies, NeoCon offers educational programming – keynote presentations and CEU sessions from world-class experts.

After an in-person hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic, theMART is gearing up again for NeoCon 2021 – running October 4 through October 6 with 1 million square feet of exhibition space. Earlier this year, theMart announced that 11 leading manufacturers had established new showrooms and 19 other existing tenants had renewed or expanded their spaces ahead of this year's NeoCon, underscoring the continued importance that physical showrooms play in building business.

Byron Morton, VP of Showroom Leasing at theMART, remarked, "Even with the setbacks of COVID-19, a showroom at theMART continues to play a pivotal role in the overall marketing and sales strategies of top brands. It's clear that their commitment to the building and NeoCon is critical to marketing their solutions, connecting with decision-makers, and delivering a dynamic, in-person experience." Best of NeoCon, NeoCon's official awards pro-

gram honoring outstanding new product since 1990, relies on

a jury of interior designers, architects, facility managers, procurement professionals, design consultants, and enterprise clients to judge the coveted competition. The jury – with industry leaders experienced in the commercial, healthcare, education, and technology sectors – will be tasked with selecting the best of the best from 58 product categories across a range of verticals. More than 275 new products have been submitted for Best of NeoCon 2021.

*"As one of the founders, I've been managing the Best of NeoCon Competition for the entirety of the program's 31 years. The 2021 edition expands upon the competition's rich tradition of community and product excellence. As part of a refresh of the program, we've grown the jury and broadened the submission categories to be in line with the latest trends and shifts in the commercial interiors industry," notes Eileen McMorro, director of the Best of NeoCon competition.*

In the days leading up to the show, Best of NeoCon jurors will split up into teams and visit all participating showrooms and booths to conduct thorough product evaluations before deliberating and making their final determinations. Participating exhibitors will have the opportunity to present products created within the last 18 months to this group of highly vetted industry professionals.

Winners will be announced on-site at a live special awards ceremony on the first day of NeoCon, Monday, October 4, at theMART. The event will also be live-streamed online. Bob Beck, industry veteran and publisher/editor in chief of Officeinsight, will serve as this year's Master of Ceremonies for the official awards celebration and will announce the winners in each category.

New to the competition this year is the physical Best of NeoCon Award. Winners will receive the translucent blue sculpture designed by award-winning firm and NeoCon partner Maiarelli Studio and produced by the material specialists at NeoCon exhibitor 3form.

To see the complete list of 2021 Best of NeoCon jurors and for more information on Best of NeoCon submissions, visit <https://neocon.com/programming/best-of-neocon> or explore NeoCon's "Meet the Jury" campaign on Instagram.



# Designing For a Digital World (Or a Space-Time Journey!)

From time to time, my mother asks me, “what do you do for work?” I’ve been practicing both architecture and design for a long time, and it’s still curious to me how she continuously asks me this question. I think this has a lot to do with the hybrid approach I’ve taken on projects in this ‘digital revolution’ that we are all experiencing and navigating today.

I prefer to see the so-called “digital world” as a twin to the analog world. Like the unique structure of DNA, two lines intertwined, similar yet different, the two live side by side and are essential to creation. The analog world influences the physical SPACE people experience and the digital world influences people’s experience of TIME, and vice-versa. In my head, working in both analog and digital simultaneously means that you can shape a person’s space-time journey!

Today, one human being can experience a complete shift in the world around them within the span of their life. Things that once took generations to change now take weeks, even days. From the hand-painted wall to the computer, from the primitive cave to the modern skyscraper, all the designs require a human-centric approach considering the super fast transformation of the reality around us and the precious time value of each character.

A designer’s job is to bring balance and harmony to the tangi-

ble and intangible aspects of our own available space-time. With time at premium and spaces being constantly reinvented, our experiences of both are too valuable to waste and therefore must be tended through an analog and a digital lens.

From a simple object to a city’s urban design, regardless of scale we are talking about the quality of people’s time: Any interaction, virtual, visual, physical, consumes an individual’s time in some capacity and this time is essential.

The point is that today, the “digital world” is the main engine of influence in the context of a person’s life and their use of time. It is no longer possible to imagine a world without tools and digital interfaces.

With the advancement of the digital world and the created intangible universe, there is now a competition for the person’s time between the physical (material) and the digital (immaterial) world, which calls to mind the issues around our attention spans and our understanding of time spent on devices. As everything goes very fast, the most popular digital tools (in a way, still primitive, primarily social networks), fight for your attention and not for the quality of your time. The volume of misinformation is gigantic since the algorithms’ goal is related to your attention, not to the quality of the time and information provided.

And this has a massive impact on the relationships between physical space, digital space, and our time consumption. How do we experience a public space when everyone around us is on their devices? Are we also too entrenched in our phones to really notice what is going on around us? How do we engage with space differently? There are no longer artistic performances or concerts where there aren’t at least a crowd of people recording the moment with their smartphones, converting that moment to the digital world to answer a call for the digital world’s attention.

As a designer, I prefer to unify the analog world and the digital world. Both fight for your time, and therefore the goal must be to create harmony between them. This harmony should come from the desire to prioritize quality time in your daily life. We must think about a design that points to a future, an invented and desired bright future, but should fulfill your desires as a user of the present day.

True, quality time is when you see something and consider it beautiful, when you are present in a space and feel good, or when you touch or use something and feel joy, or when you feel empowered and moved by good and true design!

Good design then by definition should simultaneously face the conflicts and provide synchronicity between the analog and digital world, and address three main questions:

How do we create quality time for the user and what is the strategy for that?

What is the solution in time and space (analog and digital)?

What tools, what technologies, and what resources need to be applied?

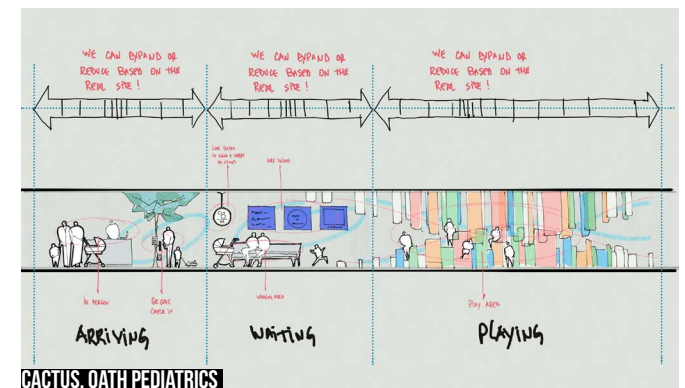
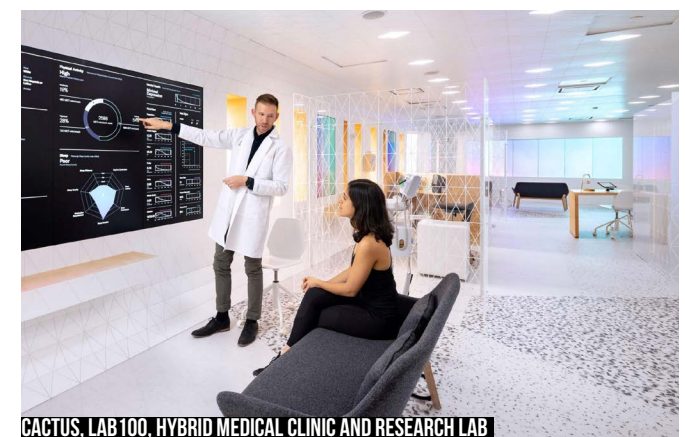
Regardless of any methodology applied to develop “the design,” these questions should help create strong results and more conscious user experience.

My work as an architect has spanned across many diverse fields: from an art installation to an entire museum; a high-performance gym to the most advanced health and wellness center, from an innovative healthcare clinic to a new A.I. operating system. In all of them, it has just been a matter of timing!

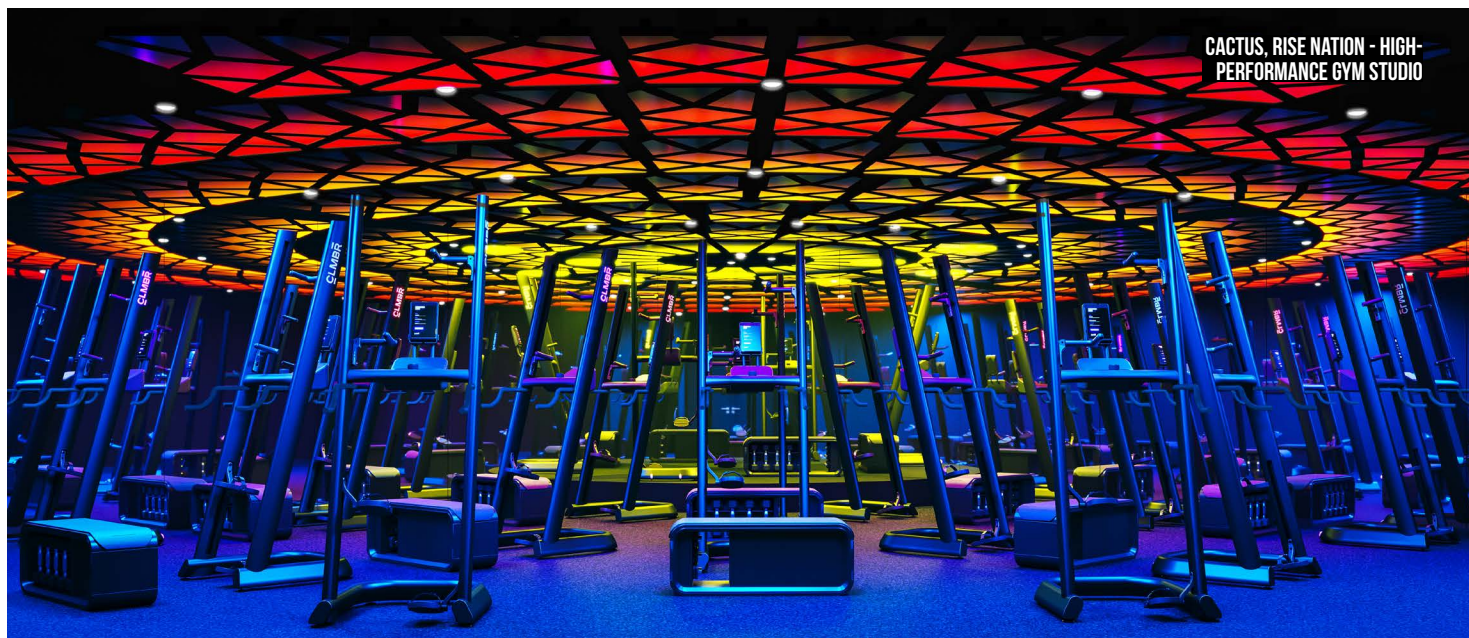
So, when my mother asks me what I do, I usually reply: “As an architect and designer, I try to make people’s time in this complex world the best-time ever!” And I know that soon she will ask me again, not because she didn’t understand, but because she likes to spend her time seeing the beautiful nature of an architect talking about time!

Cheers,  
Marcelo Pontes

P.S. Even this text requires design, and I hope that the time it took to read it was worth it for you!







*Marcelo Pontes is an award-winning architect whose work is driven by finding the balance between the digital and physical worlds. Mining inspiration from unconventional sources, he creates awe-inspiring interiors that harmonize time and space; prioritizing human-centric design and optimizing occupant experience. Marcelo's groundbreaking work spans a dynamic variety of sectors and includes a roster of established clients (including Nike and Starbucks, just to name a few.) As Head of Architecture at Cactus, Marcelo brings 20 years of industry experience and directs a team with a diverse range of capabilities including architectural design, interiors, user experience design, retail, industrial design, set design and art installations. Throughout every project, Marcelo brings a cross-sectional perspective: overlapping grounded, research-driven design with otherworldly inspiration. Marcelo's aim as an architect is to create immersive, sensory environments that evoke a collective, shared emotion or feeling. He views architecture as a transcendent tool that crosses boundaries, industries, and cultures - bridging gaps and forming lasting connections between people and spaces. His unique outlook and innovative architectural process has led to the creation of award-winning retail environments, interactive museums, first-of-their-kind health & wellness spaces, and many others. Marcelo is the recipient of multiple design awards, including: Interior Design's Best of Year Awards - Rising Star, Innovation (2021), Frame's Festival of Design Innovation - Best Use of Digital Technology (2020), and Fast Company's Innovation by Design - General Excellence Finalist (2018). He resides in Rio de Janeiro and regularly finds new inspiration while biking through his city. Marcelo also shares his insight and expertise as an Architecture + Technology Design professor in Brazil.*

# Our specialties are also our passions.

Novità is an integrated marketing and communications agency with global reach. At Novità, our passion for design and architecture drives the work that we do.

NOVITÀ

novitapr.com | @novitapr





## The Future of Design: Transporting Interiors to Virtual Spaces

As architects and designers, I believe that we have mastered the power to make use of our creative skills in extraordinary ways. From hours of designing to years of learning, we possess the ability to create magical moments across interior and exterior spaces. It wasn't until a few months ago, under the guise of a "zoomed" world during a global pandemic, that I truly began to think one step further — to the capabilities of virtual space.

Employing an architectural firm to design a virtual space is quite unheard of in the gallery world (or really, most worlds for that matter.) We worked to design a digital gallery for the debut exhibition of Minoru Onoda: Through another Lens, which was directed by Anne Mosseri-Marlio.

With most "OVRs," or online viewing rooms, depicting two-dimensional art, we ensured that the virtual gallery incorporated heightened realism. We partnered with The Boundary, an architectural visualization agency, in a quest to develop an immersive, simulated space that could meet the demands of an expanding online art market.

Our studio seeks to encourage design to be more accessible across a wider audience. In every project, whether it's a private

home or urban development, we aim to identify ways in which we can closely connect with clients and the future inhabitants of the space.

With this in mind, we noticed an occurrence that was amplified by the global pandemic—many artists and curators made the transition to online platforms with the hope of displaying their artwork to the public, as there were very few opportunities to do so in physical space.

We viewed this particular project as a chance to authentically share breathtaking art and architecture, while minimizing the gap between simulated reality and our physical existence. The intention behind the virtual gallery went beyond restrictions brought on by the pandemic—our focus was accessibility for all.

In our conversations with the gallery's director, we contemplated ways to make the space more meaningful. Creating transportive interior spaces is one challenge. However, developing these spaces, I believe that designers should ask themselves this: how can we make this feel as interactive, immersive and inclusive as possible?

We utilized our experience in the brick-and-mortar sector to develop a lifelike viewing experience—visitors are genuinely transported to another zone.

Considering the standard features of an online gallery, and our mission to incorporate accessible elements, we looked to form the space with meticulous attention to detail and realism—from the floor to the ceiling, and the size to scale. The gallery bears an essence of freedom unlike any other.

The online space is physically accessible to anyone and everyone with an internet connection. When it came down to design, we opted to incorporate inclusive elements, such as a ramp. We wanted to amplify representation—certain components helped make it accessible to those who may be intimidated by the gallery world, live a great distance from the city, or generally don't have the means to visit these spaces.

Virtual reality is an exciting tool within the architectural world, and we're just scratching the surface of technological possibilities. In my eyes, there are a number of applications for this type of interactive, immersive technology—many of which we are actively working to uncover.

*All images courtesy of Oppenheim Architecture, by The Boundary*



**Beat Huesler**, Director of European Operations, Oppenheim Architecture A licensed architect with over 28 years' professional experience, Beat Huesler is the European partner of Chad Oppenheim—in 2009, the two founded Oppenheim Architecture + Design Europe, based in Basel, Switzerland. Huesler's relationship with Oppenheim extends back to their joint studies at Cornell University in New York, where Huesler received his Bachelors and Masters of Architecture. Huesler heads the European studio, managing a senior architectural team to deliver projects in urban and remote locations around the world. His extensive construction and technical knowledge make the studio highly responsive to the available resources and industry practices in any specific location. An ability to work collaboratively with local architects, builders, and craftspeople leads to buildings that are made for their environments and loved by their communities.





# Delving Into The Public Sector

By Michelle Warren

As I reflect on NeoCon's gone by, I also reflect on my career in the furniture industry. If I got the years correct, I have been attending NeoCon since 2002 when I was invited by an up-and-coming systems manufacturer as I was the VP of Sales for a dealer that they wanted to represent the line. I had been in the industry since 1996 but had never had the opportunity to attend the show. They were on the 7th floor of the Mart that year. The following year I was there as a VP of Sales for that manufacturer (the dealer I had worked for had closed its doors) and my career skyrocketed from there. NeoCon from then on always meant a lot of fun and friends, a lot of hard work and very little sleep. I honestly never looked forward to going (my bosses will tell you I would volunteer to not go) but I always ended up grateful that I went.

This will be my first year at NeoCon where I am not with a manufacturer working a showroom and my goals for the show are so very different than what they have been in the past, so I am looking forward to a new experience.

October being the month of NeoCon is throwing me a curve ball. It

is my birthday month, a month of falling leaves and chill in the air not the month we normally head to the windy city for the biggest furniture show in North America but, I am looking forward to it. One of the many things I love about the contract furniture industry is that it is so very large but so very small at the same time. In my 25 years as part of the industry I have met many great people and a lot of them have become true friends. So, I look forward to reconnecting with old friends, celebrating my birthday with many of them, and meeting new friends. It will be different for sure, but sometimes different is good. I hope you wore your comfortable shoes!!

I want to share 5 tips for NeoCon that are applicable to everyone but will put a public sector spin them.

**1. There will be public sector end users and designers at NeoCon.** There may not be as many and they may not be from all over the US, but they will be there. In the past many federal, state, education and non-profits have been in attendance. Ask your contacts if they will be attending, you may be surprised.

**2. Make Appointments.** I am a big proponent of making showroom appointments at NeoCon and I think this year it may be even more important. The MART and all the showrooms can be distracting. If you make an appointment, you have a better chance of seeing your customer or prospect than if you do not.

**3. Read nametags.** Let everyone in the showroom know that if they see someone with a federal or SLED agency to let you know. Most nametags have the end user company- make sure you pay attention. So many great meetings with new potential prospects have happened through just paying attention to someone's nametag and/or by being alerted by a coworker that someone from XYZ agency was there and did I want to talk to them.

**4. Work Wednesday.** I know everyone is tired and many have left by this time, but someone needs to be in your showroom working and by this, I mean a salesperson! There may not be a lot of good prospects who come through on Wednesday, but that one person may come in that makes the show for you. Especially if you are not with a major manufacturer, it may not be until Wednesday that they make it by your showroom. A couple of years ago I learned this lesson when I was "stuck" working the Wednesday. There was a prospect I had met before that I knew was at NeoCon, but they were not responding to my request to schedule an appointment. I was bummed that they did not stop in on Monday or Tuesday when low

and behold the main guy came in the showroom Wednesday morning incognito...jeans, ballcap. I did not even recognize him. I walked over to greet him, read his nametag and we had a great laugh over him being incognito and then a great presentation.

**5. Walk/Work the hallways.** This may sound stalkerish but work the hallways. If I had down time while in the showroom, I would hang around outside in the hallway and see people I knew to bring into the showroom. Sometime people are super focused and will walk right past your showroom or they may even forget you would be there. This is a people industry; grab the ones you know when you see them. I would also be working as I walked to other showrooms or even the restroom. Always looking for people I knew and or nametags for people I want to know.

This year will be very different than the past, but I think these tips will apply and hopefully will benefit you in your pursuit of public sector.



## MICHELLE WARREN

Michelle Warren is President of [Catalyst Consulting Group](#), a firm specializing in providing strategic solutions to the commercial furniture industry to enhance companies' sales and positioning within their industry and distribution. Michelle has been in the commercial furniture industry for over 25 years with experience on both the dealer and manufacturer side of the industry. She has experience at the EVP, VP and National Sales Manager level for large and small manufacturers.



# The NAIRC Makes a Splash at NeoCon

## North American Independent Rep Council



*A collaboration of minds within the contract interiors industry with a passion to better our own companies and the industry as a whole.*

The NAIRC was started with one goal in mind, to bring companies from across North America together that are the best in their field and each respective territory. Each group is committed and invested in bettering their firms and the companies they partner with. Together the NAIRC is impassioned to learn more about the industry, how it can influence business, and redefine its place within the industry.

The NAIRC itself is truly a testament to the importance of partnership. It is led by their elected advisory board – Jeff Allor with the Allor Group, Sean Cronan with Cronan Associates, Michael Gallery with MRG SE and Jeff Carlson with MRL. Together with their fellow peers, they will continue to raise the bar and provide invaluable insights to the industry.



**Contract Sources, Ltd.** Is a Boston based independent manufacturer's representative organization. Our Boston showroom displays some of the most outstanding and innovative manufacturers of contract and home office furniture in the United States. As an organization, we service all six New England states. We have representatives responsible for or residing in each one. We have been successfully organized as Contract Sources, Ltd since 1991 and have established a reputation for being among our manufacturer's top producers and our client's most reliable resource.

We are excited to see you at NeoCon 2021. This year unlike any will highlight more new products than ever before. Two years of product development on display, coupled with monumental shifts in the workplace will make this NeoCon an exceptional "solution-centric" event.

**Cronan & Associates** is an independent rep group covering Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. We have been in business for 20 years, we have a 20 person team, and have showrooms in Dallas and Houston. Not to mention...we represent some of the greatest manufacturers in the industry!

Cronan & Associates sees a tremendous value in Neocon. It is a place where we can meet with our customers to show them the latest product offerings from our manufacturers, as well as to share the unique culture of each of our manufacturers. Neocon is a place to see, a place to learn, and a place to bond. We have so many great memories and stories from Neocon over the years. And, Neocon has served as a place that started many business relationships that have turned into lifelong friendships. Although it makes for an exhausting 3 days (or, 6 days in the case of an independent rep group), there is honestly no industry event that even compares to Neocon.



**The Eaton Group** is a dedicated team of seven professionals who consider our customers to be our manufacturers, our dealers, and the design community.

We represent great brands, provide in-house design and space planning services, have a dedicated customer service rep, and staff two showrooms in the Pacific Northwest. We cover the great states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, and Hawaii.

We are excited to participate in our 40th Neocon show and are looking forward to showing our clients great new products from all of our brands. See you soon!



**Levine Contract Furniture Group** is a dedicated and experienced team founded in 1973. We are based in NYC and support the A&D community to create progressive corporate, healthcare and educational environments.

NeoCon is a special event that our family has attended each year since it's inception. The Chicago exhibition is when we connect with our creative partners, clients, and distributors to discuss emerging trends of both furniture design and workplace strategy. A lot has changed in 50 years and this years Neocon will be a first step towards a rebirth of the communal workplace, centers of healing and the learning environment. We/ LCFG look forward to meeting you there to discover and embrace brave new design.



**Allor Group** Representing Contract Furnishings for over 20 years. We are excited to announce in June 2021 our new 4000 sq ft showroom located in Metropolitan Detroit.

NeoCon is the one time a year we get to celebrate our industry as a whole. Spending time with industry friends and entertaining our clients in downtown Chicago is a blast. We love experiencing all the new product, trends and fresh ideas.



**Altitude Resource Group** has been finding furniture solutions for their dealer partners in the Rocky Mountain region for over 25 years. Throughout its tenure in the contract furniture industry Altitude Resource Group has attended Neocon each of those years finding true value not only in the show itself, but also in forging stronger relationships with their dealer/designers along the way.

The secret sauce for our group has been to get a good group of supporting dealers and designers together to join us as traveling companions and guests for the show. Our manufacturers provide fantastic dinner experiences, we usually catch a Cubs game, and then provide tours of all our presenting manufacturers. All while finding time to work! Count your steps for the show and sit back and be amazed.

Thanks Neocon for the fantastic memories, experiences, and plenty of future adventures!



**The Bierman Group** The Bierman Group is a highly recognized contract furniture independent manufacturer's representative organization in Florida & Puerto Rico. Our product offering includes Architectural products and a diversified package of premier furniture manufacturers supporting contract furniture dealers and the A&D community for Corporate, Hospitality, Healthcare & Higher Education markets.





**CE associates** is a commercial furniture manufacture representative firm covering the Northern California Northern Nevada market areas, we are based out of our showroom in Cupertino California in the heart of Silicon Valley. Our role is to oversee and advocate for our clients, factories, and dealers to ensure the best-case long-term relationships for all parties involved. Some of our responsibilities include support in the creation of pricing agreements to serve client inquiries into product standards, projects, and day-to-day order requirements. We also work to make sure dealer, factory service, and follow-up is consistent and responsive as each purchasing client and dealer requires. Our neutral market position allows for optimal support, with a diverse group of factories covering Commercial Office Interiors, Architectural Wall, and Ergonomic Office Furniture. We specialize in space for technology, education, healthcare, commercial, public sector, GSA, and hospitality. We continually share each factory's latest line offerings with the intention of opening up greater opportunities and possibilities for new and better product selection. we are grateful to be of service to our client's dealers and factories



**MRG Southeast** started in 1998 with a clear mission - to be a valued partner to our manufacturers and to be the best resource in the industry to our dealers, design firms and end users. Today, MRG covers the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi with local team members in each market. We view everyone at MRG as an integral part of the team and are lucky to have great people within our organization.

Neocon is special to a lot of people, the MRG team is no exception. We love coming together as a community to share ideas, visions and see designs coming to life. Neocon plays a huge role in this year after year. People usually don't give much thought to furniture but if you think about it, we are a very unique industry that most other industries rely on to make their jobs functional.



**Nolan Brands** enjoys bringing the finest to the DC design community. From design through execution, you can depend on Nolan Brands

Neocon is a chance to see, touch and feel the latest introductions, as well as learn of the latest trends. The energy, the innovation, the community and the celebration brings us back every year. Cheers to another Neocon!



**Tim O'Neil and Associates** We are a manufacturer's representative firm in the Midwest. Our team represents over 20 manufacturer lines spanning across 5 states; Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. We offer a wide variety of lines suitable for any commercial furniture need. With team TOA you will find traditional to contemporary styles at varying price-points. We bring quality products, a dedicated team of experienced professionals, and creative solutions to any project!

Every NeoCon we are excited to see the latest and greatest design innovations come to life. This year we are thrilled to discover how the events of the past have shaped the designs for our future. Each NeoCon we find inspiration in the inventiveness of our manufacturers. The ideas and designs featured at the show help keep our minds fresh with new ideas helping us to improve the creative service we offer our clients. This year we are especially looking forward to getting out and making meaningful connections again with people in our industry. Here's to a wonderful NeoCon 2021, we hope to see you there!



**Rodenbeck Associates** is an independent manufacturer rep group formed in 1978 that is based out of Downtown Los Angeles. We pride ourselves in outstanding customer service and our excellent mix of high quality, contract furniture lines. Currently we represent 12 manufacturers for all Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Las Vegas, Hawaii and El Paso. With our diverse line package, we cover many vertical markets including Corporate, Government, Healthcare, Higher Education & Hospitality.

Transforming a workspace with great interior design inspires the people who work there. We find it very rewarding to help architects, designers and end users find the right solutions that convert their space from just a place to work to a place they enjoy being in.

Neocon is our yearly expedition where we get to learn new products and trends in our industry as well as network with our colleagues from around the country. A recent memory of our Neocon travels was on the 50 year anniversary of show. That same year also marked 50 years in the business for our founder Terry Rodenbeck. It was great to have a celebration with all the industry friends in town.



For over 22 years, **The Ruder Group** has partnered with the best independent manufacturers to bring innovative products, top-tier customer service and forward thinking to the Design/Build community of Chicago and Wisconsin. We collaborate daily with architects, designers,

dealers, GCs, installers and end-users to ensure unrivaled execution on our projects. As locals to the NeoCon show, we look forward to welcoming the national and international design communities to the MART. NeoCon gives our team a unique opportunity to connect with the creators of the products we represent and hear about their design inspiration, product development, and market trends - so we can then share those stories with our clients. It's a time to catch up with our counterparts across the country, and meet new industry partners. Welcome back to Chicago for NeoCon 2021!!



**CFS Group** has been attending NeoCon for the past 20+ years. Covering over 1 million square feet NeoCon is an excellent opportunity to experience cutting edge commercial furniture design offered by 100s of different manufactures from across the country and the world.



To learn more about the NAIRC, visit their website at [www.na-irc.com](http://www.na-irc.com)



# KEEPING CONNECTED

With the challenges that 2020 brought, it is more important than ever to “Keep Connected” to our clients, friends and colleagues. We have been simply inspired by all of the innovative ways our Rep Group friends have found to do just that! The pandemic hasn’t slowed them down one bit, and relationships are still at the center of their strategy.

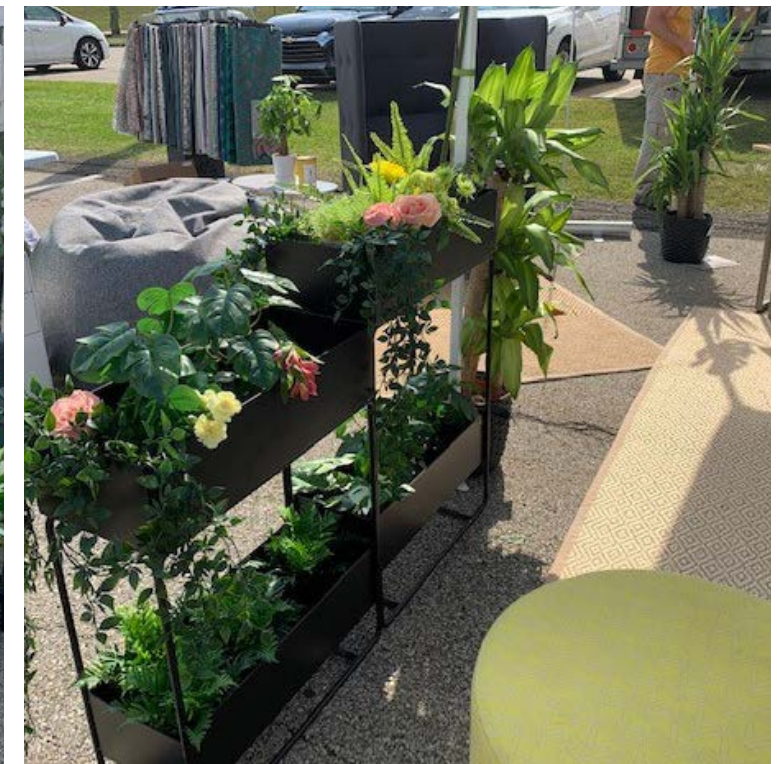
In the “Keeping Connected” section of Delve Magazine, we will highlight inspirational snapshots of what our Rep Group partners are up to, and how they are finding innovative ways to stay connected to their clients.

We hope you enjoy this new feature, and are inspired as much as we are!

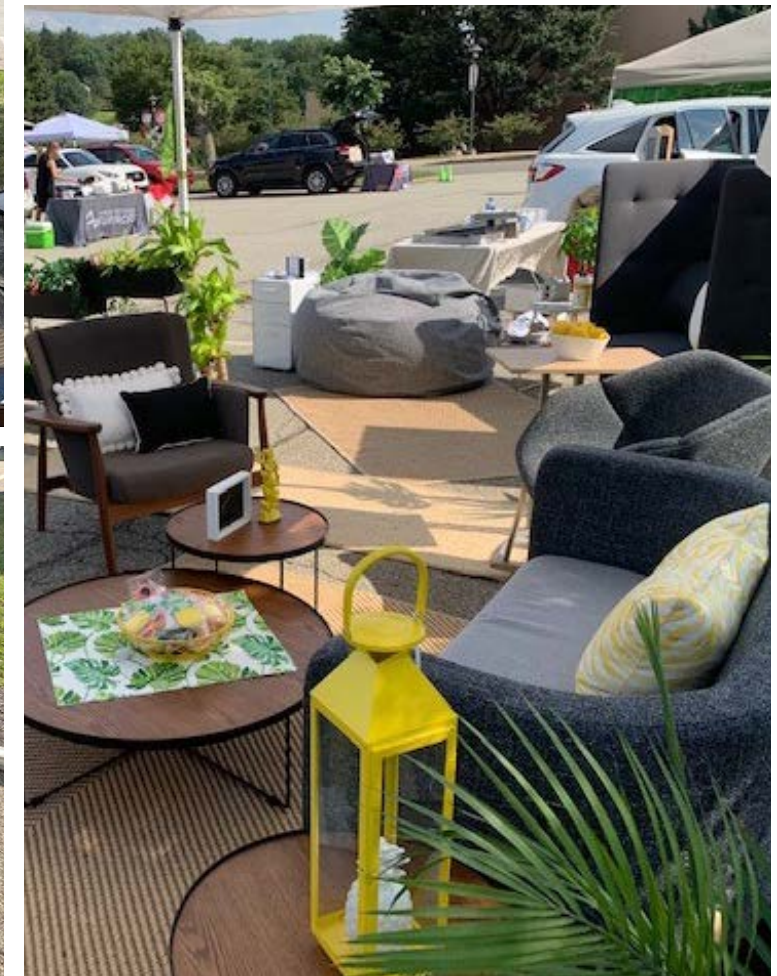


KIMBALL INTERNATIONAL

Christianne McCall, Kaelynn Reid, and Joy Van De Velde of Kimball International recently participated in an industry event at La Roche University outside of Pittsburgh PA. Sponsored by IIDA, NKBA, and ASID, **Kimball International** showcased products from all 5 of their workplace brands (Kimball, National, Etc. Interwoven, and Poppin). The theme of the entire event was Tropic Like It’s Hot.



## Kimball International







# SitOnIt Roadshow



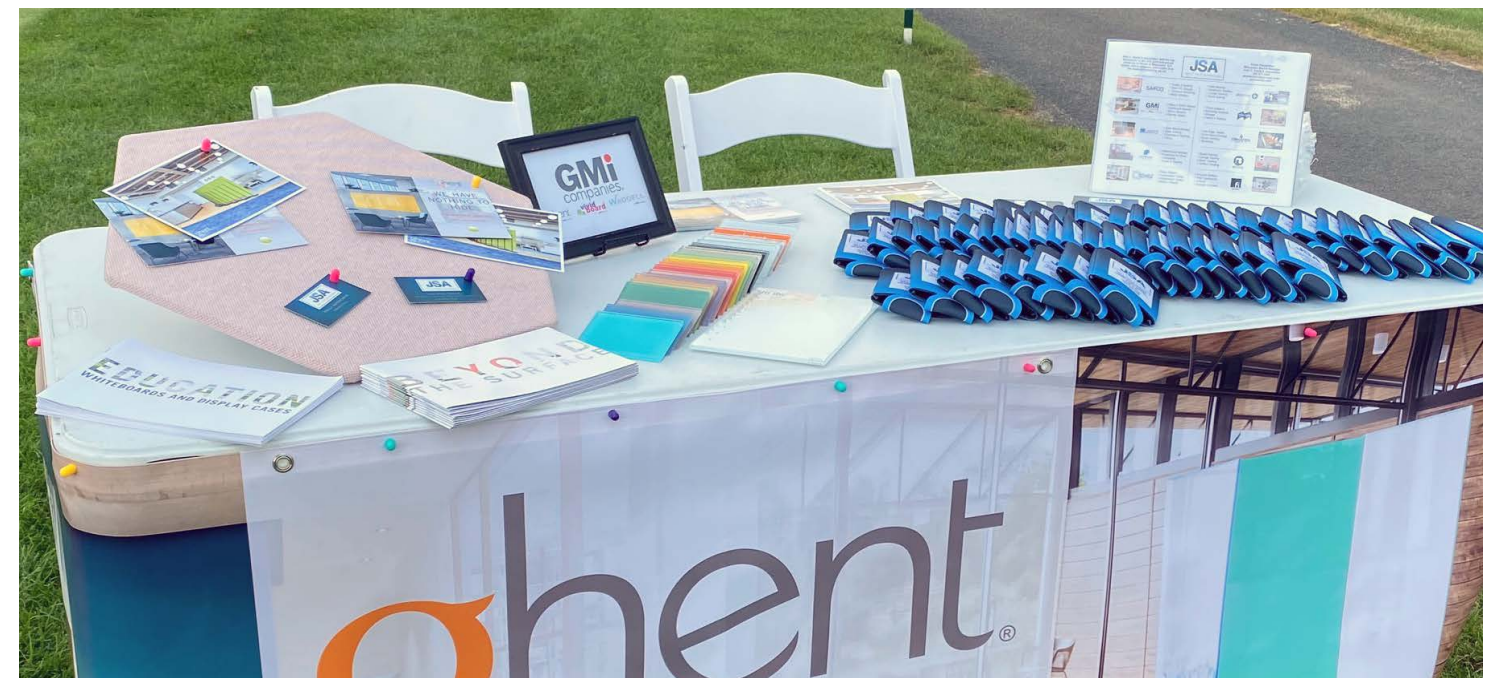
CSG/SitOnIt Roadshow that happened in Grand Rapids and Lansing! We had a great time connecting with our industry friends and showing off some great new products. Not to mention, great food from Royals in GR and Nuthouse in Lansing!

# Jack Smith & Associates

We are very excited to announce that our own Paula Kopischkie & Michael Isaac have purchased Jack Smith & Associates following Greg Smith's retirement! JSA was founded by Greg's father Jack over fifty years ago. Greg has been part of the organization forty of those years in business. We want to start by saying thank you to Greg for his mentorship & dedication to the team. It is through his example that Paula and Michael look forward to leading JSA through part of its next fifty years.

Paula Kopischkie & Michael Isaac will step into the roles of Principal and honored to carry on the Smith family's tradition of delivering top tier service along with the very best mid-priced products. A people before products philosophy have been at the heart of the organization's mission. Paula & Michael plan to see that mission remain very much intact.

The group will be re-branded as JSA Design Resource Group. They will stay true to who they are in representing a diverse portfolio of mid-priced furniture and architectural product manufacturers. The line package has a robust offering of workplace, education, healthcare, & hospitality contract offerings. However, they want to place more emphasis on service. "By providing more focus on design and specification assistance to our design, dealership, real estate brokerage, and general contractor partners will allow them more time to stay client-facing. Ultimately, this means better





service, better end user experience, and ultimately faster project turns at higher revenue for all parties involved” explains Michael with JSA. “With our manufacturer portfolio curated to provide not only a full ancillary offering but with a vast array of custom capabilities and workstation options we can literally outfit an entire space from our manufacturers” explains Paula. “We can provide that 2nd option to our partners while they focus on building a solution with their aligned offering. We know that usually a blended solution will win out in the end and our very happy to be a part of that process.”

The new leadership team has cut their teeth through the facets of various roles within the industry, thus complementing one another nicely: Paula graduated from UW Madison with an Interior Design degree in 1993. Her first design position was with a boutique Kitchen and Bath firm in Madison. From there, she moved back to Milwaukee to pursue a career in the Commercial Furnishings Industry. Paula spent these next years with a couple of different organizations along with a 5-year stint in pharmaceutical sales. In 2012, Paula joined Greg as the Wisconsin representative for Jack C. Smith and Associates. Since then, they have enjoyed a close working relationship and wonderful sales growth within the organization. Paula currently still resides in the Milwaukee area with her husband of 23 years. They have a 19-year-old daughter that is entering her second year of college and hopes to be a doctor someday. Paula is excited for the new chapter of the JSA Rep Group and partnership with Michael Isaac.

Michael started his career in design after he returned to school (following a decade in hospitality sales & management) earning a BFA in Interior Design from Harrington College in Chica-

go and followed by a Master’s in Architecture from the UNL. During his studies he established MWI Designs and collaborated on projects in the workplace, healthcare, & residential markets. He went on to head design & outside sales efforts for a north shore dealership. Michael joined Jack Smith & Associates as the Illinois Market Manager in 2017 and is very excited for his next chapter as co-owner of JSA. Michael lives in Chicago with his partner Will. He is a travel enthusiast, who serves on the board for the International Interiors Designers Association Illinois Chapter, Associate Board for Designs for Dignity, and holds designations in LEED & EDAC.

JSA’s philosophy moving forward is we do not only represent furniture & architectural products. We represent small business (we ARE small business!) We represent handmade quality. We represent affordable, approachable design. We represent innovation. We represent 100’s of men and women employed by our manufacturing partners who dedicate themselves to this industry to provide for their families. If the last year of material shortages & shipping issues have taught us anything, it is that domestic manufacturing is more important than ever as part of the fabric of the American economy. Our products are made in California to Georgia & Connecticut to Calgary (and even in Chicago) in over a dozen plants. Products that are made by many different people from many different walks of life. Those people will be front of mind in each & every day we go out into the field. We are not here to make sure domestic manufacturing survives; we are here to help make it thrive. We look forward to connecting with the organizations throughout our network in the next few weeks to share the details. Here’s to the next 50 years for JSA Design Resource Group!



Energize space.  
Elevate experience.  
Build connection.

takeform

Create graphically inspiring spaces that differentiate and inspire stronger brand relationships.

Leverage the power of **experiential graphics.**

Wall Graphics | Signage | Graphic Panels  
Dimensional Logos & Letters

800.528.1398 [takeform.net](http://takeform.net)



# Introducing Kadia Luxe

Showcasing at  
**NeoCon**  
Space 10-135



See this and more at booth #4023

**HCD**  
HEALTHCARE DESIGN  
EXPO + CONFERENCE

*Hospitality Level Comfort.  
Hospital Grade Performance.*

On display at Healthcare Design Expo + Conference 2021, Kadia Luxe arrives with an innovative front profile design crafted to hide the operational levers and included table within the body of the piece (*as shown below, mid-left*), all while offering the same functionality and unitized movement of our premier recliner, the Durable® 650 Series.

Kadia Mod Hip Chair

Kadia Luxe Style - Durable® 650 Series Recliner

Kadia Mod Style - Durable® 650 Series Recliner (in full flatbed sleep position)

Max Sleep Sofa with Hydraulic Lift Table

