

live
to

MARCH 2025

DEVELOPED WITH THE EFFECTS OF
MOTHER NATURE IN MIND

Outdoor Living by Ultrafabrics



Cosgrove



CONTENTS

MARCH 2025

STARTERS

Keeping Connected.....	4
What's New.....	6
Outdoor Oasis: Open-Air Inspiration.....	10

STORIES

Cover Story Featuring Ultrafabrics.....	12
Anthology Captures the Joy of Nature by JSI.....	15
IDEC Insights: Learning Through Nature.....	18
The Professor is In: Taking Things Outside.....	20
The Power of Biophilia by LightCorp.....	23
Women Making an Impact in the Industry.....	27
Through Laura's Lens: Forging the Future of Women in Interior Design.....	42
All-Ways: Built for Every Environment by Via.....	44
The Bandon Dunes Experience by Jeff Carlson.....	48

MRL FEATURES

Featured Pro Dealer: Business Furniture + Co.....	50
Featured Manufacturer: Botton + Gardiner.....	53
Featured Rep Group: Contract Office Reps.....	56
MRL Star of the Month: Alex Komosa.....	58
Did You Know?.....	59

WRAP - UP

Upcoming Events.....	60
What's In Store for Next Month.....	62

Let's Take Things Outside

Spring is right around the corner, so this month we're delving into the topic of outdoor spaces and how designers are reimagining these formerly underutilized areas to foster productivity, collaboration, and wellness.

Our cover story features the Outdoor Living collections from Ultrafabrics, developed to resist the effects of Mother Nature to provide lasting beauty in any season.

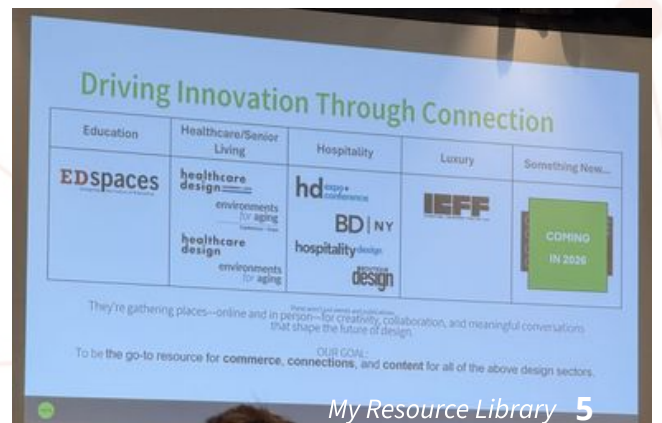
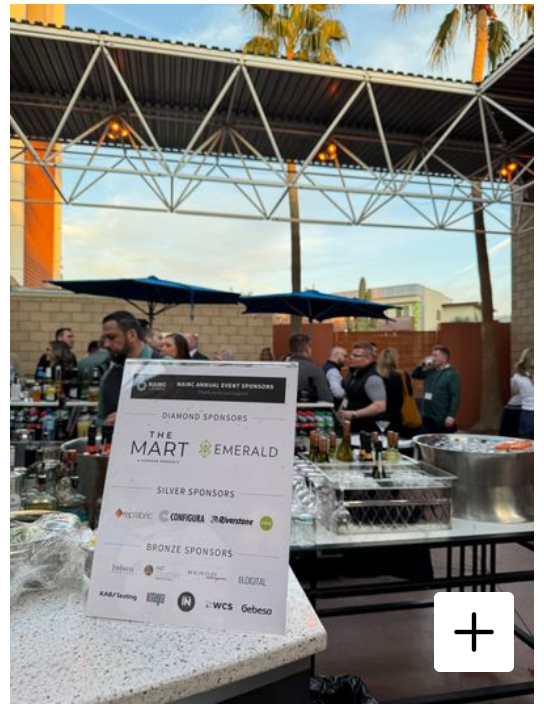


Read the story on page 12 →

Celebrating the Power of **CONNECTION**

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

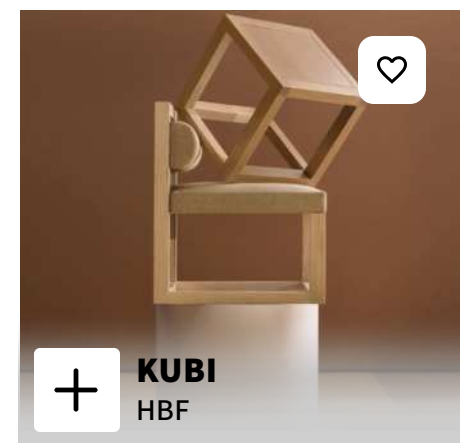
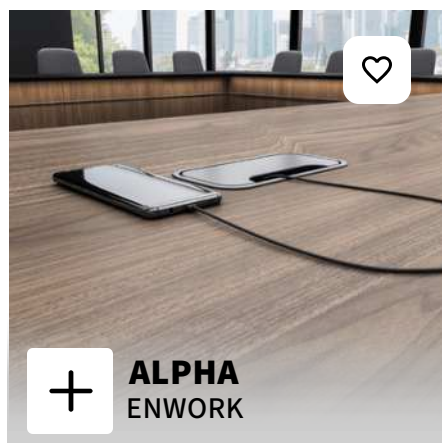
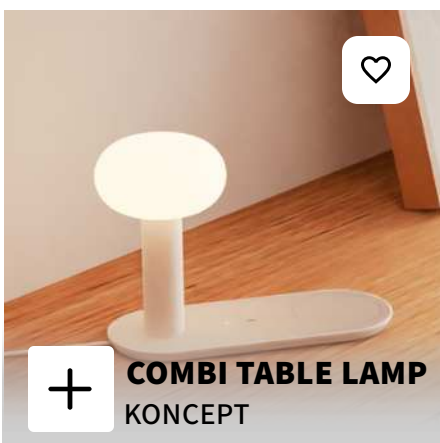
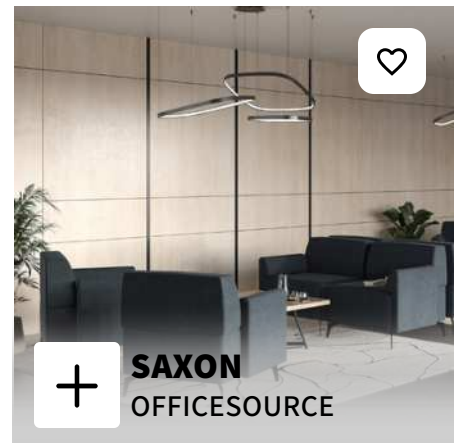
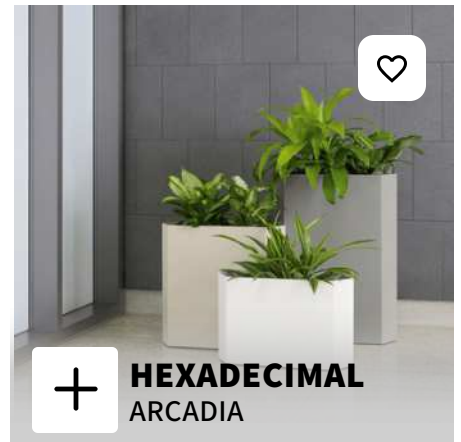
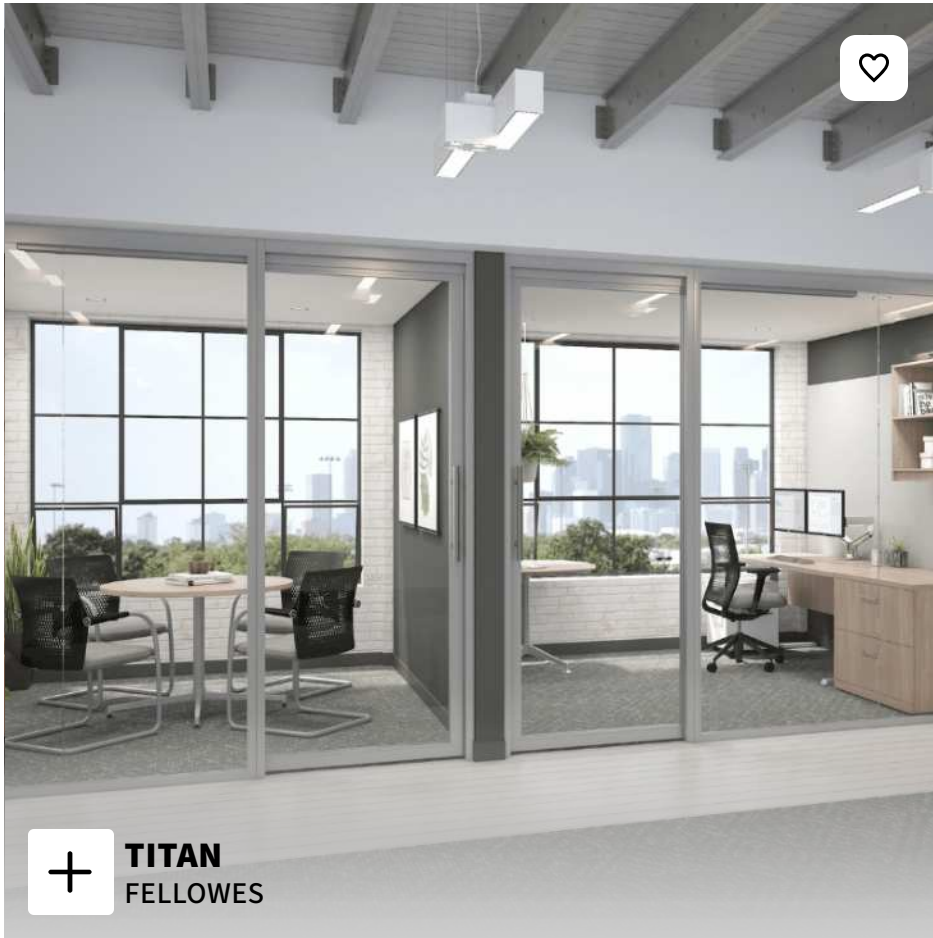


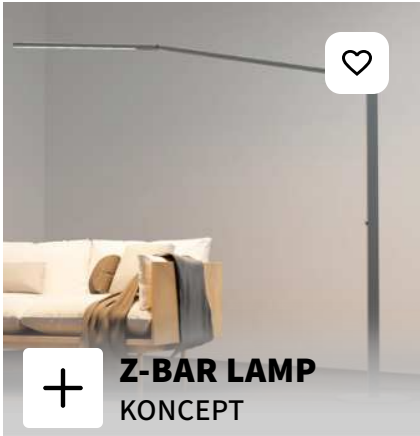


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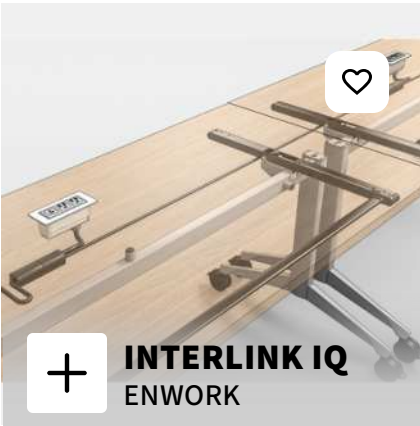
ON THE SHELVES

See something you love? Tap the heart to curate a collection of products that you'd like to request a sample of or more information!

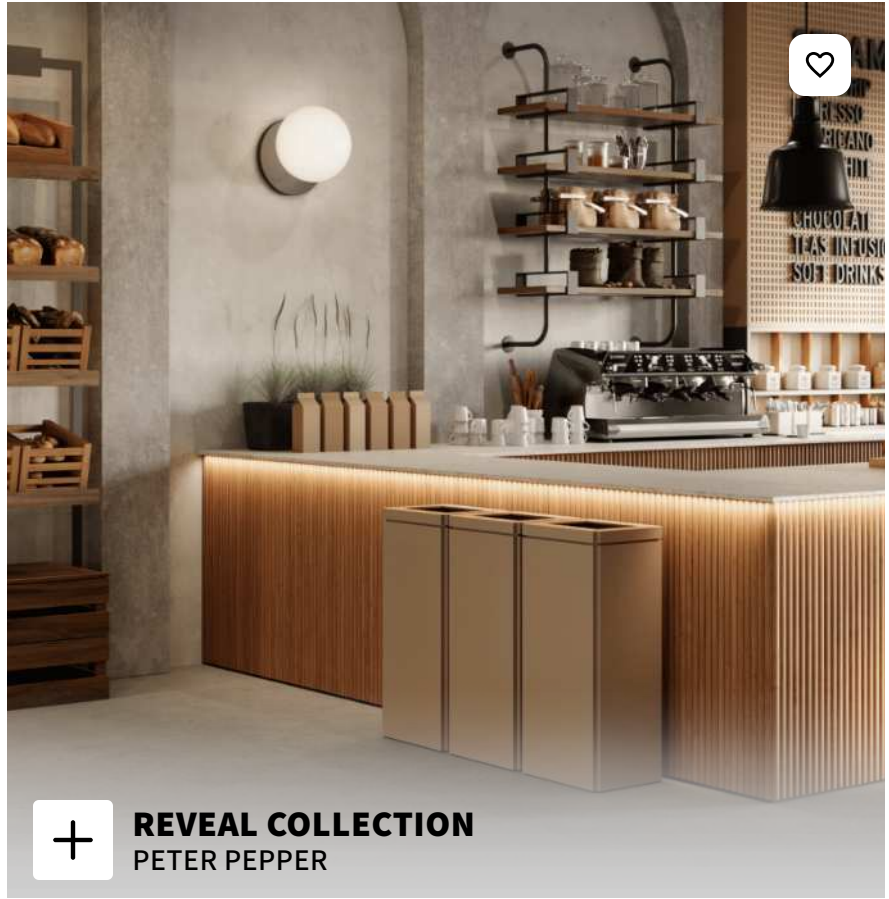




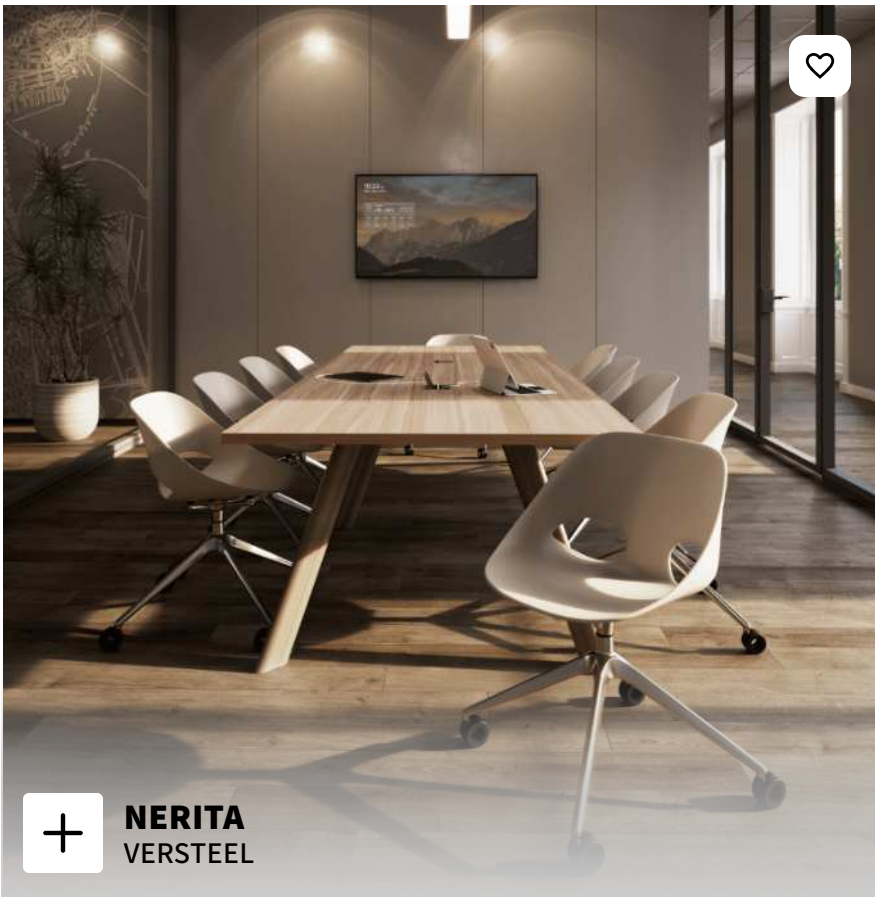
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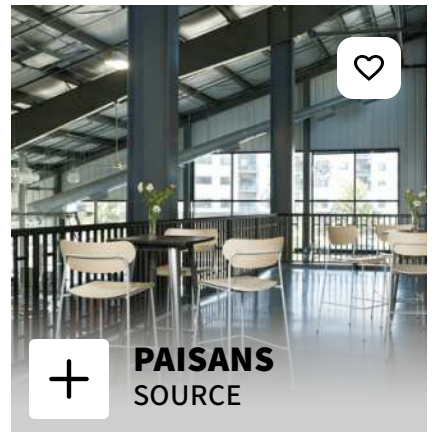
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ENWORK



+ **REVEAL COLLECTION**
PETER PEPPER



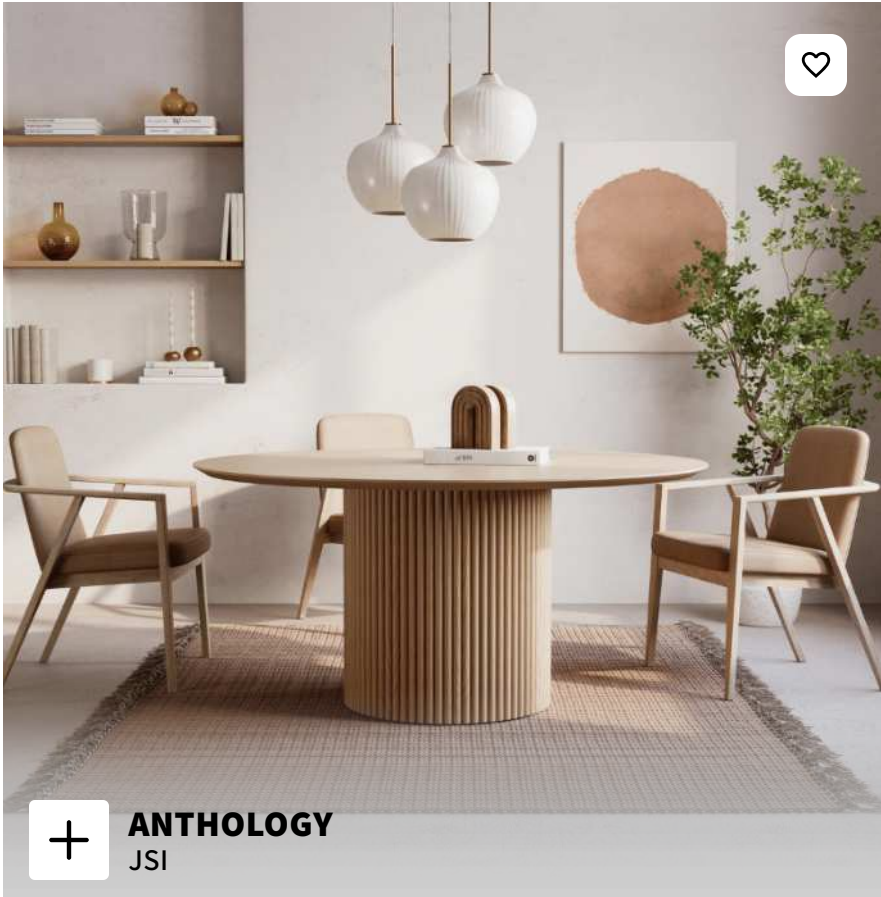
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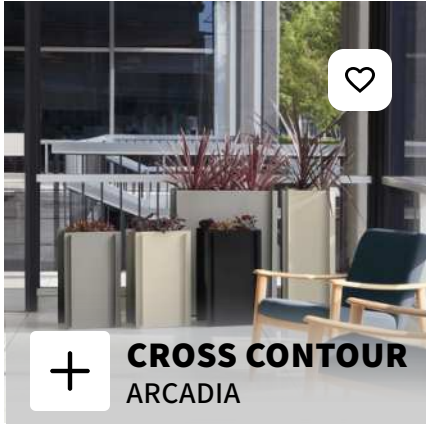
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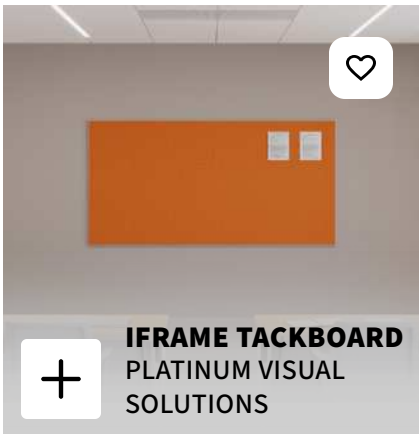
+ **ANTHOLOGY**
JSI



+ **TAURI CHAIR**
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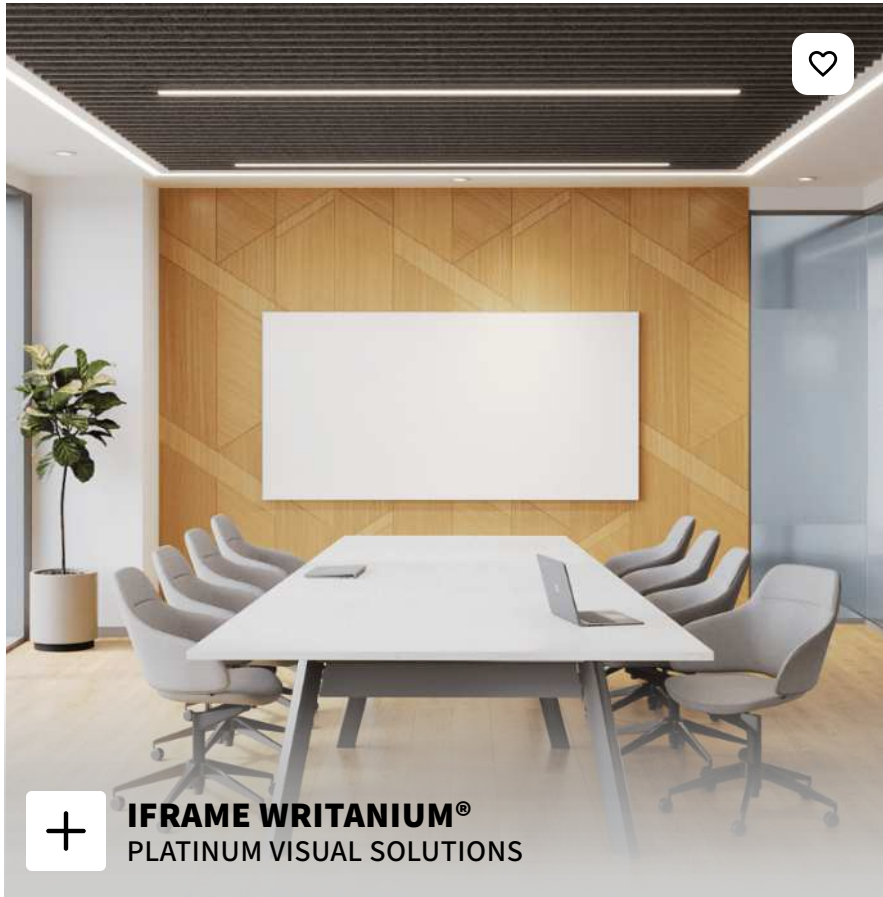
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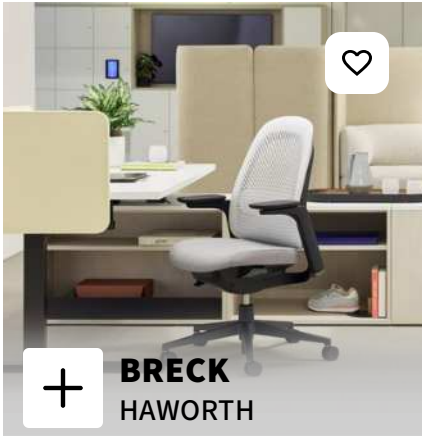
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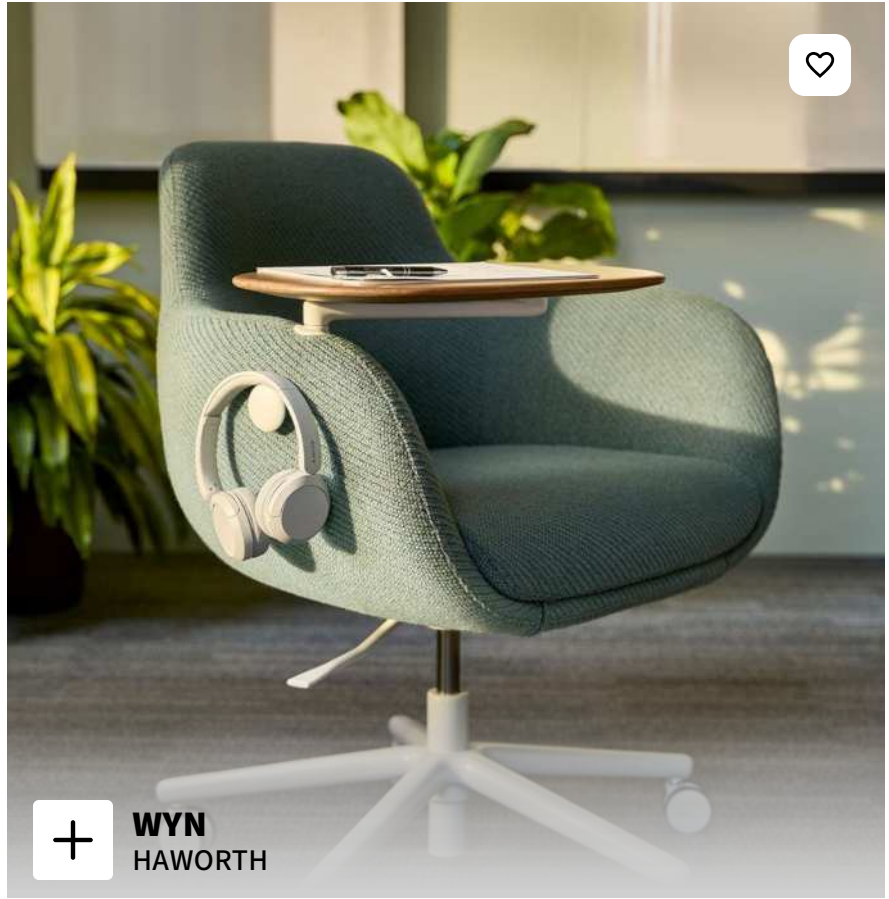
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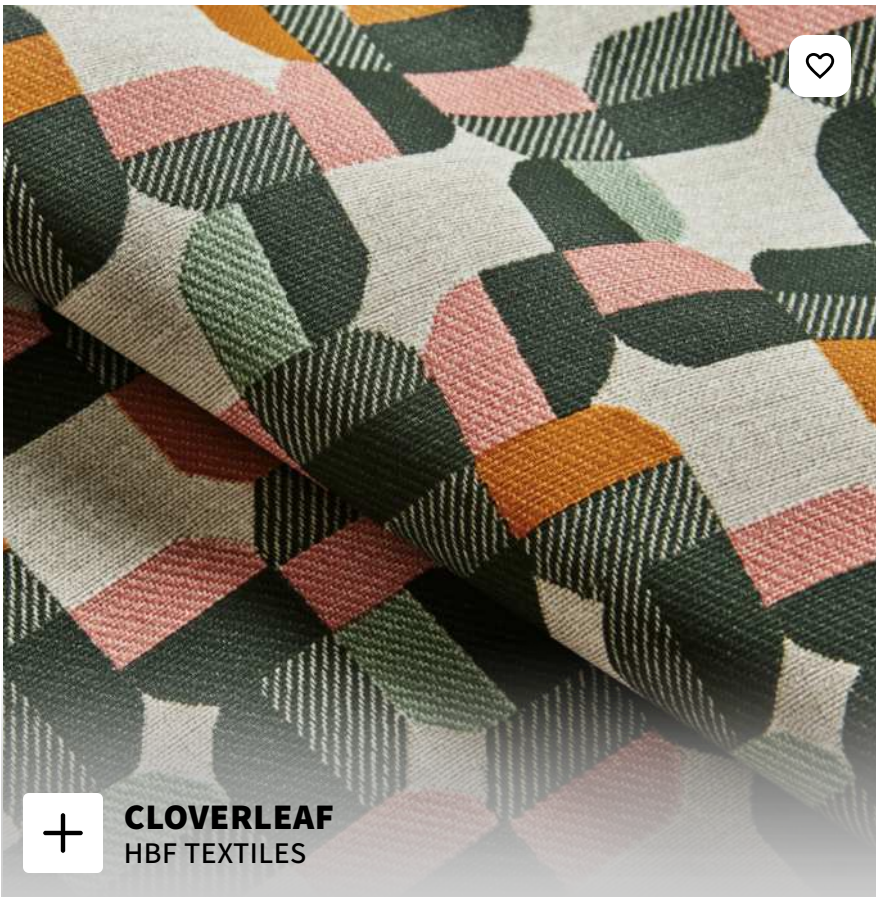
+ **BRECK**
HAWORTH



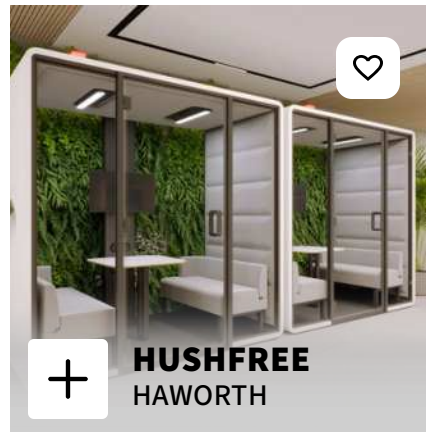
+ **WYN**
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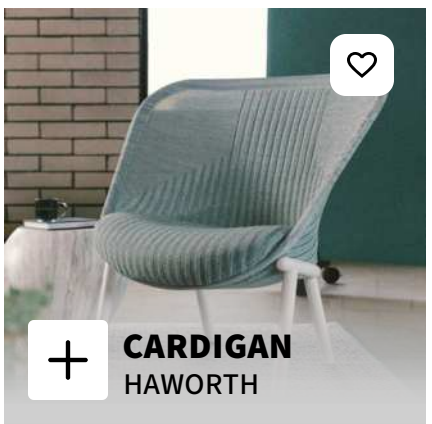
+ **4SPACE**
HAWORTH



+ **CLOVERLEAF**
HBF TEXTILES



+ **HUSHFREE**
HAWORTH



+ **CARDIGAN**
HAWORTH





Outdoor Oasis

Open-Air Inspiration



Developed with the effects of

MOTHER NATURE IN MIND

Outdoor Living by Ultrafabrics

Whether it's for poolside lounging, outdoor dining, or everyday relaxation, Ultrafabrics outdoor collections remain cool to the touch and soft against the skin, transforming outdoor living spaces into extraordinary retreats.

Developed with the effects of Mother Nature in mind, Ultrafabrics outdoor collections resist water and withstand fading to provide lasting beauty, no matter the season or forecast. Engineered with an EPA-registered defense against mildew, bacteria and other microbes, each collection intertwines comfort and protection into one.

Crafted for visual distinction, Ultrafabrics materials effortlessly tailors to form, imbuing each piece with a signature aesthetic and a timeless refined finish. Luxuriously soft, each fabric delivers an unforgettable tactile experience, ensuring every touch is a moment of pure comfort and indulgence.



Keep it Cool

Our bodies are constantly producing heat, and we naturally control our temperature through water evaporation, better known as sweating. Ultrafabrics supports this cooling process thanks to its high permeability to moisture and climate-regulating technology that captures and dissipates body heat.

That means no hot, sticky, or clammy feeling while lounging on Ultrafabrics!



Outdoor Collections

Brisa Forecast

Designed with a ventilation system that enhances softness and promotes air circulation, Brisa Forecast features a subtly textured aesthetic and is available in a range of neutrals and on-trend colors that pop.

Brisa Frontier

With a rustic texture and natural color palette, Brisa Frontier has a sumptuous hand and offers enhanced airflow circulation for unbeatable comfort.

Coast

Bringing indoor luxury to the great outdoors, Coast has a timeless grain and soothing color palette. Tested for 2 years in real-world applications, including the hot and humid climates of Arizona and Florida, the collection provides both substance and style.

Pumice

With a subtle texture and curated palette of stylish neutrals, Pumice delivers all-around style and protection for all applications.

Summit

Innovative in both style and functionality, Summit features moisture repellency, solar endurance, colorfastness, climate control technology, and EPA-registered defense against microbes, bacteria, and mildew.

Each collection supports:

- ▶ Industry-leading 16 weeks hydrolysis resistance
- ▶ Climate control, water repellency, solar endurance, and colorfastness make collections suitable for outdoor applications
- ▶ Bleach cleanable (1:5 bleach/water solution)

UF + Sustainability

Ultrafabrics are forward-thinking materials that are animal friendly and manufactured responsibly with people and planet in mind. With low-VOCs and free of toxic products, these fabrics are safe for everyone, so you can breathe easily.

- ▶ Reach Compliant
- ▶ Indoor Advantage Gold Certified
- ▶ Free of PFAs, PVC, plasticizers, flame retardants, and formaldehyde



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BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN:

How Anthology Captures the *Joy of Nature*



In an era where design is deeply intertwined with well-being, the concept of bringing the outdoors inside has never felt more relevant. Nature has an undeniable ability to affect mood and inspire optimism, joy and positivity — through many elements like its organic forms, boundless openness, and living vibrancy. JSI's **Anthology collection** captures this essence, translating the aesthetics of the natural world into a versatile series that fosters connection, creativity, and energy.

The Joy of Organic Form

The natural world is filled with curves—rolling hills, river stones, the arc of a tree's branch. Anthology embraces these joyful, organic forms in its design details. Fluted and conical bases introduce rhythm and texture, while softly contoured tabletops offer a sense of movement, akin to the gentle undulations found in nature. Even the rounded tube bases echo the familiar playfulness of pebbles and bubbles—forms that evoke a sense of lightness and spontaneity.

The Freedom of Open Space & Innovation

Nature's expansiveness has a liberating effect, offering a sense of possibility and openness. Anthology's patent-pending Bridgeline support system mirrors this feeling of vastness, allowing tabletops to span broad distances without intermediary supports. Much like an open meadow or a sweeping vista, Bridgeline's broad, unsupported spans create a feeling of fluidity—enabling gathering spaces that feel unobstructed, light, and free. This innovative engineering solution not only enhances aesthetics but also optimizes structural integrity and functionality.

The Energy of Color and Materiality

Color and texture have the power to uplift, excite, and inspire. Anthology's material palette offers a wide range of expressive finishes—rich wood grains that bring warmth and grounding, crisp laminates for a fresh and modern touch, and a vibrant array of metal colors that inject personality and energy into a space. Like sunlight filtering through trees or the unexpected pop of a wildflower in a field, these hues and materials add an element of surprise and delight to interior environments.

Gathering Around the Table

At its heart, a table is a place of togetherness—a space for meals, meetings, and moments shared. Just as a picnic table invites community in a park, Anthology's adaptable configurations encourage collaboration and connection. Whether in a workspace, a university commons, or a hospitality setting, Anthology fosters the joy of gathering, reminding us that the best ideas—and the best moments—often happen when we come together.



We asked JSI team members to share what excites them most about Anthology:

Q: What's your favorite design element of Anthology?

A: "I love the fluted base—it adds such a tactile, sculptural quality to the collection while still feeling timeless."

Q: How does Anthology stand out in terms of materiality?

A: "The range of materials is what sets it apart. Our ability to showcase solid wood, veneer, upholstery, and now metal really highlights JSI's craftsmanship, which has roots going back to 1876."



Q: What's the most exciting thing about showcasing Anthology at Design Days this June?

A: "We'll be showing the full breadth of Anthology's capabilities, including our exciting new metal operation. It's an incredible way to demonstrate how JSI brings craft and innovation together."

Q: What excites you most about Bridgeline?


A: "Bridgeline is truly an innovation—it allows for broad, unsupported spans that give Anthology a clean, open aesthetic while maintaining strength and stability. The fact that it's patent-pending makes it even more exciting!"

Experience Anthology at June Design Days

JSI will be showcasing the **full range of Anthology** at this year's **June Design Days in Fulton Market**, celebrating the craft of **solid wood, veneer, upholstery, and metalwork**. Experience firsthand how Anthology brings the best of nature-inspired design into beautifully functional gathering spaces.

Anthology reminds us that the natural world has always been a source of inspiration—and that joy is often found in the details, the openness of space, and the vibrant energy of color and form. By embracing these elements, JSI has created a collection that not only works beautifully in a variety of spaces but also brings a touch of the outdoors inside, making every interaction feel a little more joyful.



 JSI

LEARNING THROUGH NATURE

Kristi Gaines, PhD, IIDA, IDEC

*Professor and Chair, Design;
Associate Dean, Graduate School
Texas Tech University*

Muntazar Monsur, PhD (Photo credit)

*Assistant Professor,
Landscape Architecture
Texas Tech University*

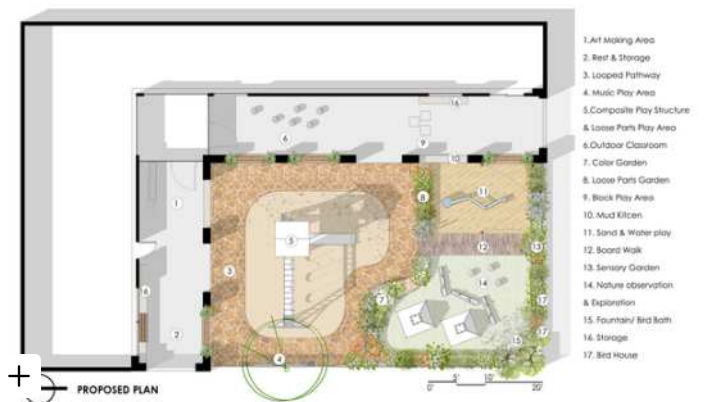
Nature-based learning spaces and outdoor learning environments (OLEs) are gaining recognition for their positive impact on learning and behaviors. Research shows many benefits of exposure to nature include enhanced cognitive abilities, improved social behaviors, reduced stress, creativity, and support for physical activities. Initiatives such as the Natural Learning Initiative (NLI), OLE! Texas, and Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO) have facilitated well-designed outdoor spaces based on evidence-based best practices. The three initiatives utilize the 12 Best Practice Indicators/design principles developed by NLI to “promote physical activity, food awareness, and social skills in a safe and natural setting” in early childcare centers. The 12 key indicators listed below assess best practice environmental qualities and components. They interact to demonstrate the potential for excellence in using the OLE:

- ▶ Ten or more play and learning settings (Even small spaces can accommodate ten or more play settings due to the size of small children)
- ▶ Looping, curvy, primary pathway for circulation and wheeled-toy use.
- ▶ Grassy area for games, activities, and events for 25 or more children.
- ▶ Sufficient shade structures in addition to trees.
- ▶ A variety of natural, loose materials present and accessible for play.
- ▶ Sufficient, different types of wheeled toys, portable play equipment, and play materials accessible for children.
- ▶ Sufficient gross motor activities supported by the OLE.
- ▶ Sufficient trees (varies by location).
- ▶ A proportion of trees that are edible fruiting species.
- ▶ Sufficient shrubs (including fruiting shrubs and vines).
- ▶ Designated vegetable garden with sufficient produce for snacking and/or meals.
- ▶ Outdoor classroom/program base/storage available.

The design of OLEs incorporate many of the same features as high-quality indoor learning environments such as safety, accessibility, storage, transition spaces, adjacencies, scale, light, color, boundaries, space organization, structure and flexible spaces. Areas between the interior and exterior spaces should be designed for smooth transitions. Natural materials should be considered over manufactured play equipment, although manufactured and recycled materials may be incorporated if requested. Natural materials provide a greater variety of sensory information, creativity, and exploration. Budgets for creating these spaces may be large or small; however, simple, inexpensive changes using readily available, recycled, repurposed or donated materials are encouraged. For many projects, the implementation process is incremental, beginning with the top priorities.

Through material choice, a variety of textures should be available for sensory stimulation and, in some cases, desensitization for individuals with sensory processing disorder. Features such as sensory pathways, sand and earth play, full body water play may be provided and even afford therapeutic benefits. Materials can also be used as boundaries to communicate specific functions such as quiet reading areas, “secret” spaces, areas for building and construction, group activities, and active areas.

Thoughtfully designed outdoor learning environments provide numerous academic and developmental benefits for children. The design of the environment should also consider educator’s preferences so that they will be motivated to utilize the OLE. To learn more about designing high quality OLEs, designer training is available through the Natural Learning Initiative and the Coalition for Natural Learning. Additional information and resources for designing and using high quality outdoor learning environments can be found on their websites.



Natural Learning Initiative, North Carolina State University <https://naturalearning.org/>

The Coalition for Natural Learning, Texas Tech University https://www.depts.ttu.edu/hs/coalition_for_natural_learning/

OLE! Texas, Department of State Health Services <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/obesity-texas/outdoor-learning-environment-ole-texas>

Early Childhood Health Outdoors, National Wildlife Federation <https://www.nwf.org/ECHO>

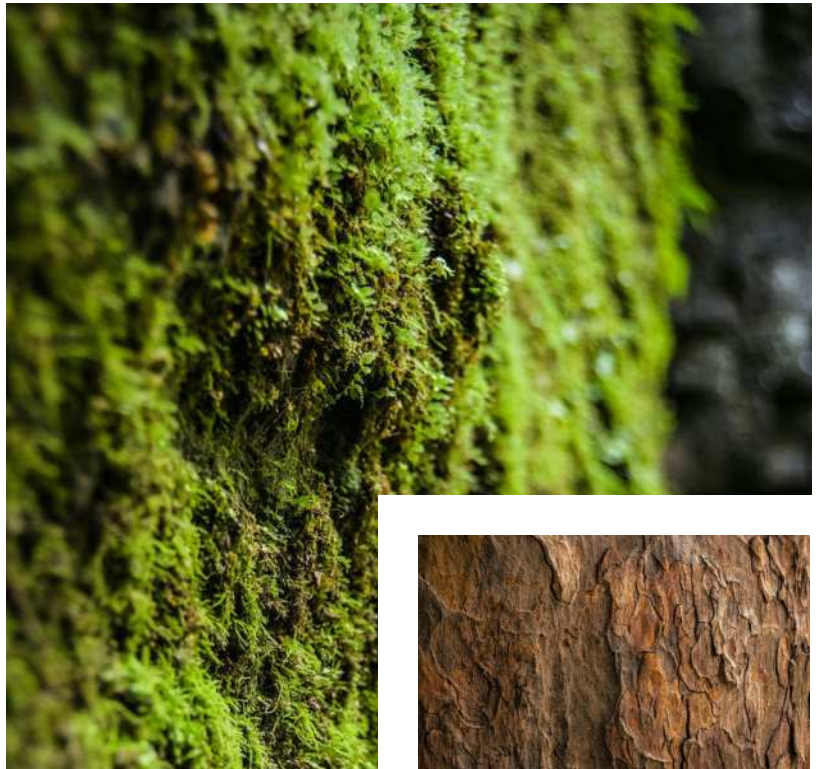
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Let's Take Things Outside

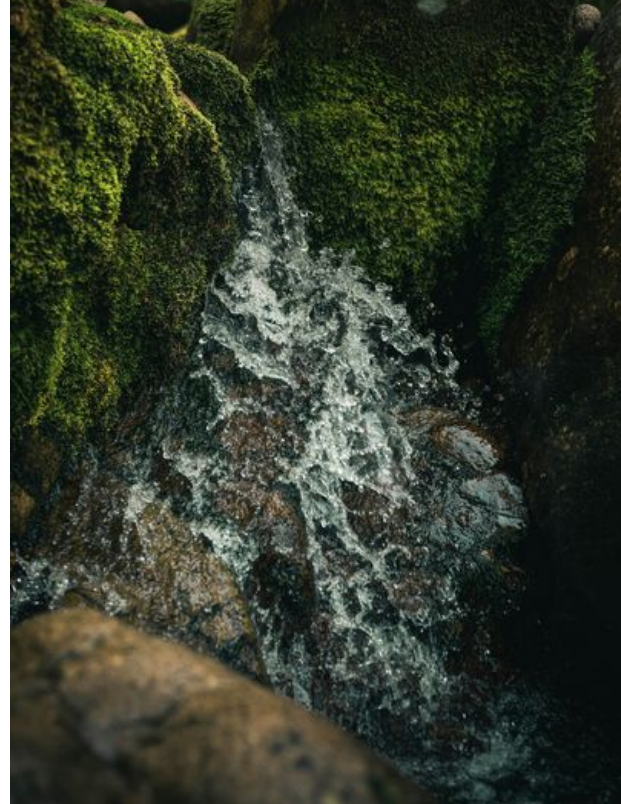
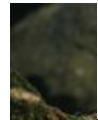
By Stephanie Sickler & Helen Turner



In the book ‘A Philosophy of Interior Design’ (1990), author Stanley Abercrombie begins by discussing ‘being outside’ before ‘coming inside,’ noting “a garden...unenclosed as it may be, it shares many features of habitable interiors. Its paths and trees are – at once almost literally and quite metaphorically – corridors and pieces of furniture, its lawns are carpets, its shrubs décor” (p. 2).

Along these lines, some posit a distinct parallel between built interior environments and the “forest interior.” What is more, recent research and work, like “Interiors Beyond Architecture” by Schneiderman and Campos (2018) with one chapter, ‘Interiors Formed with Nature,’ explores the metaphoric and physical boundaries of interior design. The longstanding connection between interior design and the outside extends to design theories and methods, from crossing of thresholds, views from inside to outside and vice versa, as well as design elements that connect interior to exterior. Relative to construction and finish materials, there is also a strong relationship to the outside through natural materials, materials inspired by nature, and materials that perform well in natural conditions.

This relationship is critical, not just for aesthetic purposes, but also the ways in which the design industry can be good stewards of the environment and its resources. Natural materials, like cork and natural fibers, can be made from renewable resources that are sometimes also biodegradable. This has the potential of creating less environmental impact, notwithstanding potential negative impacts from harmful extractive or manufacturing processes. There are also many synthetic materials, like laminates or ceramic tiles, that attempt to replicate the look of natural materials. Though not as authentic, some provide more desirable performance characteristics. Other man-made materials, referred to as ‘biomimetic materials,’ study and take cues from nature. For example, an article by Jeyasubramanian et al. (2016), reveals the creation of a functional textile that mimics the water-repellent and self-cleaning surfaces in nature, like butterfly wings, lotus leaves, or elephant ears.



With such focus on the connection to nature, one must wonder how material selections can influence a positive relationship between users and the built environment, both indoors and out. Keeping this in mind, there are several materials that perform well in nature. For example, it is now possible to experience the comforts of the indoors in outdoor environments through solution dyed acrylic textiles or soft goods tailored for use in indoor or outdoor conditions. These materials are inherently water repellent as well as stain and mildew resistant. This is especially important in the hospitality industry as well as the marine industry. Cruise ships and luxury yachts alike now benefit from a wide range of vinyl textiles coated with UV stabilized pigments, with a vinyl-urethane topcoat, and zero PFAS. The textiles industry is a good example of evolution with societal and regulatory demands that both keep users safe and provide comfort and beauty whether indoors or out.

In the April issue of *The Professor* is in: *Materials Education for Delve Magazine* we will explore these ideas further as they relate to sustainability and materials.

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BRINGING SPACES TO LIFE: THE POWER OF BIOPHILIA



By Chris Dawson, LightCorp

You may be wondering at the outset what credentials a lighting and power manufacturer like LightCorp has to author an article about this topic. Our goal is to create products that help bring spaces to life, and in this case we mean it quite literally. Our growing investment in the planter category, along with our commitment to sustainability and wellness, highlights our deep belief in the power of biophilia—the human connection to nature.

This connection has been with us since the beginning of time. From watching the sunrise to feeling peace while gazing at vast landscapes, humans have always sought a bond with the natural world. In the 1980s, American biologist E.O. Wilson gave this phenomenon a name—*biophilia*. His book explored our innate drive to connect with nature and living things.

Biophilia is the idea that people thrive when connected to nature. This connection has always been part of us. Whether it's the calming effect of a sunrise or the sense of peace from a walk in the

woods, nature has a way of grounding us. In the 1980s, biologist E.O. Wilson named this relationship biophilia. He described our innate tendency to seek connections with nature and living things.

The word itself comes from the Greek "bio" (life) and "philia" (love). Over the past two decades, biophilia has become a key principle in design and is often credited with improving how we live, work, and learn. Let's explore why biophilia matters and how you can easily bring its benefits into your space.

A Brief History of Biophilia in Design

Biophilia began influencing interior design in the early 2000s as research highlighted its benefits: better productivity, improved well-being, and enhanced creativity. By the 2010s, as sustainability and wellness gained traction, biophilic design became a standard, supported by certifications like the WELL Building Standard.

Today, with hybrid work environments reshaping how and where we work, biophilia is more relevant than ever. Businesses are rethinking their spaces to support both physical and mental health, and biophilic design offers a practical, engaging way to do just that.

Biophilia Beyond Plants

When people hear "biophilia," they often think of plants. While greenery plays a big role, biophilic design goes beyond foliage. Other ways to bring nature indoors include:

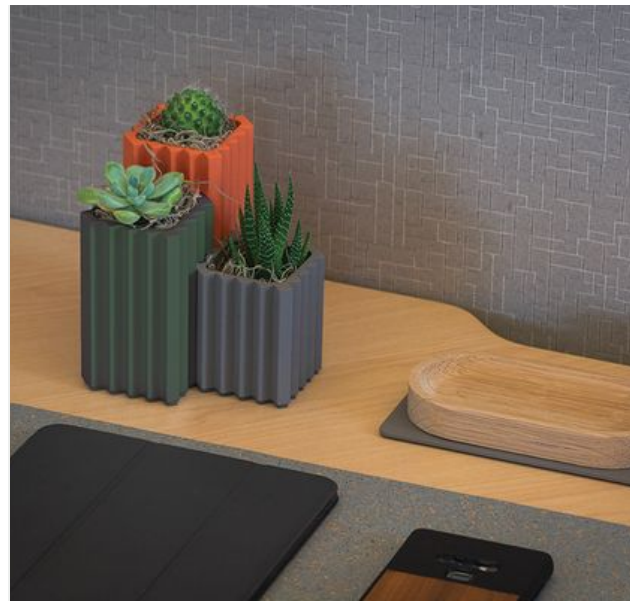
- ▶ **Maximizing natural light and outdoor views**
- ▶ **Using organic materials like wood, stone, or bamboo**
- ▶ **Incorporating curved forms and soft angles into architectural design**
- ▶ **Introducing sensory elements like nature sounds or subtle scents**
- ▶ **Adding water features, such as fountains or aquariums**



Why Biophilia Works

Biophilia isn't just about aesthetics—it's backed by science. Natural elements in a space can enhance air quality, boost mood, and improve cognitive function. Research shows that exposure to nature benefits both the body and mind. Physically, biophilic practices can lower stress levels, reduce blood pressure, and encourage better sleep through regulated circadian rhythms. Psychologically it has been attributed to improved concentration, creativity, and problem-solving skills in the workplace, leading to greater well-being and productivity. Given these advantages, biophilia is a natural choice for designing workplaces in which people enjoy spending time.

With hybrid work on the rise, companies are searching for ways to encourage employees to return to the office. Biophilic design makes workplaces more inviting, comfortable, and inspiring. Thoughtfully integrating nature into the office can elevate mood, create a sense of calm, and increase job satisfaction.



Simple Ways to Bring Biophilia into Your Space

Incorporating biophilia doesn't have to require a major investment in design. Here are a few simple ways to create a more natural, inviting environment:

Maximize natural light:

Position desks near windows or add skylights.

Introduce greenery:

Use potted plants, hanging planters, or living walls.

Create outdoor spaces:

Design patios, terraces, or rooftop gardens for fresh-air breaks.

Incorporate water elements:

Add fountains or aquariums for a calming effect.

Use nature-inspired materials:

Choose wood, stone, bamboo, or organic textures.

Engage the senses:

Play soft nature sounds or introduce natural scents like lavender.

Frame views of nature:

Arrange layouts to offer sightlines to trees or landscapes.

Encourage participation:

Invite employees to bring their own plants to work or take part in an employee garden project.

Biophilia isn't a passing trend—it's a meaningful way to design spaces that support health, happiness, and productivity. By embracing natural elements, we create environments where people feel more connected, focused, and at ease.

LightCorp's growing collection of sustainably crafted planters offers an easy way to introduce greenery into your space. Whether it's an office, home, or a third place, our planter collection helps integrate biophilic design with simplicity and style. Explore our collection at [LightCorp.com](https://lightcorp.com).

Sources:

<https://cultivateuae.com/why-your-brain-thrives-in-a-green-office-the-science-behind-biophilic-design-for-the-workplace/>

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Fringe[®] 2.0

NATIONAL.



Introducing Fringe 2.0, a new series that complements our existing Fringe series. Featuring a thinner arm and back style, slender profile, and softer, more residential cushions, it's designed to meet the specific needs of humanized spaces in workplaces, educational settings, and healthcare environments. This versatile collection includes club chairs, guest seating, and lounge components that can be used to create everything from expansive configurations for lobby spaces and community areas to designing cozy nooks for privacy and focus.

Women Making an Impact in Commercial Interiors

March is Women's History Month, so we're highlighting the women below, each one nominated for making a positive impact on our industry. We asked them seven questions, ranging from their industry origin story to challenges they've faced and advice they'd pass on to future generations of women.



Barbara Nolan



Charity Hogrefe



Erin Corrill



Helen Turner



Nicole Shamir



Paula Schmidt



Stephanie Sickler



Susan Claus



Abby Koesterman



Brandi Hoffman



Abby Troutman

1

Can you share the story of how you entered the commercial interiors industry and what initially drew you to it?

Stephanie Sickler

As a costume design major in undergrad, I was working in my internship with The Alabama Shakespear Festival when I had the epiphany that I wasn't passionate enough about costumes to want to be cutting patterns the rest of my career, especially with a terminal degree in hand. This led me to interiors. I worked in fabrics and furniture for the rest of my college years and when I was in grad school for interior design, I was awarded a Teaching Assistantship. Due to staffing challenges one semester, I was assigned to teach a section of AutoCAD to second year students. It was the most difficult and rewarding experience I'd ever been through, but I am so grateful because that is what led me to design education. I have been a professor of interior design for over 16 years, and I am so fulfilled by the opportunity to help students realize their own passions within our industry.

Nicole Shamir

The contract furniture industry has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Growing up, I watched my father build his office furniture business from the ground up, and that early exposure sparked a deep-rooted passion for the industry. What truly captivated me was the opportunity to design functional, inspiring spaces that enhance how people work and interact every day. As I began my career in contract furniture, I quickly realized it was more than just products—it was about people.

Helen Turner

As an educator, my role spans the broad reaches of the interiors industry, but I had five years of professional experience in the commercial industry prior. As long as I can remember, I had an interest and involvement in creative outlets, so when it came time for me to go to college, I searched for a major that would allow me to lean into this...while making enough money to support myself. After achieving my bachelor's in interior design, I worked at two different firms on a range of projects but, unfortunately, when the economy crashed in 2008, I found myself without a job. Though devastated at the time, I now consider this the best thing that happened to me. I was forced to think deeply about my life and goals, eventually realizing that I wanted to teach. So, I went back to school for more education and credentials. As luck would have it, my thesis chair, who had previously worked at the University of Kentucky, knew they were looking for new faculty and encourage me to apply. I have been here ever since.

Paula Schmidt

I can remember it like it was yesterday. I was working in Pittsburgh and received a call from a recruiter for a role that extremely piqued my interest. It would mean more responsibility, a higher position, additional pay, and a move to Chicago. All positives at that time in my career. After going through the interviewing process and securing an offer, I contacted the recruiter to accept the position. That's when she says before you accept, I want you to take a look at this other role we just added to our listing. "I think you would be the perfect fit." It was for a Jasper, Indiana-based position conducting market research in the office furniture industry. Well...I didn't know office furniture, but I knew market research and capturing the voice of the customer. And, I knew Jasper. Many of you who know me, know that I was born and raised in Huntingburg, which is located just south of Jasper, and will forever be my official hometown.

At this point, I hadn't lived in the Jasper area in nearly 12 years and, to be honest, I hadn't considered moving back. But the position did provide interest, a new industry to learn, the ability to add B2B skills, and would also get me closer to family and friends, as well as the comforts and security of my hometown. Long story short, I accepted the role and the rest, as they say, is history. Since then, it's been nearly 25 years and I've worked for multiple companies within the industry and even stepped out for a short time, only to be pulled back in by its unwavering, gravitational force. For the last seven years I've been at Indiana Furniture as a leader in Marketing and as I look back, I think it's safe to say that recruiter was right. This industry, for me, happens to be the perfect fit.

Charity Hogrefe

I've always had a passion for the Arts, particularly Fine Arts and Interior Design. I earned my bachelor's degree in Interior Design from the Savannah College of Art and Design. As a child, my mom gave me the freedom to completely renovate my bedroom every couple of years—painting, changing the flooring, adding new lighting, you name it! My mom, who dreamed of being an architect, was a major inspiration. My dad, a true jack of all trades, worked in upholstery for about 30 years and flipped houses as a hobby. Creativity and design have always been in my blood. And to top it all off, I married an architect, which feels like the perfect fit.

Susan Claus

I often say I fell into the commercial interiors industry by accident, but looking back, every step of my career led me here in some way. My background started in medical supplies, where I worked as a product manager. That role gave me a deep appreciation for how products solve real-world problems, a perspective that carried over when I transitioned into eCommerce, working for a school furniture dealer. There I was introduced to commercial interiors, and eventually, I found my way to Ghent.

Over the past 11 years, I have had the privilege of managing our marketing team across all aspects of the business. From brand strategy to product positioning, I have seen firsthand how impactful well-designed spaces can be. What initially drew me in was the intersection of functionality and aesthetics—how the right environment can enhance productivity, collaboration, and well-being. What keeps me passionate about this industry is the ever-evolving nature of it; every project, every product, and every challenge present a new opportunity to innovate and inspire.

Erin Corrill

I never set out to be in the Commercial Interiors industry. In fact, my career started in an entirely different world—classical music. I went to college for Classical Piano Performance, dreaming of a life on stage as a concert pianist. But reality hit hard. Hours locked in a practice room, the constant pressure to be “perfect,” and a system that cared more about image than passion drained the joy out of something I once loved. So, I walked away.

With no clear path forward, I did what I had to do—I worked. I sold jewelry, cell phones, insurance, waited tables—whatever paid the bills while I figured out what came next. Then, by chance, I landed a job at IKEA. It started as just another sales job, but I quickly fell in love with the company’s values. The pay wasn’t great, but the culture? That kept me there.

After about two years, completely against my will, my boss moved me into the Communications and Interior Design Department while I was on vacation. (I found out when I got back.) Turns out, it was the best thing that ever happened to my career. I discovered a passion for space planning, learned AutoCAD, and fell in love with the process of designing and implementing spaces. Inspired, I went back to school for Interior Architecture and spent many years traveling the country, redesigning IKEA stores. But after ten years here, I hit a ceiling. I needed growth, and I needed change.

So, I did what I’ve always done—trusted God and I took a leap of faith. I uploaded my resume to Indeed and trusted the process. Two days later, I got an email from a small software company in Cincinnati. They were looking for a customer service rep. I laughed and deleted it. My husband, however, challenged me: Why did you laugh?

I went back, reread the email, and realized they weren’t looking for customer service at all. They needed someone to teach people that good space planning and accuracy could make their lives easier. So, I gave them a call. That conversation led me to ProjectMatrix, where I started as a trainer and support specialist. I quickly realized that I was a terrible support person but an exceptional trainer. I built out the training department, took on user sales, marketing, and everything customer facing, and eventually became VP of Customer Experience.

When Configura acquired ProjectMatrix, my role evolved again. Now, as Head of Product Operations, I take everything I’ve learned and apply it to shaping the products that impact people’s lives.

Barbara Nolan

I entered this industry in 1982 and quickly developed a passion for it. With a background in journalism from the University of Maryland and aspirations of becoming a broadcaster, I soon realized that opportunities in that field were limited. As the ninth of eleven children, securing employment became a necessity. My sister, who worked at an employment agency, suggested I fill in for a receptionist on vacation after I completed my degree and recovered from tonsil surgery. While I couldn’t work at Ledo’s, a popular pizza place, I eagerly accepted her offer.

During my time at the agency, an account executive invited me to interview with a manufacturer’s representative firm. I saw it as an opportunity for valuable interview practice and agreed. The office, located on the ground floor of a building with thick doors and a doorbell, had a somewhat unconventional atmosphere. However, I was greeted by a cheerful face—an unexpected contrast to the surroundings—and she warmly led me to the conference room for the interview. I remained casual, as I wasn’t particularly interested in the position at the time. To my surprise, I was called back for a second interview, which sparked my curiosity. Shortly after, I received a job offer and found myself at a crossroads: pursue a paying job or hold on to my broadcasting dreams.

Once I began working at the firm, I encountered architects, designers, and manufacturers, quickly falling in love with the design, strategy, and creativity within the industry. Witnessing final installations and appreciating the beauty, functionality, and talent involved was immensely gratifying—especially knowing my contributions played a part.

Abby Troutman

My story is more about why I stayed in the industry. I graduated from college with a Telecommunications degree and Marketing minor with a desire to find a creative outlet for my skills. I began my career at Kimball International in our customer service department. I learned invaluable lessons from our dealer community and still, to this day, keep in mind those pain points and remember what is important to them. From there, I joined our product development team and truly got a holistic understanding of what it takes to bring our products to market. Then there was an opening in the Marketing area, so I joined our team and have been in Marketing since. With over 20 years of experience at Kimball International, I feel like what has kept me in the industry is being able to design, develop, and market products that can truly make a difference in workspaces and areas where people gather, learn, and heal. I find joy and fulfillment in being a part of bringing spaces to life and creating environments where people can be comfortable and efficient, while just being themselves.

Abby Koesterman

I reconnected with an old family friend on LinkedIn, which led to a great professional opportunity. After catching up and discussing my career aspirations, he offered me the chance to join his company. It was a moment that really reinforced the power of networking and maintaining meaningful relationships, both personally and professionally. This old family friend was Jeff Carlson, the Principal of My Resource Library!

Brandi Hoffman

My career in the industry began in 2005, answering an ad in the Herald for an order entry specialist at a furniture manufacturer (remember Jofco?). Little did I know then that my first full-time job would be the first step in becoming a full-on furniture nerd. I’ll never forget the day they installed natural walnut lateral files in the middle of the office... love at first sight. That’s when I knew I was in the right place.

2

In what ways do you feel your work has made an impact on the industry?

Stephanie Sickler

One of the most impactful things I get to do is to help students achieve their own “a-ha” moment. Whether that be in relation to a wicked design problem they are solving or discovering the sector of design they want to pursue, facilitating that moment of realization is what gets me out of bed every morning. I have been taking students to High Point Market in High Point, NC for over 10 years now, and it has become the highlight of my year. The awareness, the exposure, the experience, and the context that is gained in those 5 days for the students brave enough to travel with me is life changing. It awakens them to their passion for design and restores the mid-semester slump they are generally experiencing at the time of travel. I believe that these types of experiences energize students to enter the profession with the passion they began design school with, if not more. It’s a trickle-down effect of positivity from there!

Another area of accomplishment that has been important to me is my work with soft goods. In 2019 I published a reference book for the industry, “Soft Goods Guidebook for Interiors” (Fairchild), which details the process of designing with textiles. As a design educator, I am very aware of the successes of interior design education but also the weaknesses in our curriculum. One such area that is underdeveloped in design education is the process of designing with textiles, to include specifying soft goods such as window treatments, bedding, pillows, accessories, etc. and the process of specifying and/or recovering upholstery. Soft Goods Guidebook supplements our profession with the tools not often taught in design programs but that are very much alive in the industry. As a retail business owner (of a boutique fabric store and fabrication house) I can attest to the fact that designers and the general public alike are seeking design solutions that can be solved with textiles, in applications across our industry. I feel that this resource can help bridge the gap between what can be taught in class and what can be learned in practice.

Paula Schmidt

If I had to sum it all up, I would say my biggest impacts have been in making companies more relevant, more successful, and a better option to meet the needs of Dealers, Designers, and End Users. Since day one I’ve worked to understand behaviors, listen to the voice of the customer, and identify unmet needs. Much of my focus has been on how to design and position solutions to best support the way individuals work, live, and collaborate, while providing for unmet needs and solving problems to empower others to work smarter, not harder.

My strongest impacts have come during my time with Indiana Furniture, and a lot of that’s due to having 100% support and encouragement from my leaders. I’ve been given full reign to transform my ideas into reality, allowing us to quickly propel the image and positioning of our Brand. It’s been a continuous motion of manifesting visions and executing creative plans, while leveraging the company’s rich history of craftsmanship, inherent sustainable practices, and industry-best customer service. We’ve elevated experiences online, within showrooms and new design studios, for specification tools, in training and development, and with a multitude of other touchpoints—all to better engage and build relationships within the industry. These efforts coupled with the expansion of our product portfolio, building one, mega manufacturing campus, and move to a new headquarters has transformed this 120-year-old company into a flexible and viable, forward-thinking solution for commercial interiors.

Nicole Shamir

I believe I’ve impacted the industry with my work by blending functionality and thoughtful design, creating workspaces that truly support the people who use them. My journey at OFGO STUDIO has involved launching our core design philosophy and mission, Premium for All. Our mission is simple: to eliminate the trade-off businesses often face when choosing between high-quality workplace solutions and affordability. We believe that every organization deserves a well-designed, functional space that enhances productivity and well-being. That’s why we’re committed to providing premium contract furniture solutions that are both innovative and accessible, ensuring that great design is never out of reach. This design philosophy was first introduced to me during my time in a consumer-facing industry, where I encountered a brand that truly inspired me. Their focus on transparency, sustainability, and product value—without compromising on quality—led to my lightbulb moment. From that point on, I became laser-focused on launching OFGO STUDIO with its Premium for All mission at the forefront of everything we do. We accomplish this mission through a strong emphasis on advanced manufacturing technologies and unique construction methodologies, which allow our customers to access the highest quality products that are universally attainable.

Abby Troutman

A lot of my work is about crafting stories that help bring our solutions to life. From compelling details about design inspiration to intricate visions about the craftsmanship and attention that go into each of our products, I feel like I have impacted the industry by bringing beauty to the forefront. I pride myself on giving behind-the-scenes information so that a personal connection can be made with the products.

Helen Turner

I would like to think that my work has positively impacted the industry through the students I educate, the service I engage in, and the research I conduct. As an educator, I bring to bear the experiences and knowledge I gained from professional practice, while helping students find their own unique interests, processes, and path. With this, my goal is to help develop the next generation of critical, creative, and empathetic designers. In conjunction with teaching, I engage in research related to sustainability and interior design through topics including history, theory, materiality, and pedagogy. Though supported by grants and disseminated through book chapters, journal publications, as well as conference presentations, the work can feel siloed at times. So, some of my recent work, done collaboratively with Stephanie Sickler of Florida State University, is aimed at bringing the worlds of practice and education closer by revealing ways in which they overlap and can inform one another. On the other end of the spectrum, seeing higher education as the link between P-12 education and the profession, I am beginning to research the awareness, perception, presence and impact of Interior Design education in P-12 curriculum to explore ways of making it more accessible to a broader range of students. To extend this collective work, I also devote time and effort to various organizations that impact the industry, including IIDA OH/KY, the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC), and the Journal of Interior Design.

Abby Koesterman

I've been a great resource to reps and manufacturers on all things MRL. By staying connected and being an organized point of contact, I've helped streamline communication and foster collaboration across the board. Additionally, I've played an integral role in keeping the MRL team organized and aligned, ensuring that we stay on track with our initiatives and goals. Whether it's facilitating events, leading discussions, or supporting MRL initiatives, I've always been eager to step in and contribute where needed.

Perhaps most rewarding, though, has been the valuable relationships I've built along the way. These connections have not only enriched my experience but have also allowed me to share ideas and drive progress within the industry. Ultimately, I believe the impact I've made stems from my commitment to fostering collaboration, staying organized, and nurturing relationships that drive positive change within the MRL community.

Charity Hogrefe

To be honest, I've always wrestled with the idea of our industry having a "significant impact." On the surface, it can seem a bit superficial. However, when you take a deeper look at the true purpose of interior design, it becomes clear just how much we can influence the spaces we create. Our work goes far beyond just aesthetics; it can foster productivity, well-being, and positive change in both individuals and communities.

Personally, I feel my greatest contribution has been in finding innovative ways to improve how we serve our clients. At NBS, continuous improvement is a core value, and I've been fortunate to combine that with creativity to drive change. For example, I was inspired by another dealer who created a showroom for education furniture, and we saw an opportunity to enhance the concept further. We developed "The Launchpad," a dedicated showroom that allows our clients to engage with our products in a more immersive and meaningful way. This space has transformed how we present education furniture and strengthened the way we do business in that sector.

Additionally, we're actively evaluating the entire client experience, to ensure it's as effective and engaging as possible. We're also exploring how to take the lessons learned from The Launchpad and apply them to the other vertical markets we serve, further improving how we interact with and support our clients.

Susan Claus

One of the things I have always believed in is the power of continuous improvement—never settling for "the way things have always been done." In my work, I have focused on pushing boundaries, whether that is through innovation, collaboration, or rethinking processes that drive efficiency and growth. A big part of that comes from working with the best vendors and partners, not just to support our business but to help theirs grow as well. Strong partnerships create better solutions, and I take pride in fostering those relationships to move the industry forward.

Process improvement is just as important as the products themselves. The way we bring solutions to market—how we streamline workflows, leverage technology, and enhance the customer experience—makes a lasting impact. Some of the biggest changes I have championed include tools like our Product Builder, PIM, automation systems, and website enhancements. Each of these innovations not only improves efficiency but also helps shape the future of how we do business in commercial interiors. Beyond that, I believe in experimenting—exploring new channels, testing innovative ideas, and staying ahead of the curve. The industry is evolving rapidly, and I see my role as one that helps lead that evolution rather than just keeping up with it.

Brandi Hoffman

Having the ability to make an actual impact on the industry is exactly why I started B.Digital in 2021. Many companies were struggling to connect with customers during the pandemic, transforming digital marketing from a "nice-to-have" to table stakes for maintaining relationships. And as we all know, this industry is all about relationships! Our team has had the honor to help several companies in our industry by creating impactful and engaging digital content that connects with their customers and partners in a truly meaningful way.

Barbara Nolan

Integrity has always been my guiding principle. At Nolan Brands, we collaborate with select partners who share our commitment to excellence in both design and business. Our reputation is akin to a jewel box; we deliver the very best to the market and serve our clients to the highest standards. I take great pride in the reputation I've built within the industry, particularly for my reliability in managing projects to successful outcomes. I've often been compared to a "bottle of Bayer aspirin"—a dependable problem-solver.

3 | What are some challenges you've faced as a woman in this industry, and how have you navigated them to grow in your career?

Stephanie Sickler

One of the many misconceptions about educators is that those who can't do, teach. This was especially poignant early on in my career when I was young and looked very young. The general assumption among peers in academia was that I became a professor because I wasn't a good designer. The reality was that by the time I finished my graduate education I had logged over 9 years in the design industry, only learning by happenstance that I had a passion for teaching. As a new mother at the time, a role in academia suited my work-life balance needs and from there as my career flourished, I became more and more committed to bringing along the next generation of designers. Now, as a seasoned college professor, the challenges I face are different. I've encountered critique from within the industry as practitioners and allied professionals have at times accused educators of being "behind the times", or simply the "old folks that have retired from practice and need to be re-taught everything about the industry in order to do their job". The reality is that design education is a hotbed for cutting edge research, innovation, and creativity. We have our finger on the pulse of the emerging generation of design professionals, with the tools to guide them and curate the type of designer the profession demands. The difficulty in reconciling these two truths is that it is sometimes an uphill battle to get designers to remember that they were once students too, inspired by the great educators that came before my colleagues and myself. To advocate for a more circular design community, I have dedicated many years to connecting design industry, practice and education. Industry partners that realize the value of connecting to the next generation of specifiers early on in their career- as early as college- will reap the benefit of having loyal brand patrons for years to come. Establishing these rich connections has been a great passion of mine and I look forward to seeing my students emerge from college with a strong network of industry support in their pockets.

Abby Troutman

I feel lucky that Kimball International has a strong woman-led environment. Through my 20+ years at Kimball International, all of my managers have been women who have been committed to sharing successes and helping others along the way. With any position, it's important to have confidence and master your craft so that when you are challenged, you are firm in your expertise and know the best solution. That's my advice on how to navigate and grow throughout the turns your career will take.

Paula Schmidt

Throughout my career, and across industries, I have faced a variety of challenges. None of which are new and, unfortunately, some still exist today. I'm positive every woman has experienced the same to some degree. They range from trying to earn a seat at the table amongst the 'good ole boys club' to being talked over or downplayed to blatantly knowing that your salary is less, though you do more, simply because you're a woman, and so many others in between. Over the years, these challenges were frustrating and disappointing but became fuel for my internal fire.

At some point early on in my career, I realized I was waiting for permission to lead and seeking validation instead of creating my own opportunities and paving a path to leadership. I began taking bolder action, leaning into my strengths, speaking up in meetings, solving problems, facing challenges head-on, while remaining resilient, questioning the status quo, and, at the end of the day, delivering results. Ultimately, I added value. And when you do that, you don't just get ahead, you help to reshape and redefine what leadership looks like.

But I couldn't have navigated any part of my career without a strong and strategic network of friends, family, colleagues, and mentors, who were there (and still are) to cheer me on and champion my growth. This support system, along with confidence and perseverance, was key to breaking down barriers and advancing toward my leadership goals. The great thing is I have seen a positive shift, at least within the commercial interiors industry. When I first began in the industry it was heavily male dominated. Over the years, the number of women in sales, support, design, specification, marketing, research, communications, and so many other roles, as well as those who have progressed into leadership positions, has significantly grown and it's exciting to be a part of it. I look forward to seeing how this shift will continue to impact our industry and how it will take us into the next era of design and innovation.

Nicole Shamir

As a woman in the industry, I have never viewed my path as one that has had challenges; rather, I've always seen opportunities. Every interaction, project, and experience has been a chance to learn, grow, and make an impact. Instead of focusing on barriers, I've leaned into building strong relationships, honing my expertise, and approaching each situation with confidence and curiosity. This mindset has allowed me to navigate the industry with resilience and purpose, proving that success isn't about limitations—it's about how you choose to embrace the opportunities in front of you.

Throughout my journey in the industry, I've also had the incredible privilege of becoming a mother to three wonderful children. Becoming a mother, while launching the OFGO STUDIO brand vision, has taught me that we are resilient, strong, adaptable, and capable of anything we set our minds too. While we may juggle a million things at once, there are no limits—only opportunities to push boundaries and achieve what we set our minds to.

Brandi Hoffman

I was warned pretty early on about the 'old boys club' mentality, and yes, I've had my fair share of higher-ups with outdated attitudes. The constant worry of being too assertive or too opinionated, while still trying to make sure you're heard. Exhausting! The real game-changer for me was letting go of fitting into someone else's mold and instead showing up as unapologetically myself. Turns out, authenticity is the ultimate power move. And honestly? It's way more fun that way.

Barbara Nolan

Entering what was predominantly a male-dominated industry presented its challenges, but perseverance and hard work earned me respect over time. Through conversations with women, whether in libraries, over meals, or informally, I have consistently encouraged them to pursue their ambitions. One particularly touching moment was receiving a thank-you card from a former client, several years later, expressing gratitude for my encouragement and the impact it made on her life.

My mother, the Honorable Theresa Nolan, served as my greatest mentor and role model. She managed to raise eleven children while attending college and law school, ultimately retiring as a Circuit Court Judge. Her motto, "Bite off more than you can chew and chew like hell!" has inspired my approach to both life and work. I greatly admire the women leaders and Principals in this industry for their tenacity and effort, recognizing the hard work required to achieve success. I aspire for those I employ and encounter to value integrity and dedication, striving for excellence in their roles.

Helen Turner

Research and anecdotal evidence indicate that the interior design profession largely consists of individuals who identify as women, yet it is other identities that are not well represented in the industry. With respect to this point, I recognize the privilege of my identity in this career. However, as a woman teaching interior design in an academic setting, which tends to be very hierarchic, patriarchic, and traditional, the challenges I most often face stem from lack of general knowledge about the discipline, why it necessitates a four-year degree, and what avenues of rigorous research could result from it. So, in addition to educating students in the major, I find myself consistently educating colleagues from other disciplines and administrators as well as potential students and their parents that the field is not just "fun" or concerned with superficial aesthetics, but a discipline centered on all facets of the human condition in the creation of functional, safe, and meaningful environmental experiences.

Charity Hogrefe

I'm fortunate to be in my career at a time when women are shattering glass ceilings and making great strides. I work for a woman-owned company, and I get to witness this progress firsthand! That being said, I've still faced challenges. One of the biggest is finding the balance between being a mom and a career woman. My family is my top priority, but my career also demands a lot. With four kids—three daughters and a son—my husband and I, both of us career-driven, have had to figure out how to make it all work. Have there been sacrifices? Yes, but I truly believe it's possible to have it all. I'm determined to show my kids that they can have fulfilling careers while balancing family life too.

Erin Corrill

The Commercial Interiors industry, like many others, can still be "a man's world". But thankfully, like myself, there are plenty of women who refuse to sit still and do as they're told. Being a working mom is challenging, but I'm lucky to have a supportive husband who has never once asked me to change who I am. He knew from the start that I was fiercely independent, and rather than push against that, he embraced it. That support has been invaluable as I've built my career, traveled, and taken on leadership roles—all while raising a family.

But here's the thing—I've never felt like I had to fight to be heard in this industry, and I know that makes me lucky. ProjectMatrix embraced my quirks—my purple hair, my big ideas, my refusal to stay quiet. Mark Herrin, Larry Bertch, and Rob Detrick—saw my potential and gave me space to shine. And Configura has done the same. No one has ever told me to sit down because "the guys are talking." No one has ever asked me to tone it down or be "less." They value my ADHD-fueled need to fidget (yes, I knit during meetings), my Star Wars dresses, my currently blue hair, and—most importantly—my voice. This is how companies create real progress. By valuing individuals for their ideas, not their ability to conform.

Susan Claus

One of the biggest challenges I have faced in my career was not industry-related—it was personal. Being diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2025 is a moment that forced me to step back, reassess, and lean into what truly matters. Instead of seeing it as a setback, I chose to use it as an opportunity to grow—not just for myself, but for my team. It taught me the power of trust, delegation, and the importance of building up the people around me. As I go into my surgery date, I know I have set up my team for success. The support I have received from this industry is unmatched. Navigating this journey has led me to Common Thread for the Cure, an organization dedicated to supporting those in the furnishings industry affected by breast cancer. That connection reinforced something I have always believed: leadership is not about personal success; it is about lifting others up, whether within your company or across the industry.

Navigating a traditionally male-dominated space has also had its challenges, but I have found that confidence, resilience, and a willingness to embrace change have been my greatest strengths. Rather than trying to fit into a mold, I have focused on creating my own path—one that prioritizes innovation, collaboration, and purpose.

Abby Koesterman

As a young woman in the commercial interiors industry, one of the main challenges I've faced has been working in a field where most of my colleagues are older and have been in the industry for many years. This dynamic often presents obstacles, such as not being heard or taken seriously. To navigate these challenges, I've focused on leading with respect, integrity, and empathy. While it can be difficult, I always try to take the high road and remain composed, even in the face of adversity. I believe that staying true to my values and showing up with professionalism in every situation has not only earned me respect but has also empowered me to build meaningful relationships and grow in my career.

Ultimately, it's about using challenges as opportunities to prove my worth, stay true to my principles, and demonstrate that leadership comes from fostering understanding and mutual respect—qualities that transcend age, gender, or experience.

4

How do you personally define success in your role, and what achievements are you most proud of?

Stephanie Sickler

For the past 8 years I have served on the Board of Directors for the Interior Design Educators Council. Elected to the position by my peers, I have felt that this service has been one of my greatest achievements. During my time on the Board I have served in many capacities, most recently as the Immediate Past President, a role that will come to an end this May. In all instances and through the good and the bad, these leadership roles have benefited me in immeasurable ways. Not only have I matured as a leader, but also, I have had the opportunity to connect with design professionals and industry partners from across our industry. Leadership is not a facet of my career I set out to pursue, but it is one that I have found most rewarding.

Another notable measure of my success is the success of my former students. After 16 years I have placed students all over the country and seen them rise to great successes in their own careers. Their success tells me that we are doing something right in interior design education, and it is the ultimate feeling of accomplishment. I attend trade shows such as High Point Market, Neocon, EdSpaces, HCD and the like regularly. There hasn't been a show yet that I have not come across former students. Bearing witness to their accomplishments is such a fulfillment, and by far what I am most proud of in my career.

Nicole Shamir

For me, success in my role is about making a meaningful impact—not just in the products, but in the relationships we build. What I'm most proud of is not only the opportunity to be part of transformative projects but also the people who I have been able to meet and work with along the way.

Helen Turner

Similar to being a mother and hoping your kids' good fortunes exceed your own, I believe success in my role is measured by the success of my students and, as a program Director, the success of my faculty. In this regard, I am most proud when I have positive impact, like when a student tells me they learned something in my class or that they gained a new perspective about design, or when my students and faculty achieve their own goals and successes.

Paula Schmidt

I've had the opportunity to work on a lot of great projects and bring big ideas to life in a variety of industries. Some include playing a role in launching and positioning personal care products, food, and other fast-moving consumer goods for products we now use every day, measuring and enhancing TV advertising for pharmaceuticals to meet government regulations without sacrificing awareness and appeal, and helping to put new items on the menus of major fast food and coffee chains. And even within our own industry, I've led customer segmentation studies, designed new websites, implemented tools to make specification easier, and rebranded century-old companies.

Yet for me success is not always about a specific project or achievement. It's about constantly learning and growing, which happens every day. It's about how my team consistently makes progress and strives to meet and exceed our goals, as well as their own. It's about implementing approaches that save time and resources. It's about solving real problems. It means earning respect from my colleagues and leaders. It's hearing positive feedback from customers. It's seeing sales thrive after implementing new products, campaigns, and tools. Success is knowing I'm adding value and making an impact on others with everything I do.

Charity Hogrefe

Anyone who knows me knows I'm always looking for the next challenge or problem to solve. I've held many roles at NBS, but before that, I gained valuable experience in different positions that helped me build a solid foundation for navigating the complexities of the industry. Ultimately, the thing I'm most proud of is leading and coordinating a talented team to achieve outstanding goals, all while fostering a culture of giving back to our community and creating a positive, supportive work environment.

Susan Claus

For me, success is not all about hitting metrics or launching new initiatives—it is about creating lasting impact. It is about building something meaningful, whether that is a dedicated team, an innovative solution, or a brand that resonates. I define success as the ability to drive progress while lifting others up along the way.

Reflecting, there are several achievements I am incredibly proud of. Spearheading the launch of our Product Builder was a game-changer, giving customers a seamless, interactive way to customize solutions and transforming how we engage with them. Consolidating three distinct brands into one cohesive identity under our flagship Ghent label was another milestone, allowing us to clarify our voice in the market and strengthen our presence. And reopening and expanding our showroom space in Chicago was a strategic move that not only enhanced our visibility but also solidified our positioning for the next decade and beyond.

Beyond the tangible wins, one of the most fulfilling parts of my journey has been my involvement in WE Lead, a competitive application leadership program for women hosted by the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber. Championing leadership development for women and helping to foster the next generation of industry leaders is something that truly fuels my passion. At the end of the day, success is about making a difference—leaving things better than I found them and creating opportunities for others to do the same.

Abby Troutman

Success in my role has quite a lot of different definitions. As a copywriter, success is when I can project our brand voice, style, and personality to share our most recent introductions, press releases, advertising copy, event invitations, etc. I'm successful when our brand excels through sales, editorial pick-ups, event participation, and website traffic. When I've piqued someone's interest to want to learn more about our brands, our products, and our thought leadership, then that's a victory too. Being a part of creating success stories that showcase how our products have transformed environments and made spaces into visions for our customers is also a success.

My biggest work-related success was when I was secretly nominated by my manager and then received the "Top Women in Communications" award in NYC in February of 2023. I was honored as a "top woman in communications who elevated their profession and contributed in positive ways, internally and outside of their organization." I was honored alongside Presidents and Vice Presidents, CEOs and Directors. I gave a speech in front of a full event room and was surrounded by women who were focused on empowering and celebrating each other.

Honestly, for me, success can be found in small or huge ways, and sometimes you have to look for it. It can be a little, unexpected thank you or a big, nationwide award.

Brandi Hoffman

I'm successful when my team is happy and fulfilled with their work. That's my top priority as a business owner. When your people are heard and valued, there's a direct correlation to delivering results that make clients proud to be partnered with you.

Two of my greatest achievements have been made in partnership with My Resource Library:

1. I've always wanted to work on an app, and earlier this year we launched the MRL Media App! I'm excited to continue evolving this platform for some game-changing enhancements later this year.

2. The other big one is becoming Editor-in-Chief of this magazine, my favorite industry publication. As someone who has been writing about the industry for many years, it's a dream come true!

Abby Koesterman

For me, success in my role is defined by the ability to consistently bring value to the team, build meaningful relationships, and stay true to my values of respect, integrity, and empathy. It's not just about hitting targets or achieving milestones, it's about making a positive impact on those around me and contributing to the success of the larger team and company.

Having been in the industry for just over a year, I'm most proud of the relationships and connections I've made. I've heard many times that 'once you enter this industry, you stay in this industry' because of the people. I can now confirm that it's the support, mentorship, and collaboration with others that have not only helped me grow but have also made the journey so much more rewarding.

Erin Corrill

For me, success isn't about numbers or titles. It's about people.

I want designers to love their workflow. I want sales teams to feel empowered. I want project managers to know exactly what's happening with an order—without digging through a mess of outdated systems. And when people aren't happy? I want to know. Because if something isn't working, I take that feedback straight to the table and fight for change.

This is why I love getting on stage at events, visiting dealerships, meeting with manufacturers—talking to the people who actually use the tools we build. Seeing their enthusiasm when a solution truly works for them? That's the reward.

At the end of the day, I never want anyone to feel the way I did in college—trapped in a system that doesn't serve them, questioning their passion and their purpose. If I can help people love what they do, if I can make their work easier, more intuitive, more fulfilling—then I've done my job.



Abby Troutman accepting the Top Women in Communications Award February 2023

5

Have you had mentors who helped shape your career? If so, what advice or lessons have stayed with you? And how do you pay it forward?

Stephanie Sickler

I had a teacher many years ago that said (on picking a research topic) that we should select a topic then become an authority on it. That process stuck with me and as I defined the trajectory of my career, I heard her voice in my head many times, urging me to find something I was interested in becoming the authority on. I found that passion in textiles and materials education. I became the authority on designing with soft goods, and in my role as an educator, expanded that to a variety of material types. Now, together with my long-time collaborator, Helen Turner, we are widely recognized as the authority on materials education. In leaning in to my teacher's advice, I have found fulfilling opportunities to share my knowledge and expertise with others for the betterment of the profession.

Nicole Shamir

Yes, I've been fortunate to have several mentors throughout my career who have had a profound impact on my growth. One piece of advice that has always stuck with me is from a mentor who told me to embrace the long-term vision. They taught me that it's the steady persistence, resilience, and commitment to growth that make all the difference. Another piece of advice that has had a lasting impact is the idea of leading with authenticity. Being true to myself, both in business and in personal interactions, has allowed me to build stronger, more meaningful relationships. I make it a point to pay it forward by being a mentor to others. Whether it's providing guidance on career decisions, sharing my experiences, or simply offering a listening ear, I aim to empower others to trust in their abilities and to keep pushing forward. To me mentorship is about lifting others up and helping them recognize their potential.

Helen Turner

I have had many great mentors throughout my life and career, including family members, teachers, and colleagues. They all provided pivotal advice and lessons at different moments, but the biggest thing they all did to help shape my career was provide support. This resonates with a quote that one of my close colleagues regularly shares with our students, which is: "90% of life is showing up." So, for me, it was less about the advice and lessons than it was having someone be present for me. I try to pay it forward by showing up and being actively present and engaged for the people in my life.

Paula Schmidt

Across many industries, one of the challenges we face is the lack of women in leadership roles. This underrepresentation and lack of visibility not only makes it difficult for women to envision themselves in key/top management roles, it also makes it harder to find mentors and role models to help guide and support them, and the next generation of women, in their careers.

I've been lucky. As I began my career, my first job out of college was for a woman-owned company. She was smart, tough, and a bit ruthless (because she had to be). She knew her stuff, was a pioneer in her strategies, and confidently stood her ground. She, along with a team of well-balanced male and female leaders, positioned the company as a forerunner within the industry. Inside those corporate walls, many of the gender and diversity challenges we still face today were significantly minimized and even non-existent. Though it was decades ago, it is still the most progressive company I've ever worked for. That job provided immense professional learning and personal growth for me, and many of those lessons I still cling to and exercise today.

As I moved into other roles, and more specifically into the commercial interiors industry, I've been surrounded by strong, unforgettable women. Women who were not only willing to forge ahead, drive their passions, and speak out for their beliefs, they were willing to also teach, support, and advocate for others. To no surprise many of these women have leadership roles in our industry today or have taken leadership roles in other industries. And as I've progressed in my career, I've tried to do the same. It's about sharing knowledge, lifting others up, instilling confidence, and just being there so that all of us can work, live, and simply do better.

Charity Hogrefe

Yes! I've been fortunate to have many mentors throughout my career, some of whom may not even realize the lasting impact they've had. One mentor, in particular, is someone I now work for, which feels incredibly rewarding. The biggest lesson I've learned is to approach every situation with grace and professionalism. One mentor had to let me go during the 2008-09 recession, but we've remained close friends ever since. He's someone I can still turn to for advice, and I know he's always got my back. The most important takeaway? Never burn bridges. In turn, I do my best to pay it forward by offering support, especially to young women. It's vital to have other women to lean on through every stage of life, as each stage brings its own unique challenges.

Barbara Nolan

My mother, the Honorable Theresa Nolan, served as my greatest mentor and role model. She managed to raise eleven children while attending college and law school, ultimately retiring as a Circuit Court Judge. Her motto, "Bite off more than you can chew and chew like hell!" has inspired my approach to both life and work. I greatly admire the women leaders and Principals in this industry for their tenacity and effort, recognizing the hard work required to achieve success. I aspire for those I employ and encounter to value integrity and dedication, striving for excellence in their roles.

Abby Troutman

Throughout my career and my personal life, I've been surrounded by influential women. Strong women who are wise and witty, but caring and determined to help others shine. From each of them, I've learned how important it is to be confident in your skills and proud of your experiences. I have helped pay it forward by making sure that others truly know that you can learn from anything, it's just critical to make sure you are focused on the right takeaways. You may be defeated or discouraged, but there's always something to learn and grow from. I think it's also very important to just be kind. It's simple and not hard. In everything, I feel like being considerate and helpful to others can open doors and build relationships.

Abby Kosterman

Yes, I've been fortunate enough to have a few mentors who have played a significant role in shaping my career. Their guidance, support, and wisdom have been invaluable as I've navigated my career. One key lesson that has always stuck with me is the importance of showing up—whether that means showing up for your work, showing up for others, or showing up for yourself.

I make a conscious effort to show up for the people who show up for me. I believe in nurturing and fostering relationships that are meaningful and mutually supportive. Just as my mentors took the time to invest in me, I try to do the same by offering support, guidance, and encouragement to those around me. It's about creating a cycle of growth and empowerment, where everyone feels valued and uplifted.

Brandi Hoffman

I haven't had a formal mentor, but the same person that saw my potential when I was 20 years old fetching orders off a fax machine also brought me back into the industry over a decade later.

She is absolutely the reason I went into marketing and why I'm back home in this industry with my fellow furniture nerds. I'm forever grateful!

A lesson I learned from a bad experience I witnessed her go through: don't work for people who don't value and respect their team. During my weekly one-on-one meetings with the B.Digital team, I always make sure to ask how things are going, find out if they feel fulfilled in their work, and let them know how appreciated they are.

Susan Claus

One of the most valuable lessons I have learned in my career is the importance of building your own board of directors—a group of trusted advisors who help guide you through both business and personal decisions. This concept started to form in my mind during my time in WE Lead. At the time, I did not realize that I had already been “collecting people,” as I like to call it—mentors, coaches, pacing partners, and confidants who each played a role in shaping my journey.

The best way to start building your board is simple: network. Talk to people. Be curious. Some of the most valuable relationships in my career have come from stepping outside of my comfort zone and putting myself in rooms where I could learn and grow. I always encourage others to seek out opportunities that provide networking, learning, and self-investment—whether that is attending industry events, conferences, or leadership workshops. Even if networking is not your favorite thing, it is worth it. The connections you make can shape your career in ways you never expected.

For me, paying it forward is just as important as receiving guidance. I make it a priority to mentor and support others, whether that is through formal programs or just being a sounding board for colleagues navigating their own challenges. Leadership is not about advancing yourself—it is about lifting others up and creating space for them to thrive.

Brandi Hoffman (right) and Morgan Elmes of B.Digital



6

Balancing career, personal life, and professional growth can be challenging. How do you prioritize well-being while maintaining your impact in the industry?

Stephanie Sickler

Like so many other design professionals, I have a difficult time saying “no” especially when I see an exciting opportunity on the horizon. Something that I have learned through the process of Tenure and Promotion at an academic institution is the ability to curate those opportunities and hone my path into a focused area of study and exploration. This practice ensures that I (primarily) say “yes” to opportunities that are in my direct path and in line with my personal and professional goals. I am not always as successful at that as I would like to be, but it gives me focus when presented with more opportunities than can reasonably be accomplished.

In addition to being a Professor, Board Member, and business owner, I am first and foremost a wife and a mother (and a dog mom). When I say “yes” to opportunities I try to ensure that those are in concert with our family calendar rather than in opposition to it. In the times when I have had to sacrifice family time for my career, I have taken care to ensure that my children, my teenage daughter in particular, understand that in my career I am capitalizing on the opportunity to be a strong, intelligent, and independent leader who is working toward an established goal. Now that my children are a little older those lessons are easier, but it’s something that we work on together every day.

Helen Turner

To be honest...not always well! However, I have also heard that “work-life balance” is unattainable, because there can never be true balance – especially since academia, like the design industry, is never consistent and there are always times one or the other requires more. Instead, I lean into the notion of “work-life integration,” which allows flexibility with the attention and effort I give to different parts of my life during any given day or week. While I still try to set some boundaries between work and personal life, being OK with the ebb and flow feels less stressful and enables time for me to focus on my well-being, like making sure I can pick my kids up from school a couple days a week, or have coffee with my husband on occasion, or even just go for a walk mid-day.

Paula Schmidt

Let’s be honest, I’m not always the best in this area. It’s difficult for me to turn it off. I’m sparked with ideas everywhere and I usually want to quickly capture them and flush them out. I have an innate eagerness to complete one project so I can move on to the next. It’s truly a blessing and a curse. Though it may sound trite, I think I’m the epitome of work hard, play hard. My advice to you, and to myself, is to remember you don’t have to do everything yourself. Ask for help. Delegate. Set boundaries. Celebrate wins (even the small ones). Take care of yourself to enjoy life. And, most importantly, smile and have fun no matter what you’re doing.

Charity Hogrefe

I’ll be honest, it’s something I’m still working on, but it’s a priority for me right now. When new opportunities come my way, I pause to evaluate whether they align with my core values and priorities. If they don’t, I’ve learned to say no, which is hard for someone like me who tends to want to please others. But saying no to things that don’t serve me is essential for my well-being and overall balance.

Barbara Nolan

In today’s era of remote work, achieving work-life balance is more attainable. Having three wonderful children, I worked full-time throughout their lives, supported by an amazing husband who shared parental responsibilities. I believe my children would express pride in my career and affirm that they never felt disadvantaged by having a working mother.

Faith is a crucial aspect of my life. My mornings typically begin with daily Mass, followed by a workout, and then I address the day’s tasks. Preparing both mind and body has proven invaluable.

Susan Claus

Balancing career, personal life, and professional growth is never easy, but for me, it all comes down to boundaries. I have always been very protective of my time because I know that to be fully present—whether at work or at home—I need to create clear distinctions between the two. I am open about my family at work, but I also recognize the importance of keeping professional and personal spheres separate. When I am home, I make a conscious effort to disconnect from work and be fully present with my family. Of course, there are exceptions, but having that clarity allows me to show up more intentionally in every aspect of my life.

One mantra that has guided me over the years is: “You can have it all, just not all at once.” It is a reminder that balance is not about doing everything at the same time—it is about knowing when to lean into different priorities. There are seasons of intense focus on career growth, and there are seasons where personal life takes precedence. Giving myself permission to embrace that ebb and flow has been essential for both my well-being and my ability to make a lasting impact in this industry.

At the end of the day, prioritizing well-being is not about personal benefit—it makes me a better leader, colleague, and mentor. By setting boundaries, I can fully commit to the work I do, the people I support, and the life I am building beyond my career.

Abby Troutman

For a long time I've firmly believed that you need to protect your peace. I have interpreted this phrase to mean that you have to find peace anywhere and everywhere you can. From tender moments with my daughters to big work-related events, you have to ground yourself and find happiness. It's there, it's just that sometimes you really have to look for it. And then, when you've found it, cherish it. For me, well-being is a holistic term. I need to balance home, work, and outside responsibilities to find my personal well-being. By finding that, I am able to bring my best self to work every day and continue to propel our brand in the industry.

Nicole Shamir

When balancing career, personal life, and professional growth I've learned there are three key things that allow you to prioritize well-being while maintaining your impact in the industry. #1) It's all about finding the right rhythm and embracing each day with a positive mindset. #2) Break things down and focus on the small wins you can achieve each day, and #3) Surround yourself with people who lift you up, challenge you to grow, and inspire you to be the best version of yourself.

Brandi Hoffman

Well, the short answer is that I haven't. I'm a workaholic and put everything else on the backburner when I started B.Digital - self care, fitness, friendships... you name it. Now that my team has grown and I can delegate more work, I'm finally beginning to step back and evaluate what I need to do to find the right balance for myself. Will I always work a little too much? Probably! That's just part of who I am.

At the end of the day, it's all about being happy with the path you're on, and if you aren't — it's time to forge a new one!

Abby Koesterman

Set clear boundaries. I make an effort to be fully present in whatever I'm doing, whether that's focusing on work or spending quality time with loved ones. I try to be disciplined with my time—knowing when to say 'no' and when to delegate tasks. In addition to time management, I focus on self-care. This could mean taking time to recharge with activities I enjoy, like exercise or reading, or simply getting enough rest. I've also found that having a strong support system—whether it's colleagues, friends, or family—has been invaluable in helping me navigate the pressures of both work and personal life. Maintaining my well-being also involves creating space for continuous growth, both professionally and personally. I set achievable goals and make time for learning opportunities. Ultimately, I believe that taking care of yourself is just as important as advancing your career. When you're at your best, you're better able to contribute, lead, and make an impact on your work.



Abby Koesterman (far right) with MRL teammates Heidi Fields and Shelley Garner at the 2025 NAIRC Annual Event last month.

7 | What advice would you give to young women looking to enter and excel in the commercial interiors industry?

Stephanie Sickler

Even if someone tells you that you are not cut out to be a designer, or that you will not be successful in some aspect of your career, do not despair! The design industry is vast and there is room for anyone with a passion to succeed. If you can be open to opportunities that come your way, even if it's not what you thought you would be doing, you can build a wonderful career in the interiors industry!

Nicole Shamir

The commercial interiors industry is a dynamic and vibrant space where innovation thrives and connections flourish. It's incredible to be part of a community that is driven by the passionate and inspiring individuals who make this industry extraordinary. Surround yourself with a supportive network of mentors, colleagues, and friends. Find people who inspire you, challenge you, and help you stay grounded. And lastly, stay focused on your goals, embrace challenges as opportunities, and keep believing in yourself—because the sky really is the limit.

Charity Hogrefe

If this is where your passion lies, go for it! There's nothing better than having a career in a field you truly love. Be a sponge—absorb all the knowledge you can and never stop learning. And above all, never let anyone tell you that you can't have it all. If you're determined and confident, the sky's the limit.

Barbara Nolan

My advice to future generations is to return to the basics: build genuine relationships, work diligently, prioritize integrity, participate actively, and cultivate your personal brand.

Brandi Hoffman

Be authentic, honest, and confident in who you are — and don't be afraid to tell people "I don't know, I'll look into that." I spent sooo much energy caring what other people thought of me when I was younger, and worrying they'd think I was stupid if I couldn't answer all the questions. Take that pressure off of yourself as soon as you can. For me it took until my mid 30s, but I'm very glad to be on the other side now. If you don't "fit" where you are, then you're not in the right place.

Paula Schmidt

Focus on your growth and invest in your development. You can learn from everything and anyone around you (both what to do and what not to do). Be confident. If you're not, work on it. You must believe in yourself and your abilities. Create a plan and stay true to your goals. Don't let anyone undermine you. Focus your energy on the positive. Surround yourself with people who will celebrate your wins. And never compromise who YOU are. Remember, as I was once told, you're not in the room by chance, you're there because you belong and have value to add.

Helen Turner

Be strong – strong in your convictions and strong in your sense of self. There are many opportunities to fall victim to imposter syndrome but know that you have a voice and your contributions are valuable. But beyond that, please don't forget where you came from. Remember when you were in design school how much it meant to have a practicing professional come talk to your class or mentor you or offer you an internship. That is still the case for students today. So, stay in touch with your teachers and your design program because there are always opportunities to be involved or give back. Any small (or big) gesture can be meaningful and may help shape the future for an emerging designer – or more.

Erin Corrill

Don't conform. Be your authentic self.

If where you are today doesn't appreciate that—leave. Find the company that values you for who you are, that encourages you to speak up, that doesn't ask you to shrink yourself just to fit in.

Set boundaries. Work hard during the day, then turn work off. Spend time with your family, your friends, doing what you love. Don't burn yourself out early. Success isn't about climbing the highest ladder—it's about being happy.

Find your support circle and nourish it. Surround yourself with people who challenge you, encourage you, and remind you who you are. And when it comes to relationships, find a partner—not just a spouse, but someone who truly sees you. Someone who rolls their eyes when you shave half your hair off and dye it blue—but loves you for it anyway.

At the end of the day, success isn't about money or titles. It's about happiness. I love my career. I love my family. I love the life I've built.

And as long as I can take the occasional Disney vacation, buy the next big LEGO set, go camping with my family, and spend time outdoors—I consider everything I've done a massive success.

Because life is too short to spend it being anything other than exactly who you are.

Susan Claus

My biggest piece of advice? Say yes.

When I first joined GMi, one of my earliest projects was figuring out how to seamlessly interact with dealers without housing our products in a wholesale warehouse. I had no prior experience in this area, yet I found myself collaborating with our internal IT team, external developers, and our sales team while also learning the complexities of the office products buying process. I asked a lot of questions—not just to understand, but to contribute meaningfully. I never once considered saying no just because I lacked experience. And while the project did not end exactly as we had hoped, the lessons I took from it have shaped my career in ways I never could have predicted.

If I polled the people on my personal board of directors, I know they would highlight more tactical steps I have taken to grow my career. But the truth is, success is not about following a perfect checklist—it is about taking a series of intentional steps that align with your goals. The journey is not a sprint, and you do not need to implement every piece of advice all at once.

So, my advice to young women entering the commercial interiors industry? Start now. Cultivate a thirst for continuous learning. Set boundaries that enhance your well-being. When opportunities arise, seize them with a resounding yes. Infuse joy into your work—because laughter, collaboration, and innovation go hand in hand. Most importantly, embrace the fact that leadership is an ever-evolving process. It is not about having all the answers from day one—it is about growing, adapting, and leading with authenticity.

Take that first step today and let your leadership journey unfold.



Abby Troutman

I think it's so important, in any role, to have an open mind and strong problem-solving skills. By being yourself, you offer something that no one else can...so showcase your personality, your creativity, your drive, your curious nature. Stand out and be proud and confident. Equally important, though, is knowing how to balance sharing your voice with listening to others.

Specifically regarding the commercial interiors industry, you have to remember that it's so much more than just furniture. The furniture creates spaces that offer privacy in stressful situations, spaces that comfort those who are navigating medical situations, and spaces that build brand awareness and boost productivity. The furniture is an element in a grand plan, and you get to help make sure that plan is human-centric and focused on providing an experience.

Abby Koesterman

My advice to young women entering the commercial interiors industry is to be a sponge—soak up as much knowledge as you can. This industry is full of professionals who have been here for many years and have a wealth of experience. Take the time to talk to as many people as possible and build meaningful relationships. The more connections you make, the more you'll learn and grow.

Never be afraid to ask questions. No question is a bad question. The people you meet have a lot to teach you, and asking thoughtful questions shows that you're eager to learn and engage with the work. At the same time, always express your ideas and opinions. Your unique perspective is something that should be shared.

In addition to building your knowledge, it's important to lead with confidence and integrity. If you stay true to your values and approach every situation with professionalism, respect, and empathy, you'll make a lasting impact. Surround yourself with mentors who support your growth and lift you up.

All in all, keep learning, stay resilient, and remember that your unique perspective is invaluable in shaping the future of this industry!



FORGING THE **FUTURE OF WOMEN** IN INTERIOR DESIGN

As the Director of the Architectural Division at My Resource Library, I have had the privilege of witnessing the evolution of the interior design industry over the years. Today, I am excited to discuss a topic close to my heart: forging the future of women in interior design. This journey is about embracing leadership roles, fostering mentorship, and building a lasting legacy.

Women have always been at the forefront of interior design, bringing creativity, innovation, and a unique perspective to the table. Today, more women are stepping into leadership roles, shaping the future of the industry. These roles are not just about holding titles but about influencing the direction of design, advocating for sustainable practices, and pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

One such leader is Suzanne Tick, a renowned textile designer and CEO of Suzanne Tick Inc. Her work in textiles, hard surfacing, and lighting has set new standards in the industry. Suzanne's approach to design is both innovative and sustainable, making her a true icon in the field. Another influential figure is Barbara Barry, whose timeless and elegant designs have made her a household name. Barbara's ability to create spaces that are both beautiful and functional has inspired countless designers.

Mentorship plays a crucial role in the growth and development of women in interior design. Experienced designers have the opportunity to guide and support the next generation, sharing their knowledge and expertise. This mentorship is not just about teaching technical skills but also about instilling confidence and encouraging young designers to find their unique voice.

At My Resource Library, we believe in the power of mentorship. Our platform connects seasoned professionals with emerging designers, creating a community where knowledge is shared, and creativity is nurtured. This collaborative environment is essential for fostering innovation and ensuring that the legacy of great design continues.

Building a legacy is about more than just creating beautiful spaces; it's about making a lasting impact on the industry and the world. Women like Suzanne Tick and Barbara Barry have built legacies that go beyond their individual projects. They have set new standards, inspired others, and paved the way for future generations.

As we look to the future, it's important to recognize and celebrate the contributions of up-and-coming female designers who are poised to make their mark. Designers like Tali Roth, known for her dynamic approach to contemporary spaces, and Anishka Clarke and Niya Bascom of Ishka Designs, who are bringing beautifully simplistic interiors to the forefront, are just a few examples. These designers are not only creating stunning spaces but also challenging the status quo and pushing the boundaries of design.

The future of women in interior design is bright. With more women stepping into leadership roles, the importance of mentorship, and the building of lasting legacies, we are witnessing a transformation in the industry. Icons like Suzanne Tick and Barbara Barry have laid the groundwork, and now it's up to the next generation to continue forging this path.

At My Resource Library, we are committed to supporting and celebrating the achievements of women in interior design. Together, we can create a future where women continue to lead, inspire, and innovate. Let's embrace this journey and build a legacy that will inspire generations to come.



Laura Carlson

BUILT FOR EVERY ENVIRONMENT

All-Ways by Via Seating: Versatility with Style, Comfort and Sustainability

Built for Every Environment

The All-Ways chair by Via Seating offers unmatched adaptability, making it a perfect fit for higher education, K-12 classrooms, corporate offices, healthcare facilities, public sector institutions and biotech spaces. In educational settings, All-Ways' stacking, nesting and folding capabilities support collaborative learning, enabling quick reconfigurations for lectures, workshops, or group projects. Corporate spaces benefit from its sleek design and functionality, serving as an ideal solution for training rooms, conference spaces and multi-purpose areas. Healthcare facilities value its easy-to-clean surfaces and ergonomic design, ensuring both comfort and hygiene for patients and visitors. Public sector institutions appreciate its durability for public meetings and staff training, while biotech and laboratory settings find its compact nesting and ergonomic support ideal for fast-paced research environments.

Minimalist Design, Maximum Functionality

At the core of All-Ways is a minimalist design philosophy that pairs form with function. Crafted from a limited palette of high-quality materials, the chair offers a sleek, modern aesthetic while reinforcing Via Seating's commitment to sustainability. Its thoughtful construction ensures maximum utility with a reduced environmental footprint. Engineered for effortless stacking, nesting and folding, All-Ways seamlessly adapts to spaces requiring frequent reconfiguration. The ability to stack up to 20 chairs and nest compactly simplifies storage, making it an efficient solution for both small and large spaces.



Comfort Without Compromise

Beyond its versatility, All-Ways prioritizes comfort. The ergonomic design delivers optimal support for prolonged seating, catering to users in both active and formal settings. Multiple customization options, including upholstered seats and backs, allow users to tailor the chair for their specific comfort and style needs. The addition of tablet arms on either side enhances functionality, making All-Ways a practical choice for note-taking during meetings or classroom sessions. This blend of ergonomic support and customizable features ensures the chair meets the demands of diverse environments.



Sustainability at Its Core

All-Ways stands as a testament to Via Seating's dedication to environmentally responsible manufacturing. Constructed using the Design for the Environment (DfE) approach, the chair meets stringent sustainability standards. Each component undergoes assessment for environmental impact and materials are screened against ANSI/BIFMA e3-2019 Annex B and California Proposition 65 standards to ensure safety and sustainability. Via Seating's environmentally conscious approach extends beyond materials, incorporating efficient manufacturing processes that reduce waste and promote recyclability. With BIFMA LEVEL® certification, All-Ways exemplifies a holistic commitment to sustainability across design, materials and production.



Award-Winning Innovation

The design and functionality of All-Ways have earned industry-wide recognition. The chair received the prestigious Best of NeoCon GOLD award in the Seating: Stacking category, highlighting its excellence in both design and utility. This accolade underscores All-Ways position as a frontrunner in versatile seating solutions, setting a new benchmark for future innovations in flexible seating design. Such recognition is a testament to Via Seating's ability to blend style, adaptability and environmental consciousness into a single product.





Designed for Evolving Spaces

All-Ways is more than just a chair—it is a solution built for evolving environments. Its ability to transition between functions—from classroom seating to conference room solutions—makes it indispensable for multi-purpose settings. Its lightweight frame and compact nesting features allow for easy reconfiguration by a single user, transforming any space into a functional, collaborative area within moments. With its versatile applications and thoughtful design, All-Ways is built to move with you—all ways, always.



CONCLUSION

The All-Ways chair by Via Seating is more than just a seating solution; it's a dynamic tool crafted to adapt to the multifaceted needs of contemporary workspaces. Combining minimalist design, ergonomic comfort and environmental responsibility, it offers a comprehensive solution that meets the needs of diverse industries. Its award-winning innovation and sustainable construction further establish it as an indispensable asset in modern environments. As spaces continue to evolve, All-Ways stands ready to meet every challenge, delivering style, comfort and adaptability—all ways, always.

DIGITAL MARKETING *for furniture needs*



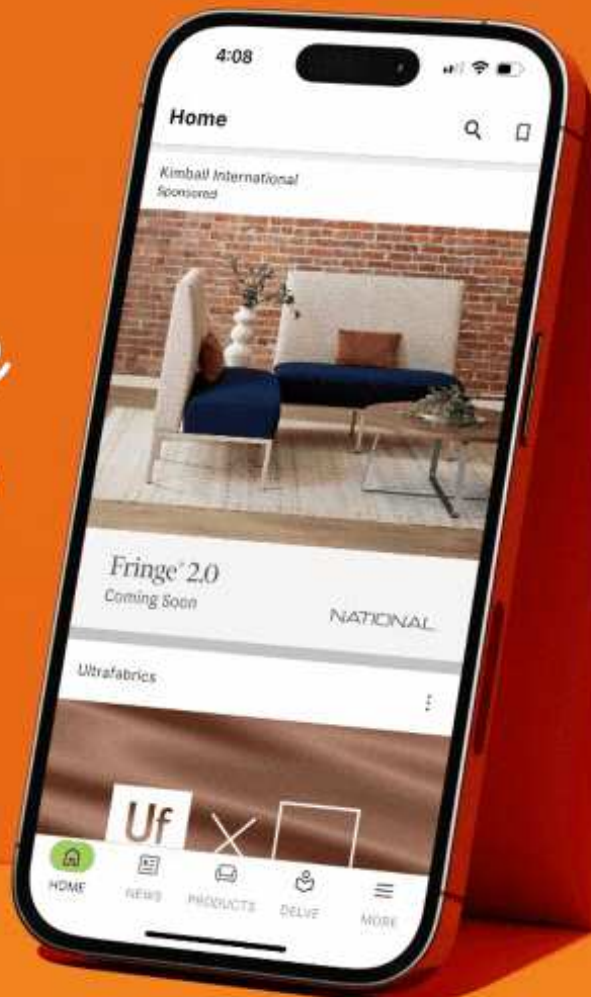
From manufacturers and independent reps to dealers and tech providers, B.Digital is helping people across our industry stay connected with impactful and engaging digital experiences.

WEBSITE CREATION & MANAGEMENT | SOCIAL MEDIA | EMAIL MARKETING
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO) | CONTENT DEVELOPMENT *and more!*

B.DIGITAL

*Industry
News in
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STAY CONNECTED
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A WALK TO REMEMBER:

Camaraderie and Connections at Eaton Group's Annual Bandon Dunes Boondoggle Golf Tournament

Nestled along the rugged Oregon coast, Bandon Dunes is more than just a world-renowned golf course; it's a place where relationships are forged, and memories are made. This year's Boondoggle Golf Tournament, hosted by Dave Eaton owner of Eaton Group, was no exception. Under the unpredictable February skies, with bursts of sun, rain, and even hail, industry professionals from across the country gathered not just to play golf, but to connect.

Walking the course, with its sweeping views and challenging holes, provided the perfect backdrop for open, meaningful conversations. The shared experience of braving the elements and navigating the course created a sense of camaraderie that extended far beyond the game itself. It was an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships, to share stories, and to find common ground in a relaxed, yet invigorating setting.



As we reflect on the tournament, it's clear that the true prize wasn't just in the scorecards, but in the lasting connections and the shared moments that will continue to resonate long after the final hole was played.

Thank you to...

Byron Smith
Ed Eisaman
Dave Eaton
Richard Russell
Joe Mathieu
Nick Camp
Larry Rivard
Jim Palmitier

Nathan Weber
Scott Brewer
Charlie Kelly
Doug Sackville
Bill Falk
Vic Shay
Jared Butterworth
Jeff Carlson

Mike Blessinger
Andy McLain
Anthony Pepe
Thomas White
Lowell Gordon
Sean Cronan
Frank Cross



FEATURED PRO DEALER

MRL Pro Dealer **BUSINESS FURNITURE + CO.**

Indianapolis, Indiana | Dayton, Ohio | Fishers, Indiana

PRO DEALER SINCE 2015

Business Furniture + Co. is a 103-year-old, woman-owned business headquartered in Indianapolis, with showrooms in Dayton, Ohio, and Fishers, Indiana. We specialize in designing healthcare, education, and corporate spaces that go beyond furniture—we shape experiences. As a trusted Steelcase partner, we bring innovation and expertise to create healing-centered healthcare spaces, dynamic learning environments, and collaborative corporate workplaces where teams thrive.

PROFILE CONTRIBUTORS

Amanda Clark-Wahl
Vice President of Marketing

Hannah Freiherr
Vice President of Design

Terry Richard
Chief Revenue Officer

Mary Meredith
Vice President of Client Satisfaction

Sammie Rosen
Business Development

Crystal Polson
Director of Client Services

What drove or influenced your decision to go Pro?

We went Pro because My Resource Library simplifies everything. It gives me instant access to local rep details, manufacturer customer service contacts, price increase updates, and contract copies—all in one place. We also appreciate having dealer-specific information consolidated, making it easier to stay informed and efficient.

How do your team members use MRL?

Sammie Rosen, Business Development, shared that she uses MRL to stay connected. *“MRL keeps me ahead in sales. Having local rep details, manufacturer contacts, price updates, and contract copies all in one place allows me to respond quickly to client needs. The ability to access dealer-specific details in a single platform streamlines my workflow, helping me close deals faster and provide top-tier service.”*



Regarding using MRL for design purposes, **Hannah Freiherr**, Vice President of Design, spoke to the efficiency created by using the Pro Dealer version of MRL. *“The ability to browse materials, finishes, and product availability in one place keeps our design team inspired and ready to create thoughtful, well-informed solutions for our clients.”*

Crystal Polson, Director of Client Services, added that their Project Managers find value in utilizing the platform. *“MRL keeps our client services team ahead of the curve. Having real-time access to factory updates, pricing changes, and contract details allows us to provide accurate information and quick responses to our clients. Plus, having local rep contacts and customer service details in one place streamlines communication and helps us resolve inquiries efficiently.”*

Marketing activities and efforts are also supported by MRL. Vice President of Marketing, **Amanda Clark-Wahl** finds value as *“it gives us instant access to brand galleries, product imagery, and material libraries, making it easy to create visually compelling campaigns.”*

Other employee insights from the Business Furniture + Co. team include the following:



Casey McPherson, Workplace Specialist:

“MRL is an indispensable part of my daily workflow. I rely on it to quickly access essential details like discount structures, freight fee terms, and local rep contact info—everything I need to secure the best deals for our clients. It streamlines my work and helps me focus on what really matters.”

Dainen Tolman, Director of K-12:

“I use MRL as a powerful resource to explore innovative product ideas and retrieve critical rep information quickly. It's an essential tool for staying ahead in our fast-paced industry.”



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

The Business Furniture + Co. team has their Custom Library organized using the tiered shelf feature which makes it easy to prioritize preferred dealer partners and streamline searches. The Full Product Library has introduced them to new manufacturers they may not have discovered otherwise, and the Enhanced Search features save time throughout the day.

Finding information and resources quickly, without having to search through multiple websites, makes narrowing down specific product information a task that can be completed quickly and efficiently. Brittnay Murphy, Workplace Specialist shared this example, "When an obscure request comes in—whether it's for a baby changing station, an exam table, or outdoor furniture rockers—I immediately turn to MRL instead of relying on generic searches. Its vendor-specific information is detailed and reliable, allowing us to address client needs quickly and accurately. It truly is a game-changer for our team."

“Our sales and design teams actively use the Inspiration Galleries for client presentations and idea generation, while Pro Notify has improved client engagement and sped up response times. The mobile access is a huge advantage for our team in the field, giving them instant access to product details, project info, and visuals when meeting with clients. We also utilize Project Tools for internal collaboration and regularly schedule training refreshers to ensure our team stays up to date with MRL’s newest features.”



At Business Furniture, MRL is a game-changer. It streamlines our access to essential product data and vendor contacts, ensuring we secure the best discounts and quickly source niche items. This tool plays a pivotal role in our daily operations, driving efficiency and helping our team deliver exceptional solutions for our clients.



The Inspiration Behind Botton + Gardiner



What inspired the founding of your company, and how has your design philosophy evolved over time?

Botton + Gardiner was founded by two passionate landscape architects, Mike Botton and Carol Gardiner. Their journey began with a deep understanding of public space design and a desire to craft thoughtful, functional site furniture. The first product, named 'Urban,' was inspired by the timeless elegance of the Parisian metro system's Art Deco aesthetic. This early design set the stage for the brand's legacy—blending industrial design with landscape architecture to create products that enhance outdoor environments.

For over 27 years, Botton + Gardiner has remained synonymous with quality commercial site furniture. Our commitment to sustainable, innovative design has transformed public spaces across Australia and beyond, shaping outdoor environments that are not only functional but also inspiring.

What is your process for selecting materials, and what is your commitment to sustainability in your products?

At Botton + Gardiner, sustainability is at the core of everything we do. Our mission is to minimize environmental impact while designing spaces that promote wellness and longevity.

Certified Hardwood: We source all Australian eucalyptus hardwood from sustainable forests certified by the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), ensuring responsible forestry practices.

Material Alternatives: We provide sustainable alternatives to traditional hardwood, such as Duraslat™—a mineral-based composite that contains up to 46% renewable natural filler and emits no VOCs.

Recycled Materials: Our locally sourced steel and aluminum incorporate recycled content and are fully recyclable, reducing waste and promoting circular design.

Low Pollutants: Our powder-coating process is VOC-free and backed by Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), contributing to LEED-certified projects.

Mindful Manufacturing: We prioritize local manufacturing, ensuring that waste is responsibly sorted and disposed of, reducing our environmental footprint.



What are some of the most exciting trends you're seeing in the outdoor furniture market right now and how is your company responding to them?

The outdoor furniture industry is evolving rapidly, with a strong focus on creating seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor environments. Key trends include:

Curated Outdoor Spaces: Designers are prioritizing outdoor areas that reflect interior aesthetics while catering to modern work and leisure lifestyles.

Outdoor Cafeterias: The rise of flexible workspaces has driven demand for inviting, durable outdoor dining and gathering spaces.

K-12 Educational Environments: Schools are investing in outdoor furniture solutions that support collaborative learning and social interaction in open-air settings.

At Botton + Gardiner, we continuously innovate to meet these demands, collaborating with architects and designers to develop solutions that enhance the outdoor experience.

What are the unique challenges of designing outdoor furniture compared to indoor pieces, and how do you address those?

One of our proudest projects involved the creation of a dynamic outdoor space that seamlessly blended natural elements with functional furniture, setting a new benchmark for urban placemaking. Our ability to integrate sustainable materials with cutting-edge design principles has enabled us to contribute to award-winning developments across Australia.

Looking ahead, our vision for the next 5–10 years includes:

Expanding our material innovations to further reduce environmental impact.

Strengthening collaborations with architects and designers to push the boundaries of outdoor space design.

Developing modular and adaptable furniture solutions that cater to evolving urban and commercial landscapes.

How do you see the outdoor furniture industry evolving in the next few years, especially with the growing trend of creating functional outdoor living spaces?

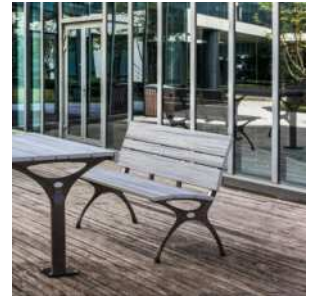
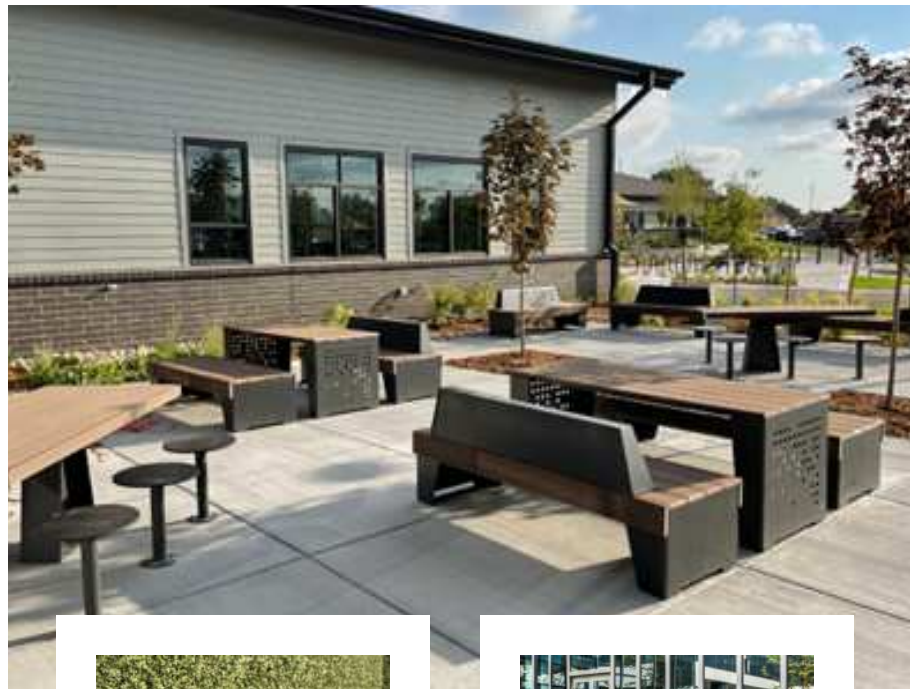
Designing outdoor furniture requires durability, comfort, and sustainability – ensuring pieces not only withstand harsh environments but also enhance the spaces they occupy. We address these challenges through:

Durability: Using corrosion-resistant metals, UV-stable finishes, and weatherproof materials to ensure longevity.

Comfort: Ergonomic designs that enhance user experience in high-traffic commercial settings.

Sustainability: Selecting eco-conscious materials and finishes that support both resilience and responsible sourcing.

As the demand for functional outdoor living spaces grows, we recognize the shift toward multi-functional environments that encourage interaction and engagement. Taking the inside out—bringing comfort, design, and usability into outdoor settings—creates spaces people want to visit, use, and enjoy. It’s about designing for experience, not just function.



botton + gardiner

PUBLIC SPACE FURNITURE

By collaborating with landscape architects, interior designers, and general contractors, we help shape adaptable and inviting outdoor areas in urban, corporate, education, and hospitality settings. Whether it's through thoughtful spatial planning, ADA compliance, or creating reasons to gather, Botton + Gardiner is committed to delivering solutions that foster connection, relaxation, and well-being in an ever-changing world.

Getting to Know **CONTRACT OFFICE REPS**

of Southern California

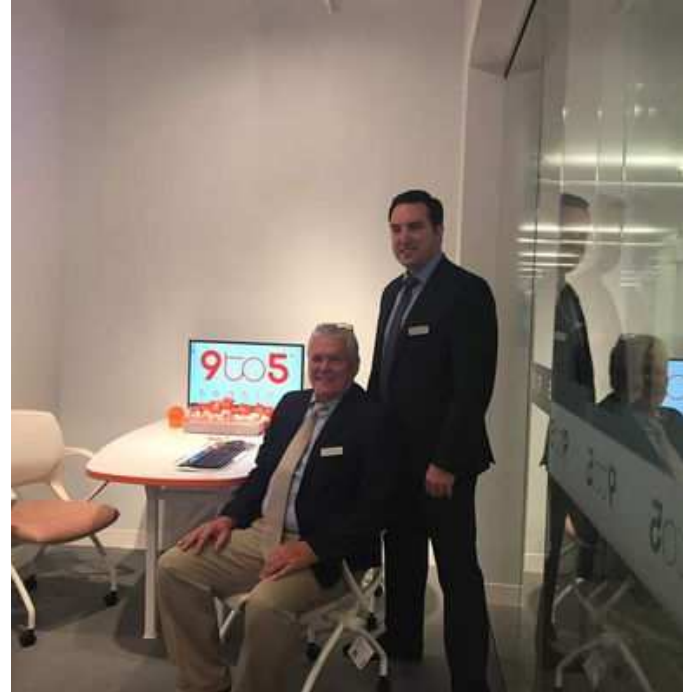
Delve: Tell us a little bit about how your rep group got started.

COR: I started Contract Office Reps of Southern California during the 2008 housing crisis, just 1.5 years into my office furniture career and challenging time for many industries. At the time, I was a salaried direct rep, but as the market shifted, my position transitioned to 100% commission. Instead of walking away, I saw an opportunity to build something of my own. I launched the company—then known as Ergo Reps—focusing on ergonomic furniture solutions. Over the years, we expanded our manufacturer partnerships and grew into a full-service rep group, rebranding as Contract Office Reps of Southern California. Most recently, we merged with Davis Contract, a company with 40 years of experience in systems, seating, casegoods, and ergonomics. Partnering with George Davis has strengthened our commitment to delivering top-tier solutions and customer service to our clients.

Delve: How has the company changed over the years?

COR: What started as a small, ergonomics-focused operation has evolved into a full-service contract furniture rep group. We expanded beyond seating and ergonomic solutions to include desking, acoustics, lighting, and more. The recent merger with Davis Contract is the biggest transformation yet, bringing together two experienced teams with a shared vision. George and I have built our careers on long-term relationships, exceptional service, and a commitment to delivering results. With this partnership, we're expanding our reach and enhancing the level of service and expertise we provide to dealers, designers, and manufacturers.





Delve: What do you think is the secret to your rep group’s longevity and success?

COR: The key to our success is perseverance—never backing down from a challenge and always finding ways to add value for our partners. Starting the business during a financial crisis taught me resilience. We’ve weathered industry changes, economic downturns, and shifting workplace trends by staying adaptable and solution-oriented. George and I share this mindset, which is why our partnership works so well. We believe in being hands-on, responsive, and consistently delivering for our clients. The relationships we’ve built over the years, based on trust and follow-through, are what keep us going.

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

COR: I love seeing how our work directly impacts people’s environments. Whether it’s designing a modern office space, a collaborative workspace, or a hospitality lounge, it’s rewarding to know that the products we represent help shape the way people work and interact. There’s nothing more fulfilling than tackling a complex project with many moving parts and seeing it come together successfully. Watching the final space take shape, knowing the effort and collaboration that went into it, is what keeps me passionate about this industry.

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

COR: With Contract Office Reps and Davis Contract now under one roof, I see us continuing to grow and innovate. The industry is shifting towards hybrid work models, wellness-focused designs, and sustainable solutions, and we plan to stay ahead by expanding our product offerings to meet these needs. Technology is also playing a bigger role in how we do business—AI, virtual showrooms, and digital sales tools will allow us to better serve our clients. Last but not least, I’m excited at the potential of my kids joining the family business.

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

COR: Perseverance. From launching in uncertain times to merging two powerhouse rep groups, our success has been built on resilience, hard work, and an unwavering commitment to our clients.

MRL STAR OF THE MONTH



NAME:

Alex Komosa

DEALER:

Furniture Plus Design

TITLE:

Account Executive

LOCATION:

Urban Honolulu, Hawaii

HOW LONG WITH FURNITURE PLUS DESIGN:

8 months

HOW LONG IN THE CONTRACT FURNITURE INDUSTRY:

8 months

GET TO KNOW ME:

What's one thing that's always on my desk: I have three monitors, and one always has MRL open on my web browser. 😊 It's true!

How would your coworkers describe you in five words? My colleagues said: I am optimistic, Joyful, Good-Hearted, Smart, and Goal-Oriented.

What's your favorite thing about working in this industry? Meeting new clients, building rapport with existing clients and accounts, the collaborative aspect of furnishing projects, and the attention to detail necessary as we strive to be best-in-class in our industry.

What's your go-to lunch or workday snack? My personal favorite is the Sunset Sandwich from Storto's Deli. They have the best sandwiches in town!

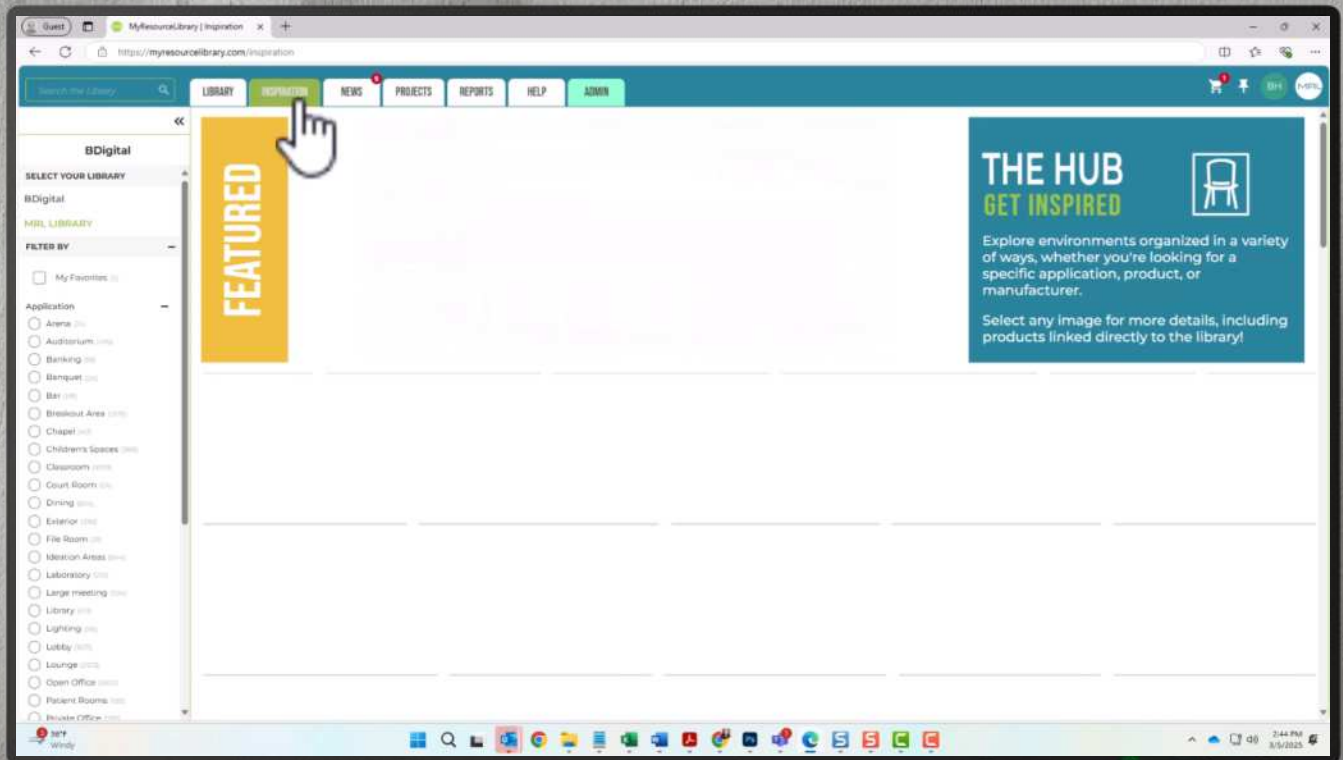
If you had to teach a class, give a TED Talk, or do a podcast what would it be about? I would focus the majority of the class on foundational principles of leadership, the importance of time management, and the benefits of goal setting & to-do task lists.



DID YOU KNOW?

FILTER THE INSPIRATION GALLERY BY APPLICATION

(Like, outdoor spaces for example...)



You can find more tips and tricks in our learning platform,

MRL UNIVERSITY!

Don't have access? Reach out to hello@myresourcelibrary.com

**INTERIOR DESIGN
EDUCATORS COUNCIL**



2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

March 16-19 | CHICAGO, IL

The Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) Annual Conference brings together educators, practitioners, and students to explore various facets of interior design, including history, theory, practice, and pedagogy. The event will feature abstract presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, emphasizing scholarship, diversity, and collaboration within the interior design community. A notable highlight is the introduction of Student Day on March 18, offering students complimentary registration and activities such as showroom tours and a service charette.

Special Event at The Merchandise Mart

Promenade Sponsored By:

IDEC PROMENADE

March 17 | 5:30PM-9:30PM

HAWORTH



MORE EVENTS

March 16-19
IDEC (Interior Design Educators Council)
Chicago, IL

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

May 5-7
Hospitality Design
Las Vegas, NV

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

June 9-11
Fulton Market Design Days
Chicago, IL

NEOCON
June 9-11 | Chicago, IL

September 17-19
IFMA World Workplace
Minneapolis, MN

September 28-30
Connexions

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

October
ACT Conference
New York, NY

October 25-28
Healthcare Design
Kansas City, MO

October 7-9
CET Experience
Orlando, FL

November 9-10
BDNY
New York, NY

November 3-8
ISG meeting
Denver, CO

November 5-7
EDspaces
Columbus, OH



MRL MIXERS

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

Next Sessions:
March 18 and March 20

[LEARN MORE](#)



BIFMA LEARNING SERIES

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

Next Session: March 27
Topic: A Body Conscious Approach to Furniture in Learning Environments

[LEARN MORE](#)



APRIL 2025: **SUSTAINABILITY**

In honor of Earth Month, the next issue of Delve Magazine will spotlight sustainability within the contract furniture industry. We'll explore how manufacturers and designers are integrating eco-friendly practices into their products and processes, reflecting a broader commitment to environmental stewardship. The focus will be on innovative approaches that reduce environmental impact, from sourcing sustainable materials to implementing energy-efficient manufacturing techniques.

Sustainability has become a pivotal consideration in the commercial interior design process. Leading design firms are at the forefront of this movement, emphasizing the importance of reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable design practices.

Do you have a product or project that you'd like featured in next month's issue? We'd love for you to be part of the story!

[Share Your Ideas](#)

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