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editor's note

Dear Reader,

The landscape of education is evolving at an unprecedented pace, and as we dive into this special "Education Design" issue of Delve Magazine, we find ourselves at the nexus of innovation and transformation.

In these pages, you'll explore the dynamic world of educational spaces, where creativity, functionality, and purpose converge. We'll showcase visionary designers who are shaping the future of learning, creating environments that inspire curiosity, collaboration, and growth.

From cutting-edge classroom designs to innovative virtual learning platforms, we'll delve into the solutions that are revolutionizing education.

Enjoy!

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LEARNING FROM RETAIL DESIGN: ENHANCING LIBRARY SPACES FOR ENGAGEMENT AND EXPLORATION

by Patricia Cadigan, M. Ed., ALEP,
Artcobell Vice President/Learning Environments

RETAIL DESIGN THINKING CAN INSPIRE US TO CREATE ENGAGING,
EXCITING MEDIA CENTERS THAT APPEAL TO TODAY'S STUDENTS.

Who doesn't love to shop?

Well, maybe not everyone loves the act of shopping. But we can all appreciate the design of a well-thought-out retail space, can't we? While exploring the fascinating world of retail design and its insights, I noticed striking parallels between these principles and the modern design of school libraries.

The school library of yesterday is going through metamorphosis. Teachers and librarians are struggling with how to make these spaces relevant to Gen Z and Gen Alpha, the children of the digital age. What would happen if we adapted retail design principles, based on the psychology of consumer behavior, to create inviting, functional, and user-centric library spaces? Interested? Well step inside!

Bridging Retail and Libraries: A Shared Goal

The retail industry's challenge of attracting younger shoppers looks a lot like today's libraries' pursuit of engaging students. Both seek to draw their target audience into physical spaces. Just as retailers study consumer behavior to optimize shopping experiences, librarians can adapt these tactics to curate immersive learning environments. Let's start by recognizing that getting students into library spaces is just the first step.

Understanding Generation Z and Generation Alpha: Designing Library Spaces for Digital Natives

The retail sector invests a lot of money in trying to understand its customer base. "Digital natives" -- Generation Z and Generation Alpha -- are profoundly influenced by technology and have effortlessly assimilated it into every aspect of their lives. Retailers recognize that they pose a distinctive (and profitable) opportunity for creating environments that deeply resonate with their unique perspectives. From a school perspective, Generation Alpha, born from 2010 onwards, constitutes our students from kindergarten through 7th grade, while Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s comprise our middle and high school students.

A Visual World: The Influence of Media

Generation Z and Alpha have grown up in a digital age characterized by a constant influx of visual information. Images, videos, and visual content are an integral part of their lives, shaping their perceptions and understanding of the world. This immersion has honed their ability to interpret and manipulate visual information, making them particularly responsive to environments that stimulate their senses.

Harnessing Inspiration: The Retail Connection

Today's retail is all about visual engagement. Retailers have realized that to capture the attention of Generation Z and Alpha, they must craft visually captivating and stimulating spaces. With online shopping readily available, how do retailers entice them into physical stores? Retail designers carefully curate every element to evoke curiosity, excitement, and wonder. Incorporating attractive spaces, vibrant colors, and flexible elements, they aim to create a sensory experience that sparks positive emotions and drives engagement.

Translating Retail Wisdom to Libraries

The retail approach to capturing the interest of digital natives can be seamlessly translated into library design. Libraries, traditionally seen as repositories of knowledge, can evolve into vibrant spaces that resonate with the visual sensibilities of Gen Z and Alpha. Here's are 6 ways to use retail design principals to bring more students into your library spaces:

1. Aesthetic Appeal:

Integrate vibrant colors, captivating visuals, and imaginative spaces into the overall design. These elements can serve as focal points that intrigue and invite exploration.

Example: use a colorful carpet and a variety of seating to create an active floor space for reading or discussion.



2. Flexible Learning Zones:

Provide diverse zones that cater to different learning styles. Incorporate collaborative areas, quiet study nooks, and interactive zones to accommodate the multifaceted ways in which Gen Z and Gen A engage with information.

Example: break up space with mobile shelving and create zones for a variety of activities: reading, group projects, maker activities, and individual quiet work.



3. Connection and Community:

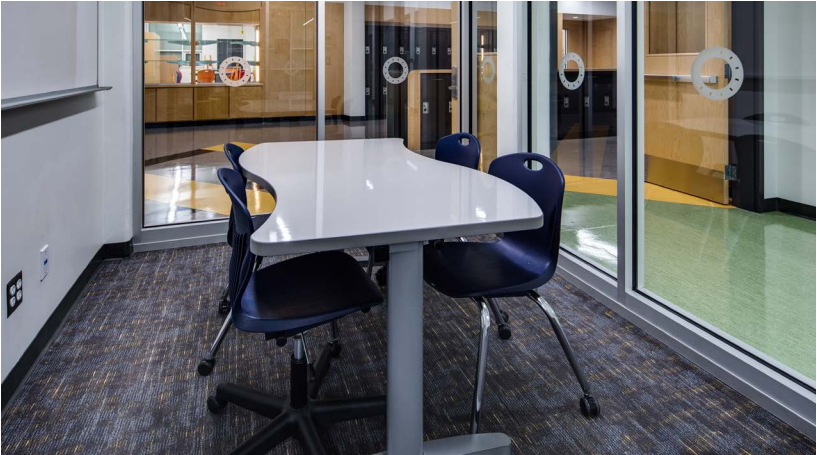
Create spaces that foster human connection. Social engagement is not solely confined to online platforms; libraries can offer gathering spaces, small groups learning labs, and collaborative environments to nurture community bonds.

Example: develop a "coffee shop" mentality and organize areas where small groups can interact face-to-face and with the world outside their walls.



4. Personalized Learning: Technology allows for personalized learning experiences. Libraries can incorporate tools that offer tailored recommendations, allowing digital natives to explore subjects aligned with their interests.

Example: create breakout rooms where students can participate in remote learning and interactive activities without disturbing others who are also using the space.



5. Visual Storytelling: Curate visual narratives that showcase the library's offerings. Display success stories, user-generated content, and artistic expressions to highlight the diverse ways in which the library contributes to personal growth and community enrichment.

Example: adopt a retail mindset when displaying "merchandise". Use open shelving and tables that are easily accessible to put materials within reach of all students.



6. User-Centered Spaces: Engage users in the design process by incorporating elements they find visually appealing. Encourage feedback and collaboration to create spaces that resonate with their preferences. Allow mobility so that users can "re-create" the space to work for them as they need to.

Example: use desks and tables that configure in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the users.



Cultivating Meaningful Interactions

The transformation of library spaces into dynamic learning environments requires careful planning and consideration. As digital natives evolve, libraries must evolve with them, creating spaces that spark inspiration, facilitate exploration, and nurture the desire to learn. By drawing insights from retail design principles and incorporating them into library spaces, educators and designers can craft environments that truly engage, educate, and empower the students of Generation Z and Alpha. A well-designed library program goes beyond the transactional and becomes transformational. It empowers students to explore, communicate, and challenge themselves, fostering a lifelong love for learning that extends far beyond the confines of physical space.

artcobell

UNLEASH THE POWER OF **Play!**

Find Joy in Learning with KI



Celebrating joy and fun in the classroom
Classroom design plays critical role in student development

Feelings of joy and happiness are something people crave. Joy can alleviate stress, increase productivity, and foster creative thinking. For students especially, joy and fun are key differentiators in their learning capacity and their overall well-being.

Studies show that students of all ages are more engaged with their learning if “fun” is part of the equation. The KI education team knows this too – from years of experience in the classroom.

“We know from our own experiences that students learn better by doing – when they have fun and can interact with their peers and the lessons and materials before them in unique ways,”

- Bryan Ballegeer,
[vice president of education at KI.](#)

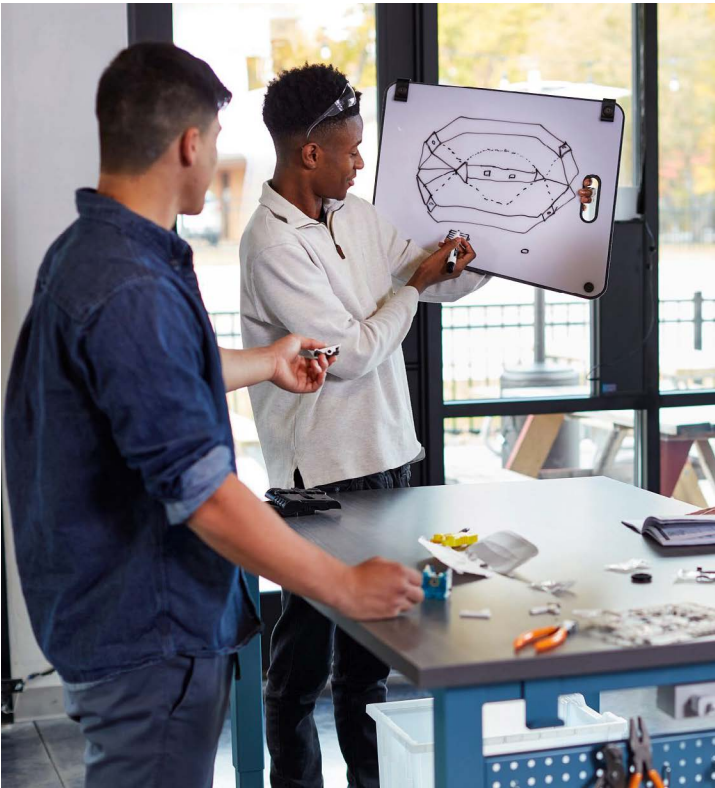
Classroom design has evolved to reflect the need for more interactive and playful lessons. Rows of desks, set up for students to focus on a lecture at the front of the room, don’t typically elicit an atmosphere of fun.

“When done right, the design of a learning space can and should enhance student learning,” says Ballegeer.

Harness the power of play and movement
Students of all ages need playtime.

Work doesn’t feel like work when it’s something we love doing, and learning that incorporates fun doesn’t have to feel like learning either.

“Play is the most natural form of learning,” says Emily McGinnis, [K-12 education market manager at KI.](#) “Students learn from their interactions and experiences with each



other and their surroundings. Whether they’re in pre-K or college, most students don’t want to sit in one place all day.”

For K-12 students, play primarily happens out of their chairs or on the floor of the classroom.

Colorful carpets and soft, movable furniture satisfy their desire to escape for independent learning time or allow them to build forts, create, and problem-solve with their peers during free play or project assignments.

While designated areas in some classrooms offer ways for students to “shake their sillies out,” play games, or loosen up with a fun dance party, larger class sizes and limited space are realities many classrooms encounter.

Incorporating mobile furniture like nesting tables and chairs, whiteboard screens, and versatile storage options can provide space-saving opportunities and flexibility for play areas in a classroom.

Chairs and stools that encourage subtle movements – like swaying, rocking, or swiveling, provide educators a way to incorporate valuable movement into any lesson, even if

students remain in their seats.

“Playing within the context of school can lead to more engaged students and increased critical thinking and creativity skills,” says McGinnis. **“Research shows that teachers using a playful curriculum feel more effective as educators because the students are more engaged.”**

In higher education, play happens in the classroom, but it’s even more prevalent in the learning and development that occurs outside the classroom, says Katie Clark, [higher education market manager at KI.](#)

“The spaces we create and the opportunities we provide play a critical role in counterbalancing the stress and pressure students today feel,” says Clark.

Playful spaces in higher education are often transitional spaces – student lounges, cafés, libraries, or innovation centers.

These fun, functional, and colorful areas meet a variety of student needs that include peaceful respites, space for social activities, or playtime hosted by extracurriculars

like e-sports or campus life organizations.

“All students need spaces where they can escape and let go – where they can find joy in their educational experience,” says Clark. “It’s so incredibly important for their development.”

Giving students the freedom to create

A recent Gallup study on creativity in the classroom found that students who engaged in creative thinking assignments were better able to:

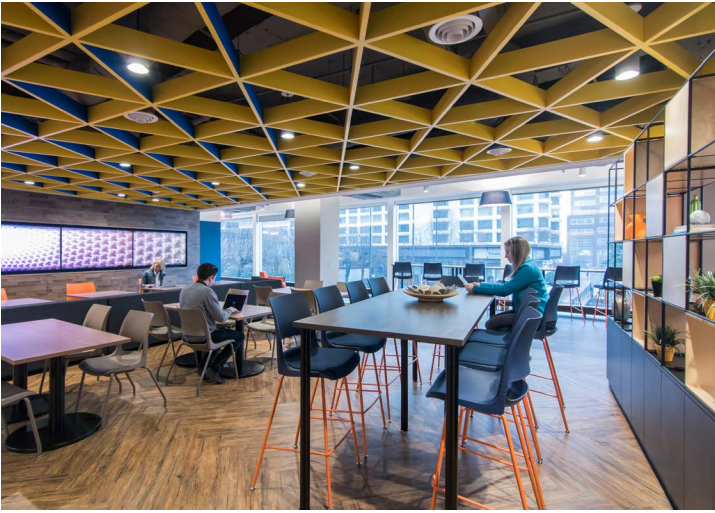
- Draw connections between subjects
- Retain material
- Demonstrate a deeper understanding of topics
- Problem solve
- Think critically

Creative assignments can increase confidence among students of all ages, says McGinnis.

“These assignments can help develop their ability and willingness to master challenging material, take risks, and harbor responsibility for their own learning,” says McGinnis. “When students feel confident about their ability to learn, their mood and morale improve, too.”

The creation of dedicated makerspaces in educational institutions gives students the opportunity to use hands-on techniques and tools to make something new, discover problems and solutions, and consider how their learning can be applied to real life.

For students, the ability and freedom to be creative and



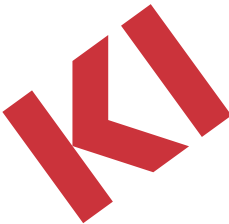
messy with their work leads to profound development and big ideas, says Clark.

“The world is full of really hard, really complex issues and challenges,” says Clark. “Those problems are only going to be fixed with new ideas and creative problem solving – that’s what is going to get us to a better place. Educating our future leaders, using all the tools possible, is going to give them the opportunity to find those solutions and not get sucked into the doom and gloom of the issue.”

The freedom to play, initiate learning, and problem solve is exponentially beneficial to building a student’s confidence and well-being whether they are 5 years old or 20.

Unleash the power of play in the classroom

By embracing the creation of environments that support joy and play, K-12 and higher education institutions have an opportunity to help students develop their social, emotional, and life skills in a way that’s fun and doesn’t actually feel like learning.



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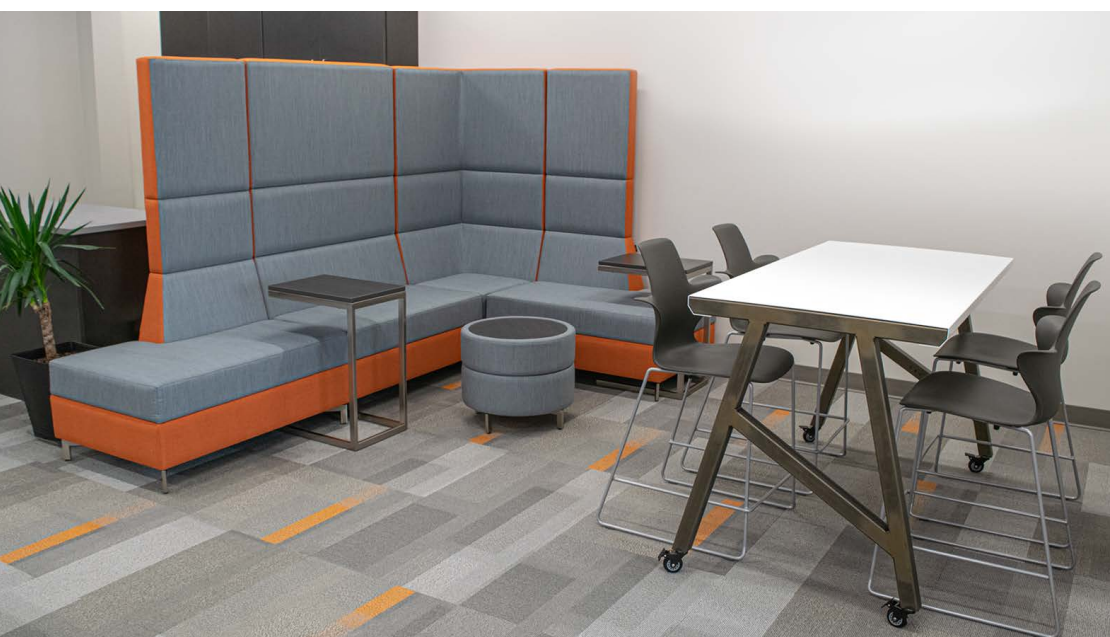
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Elevating Teacher Wellness Through Space Design:

A Critical Focus for K-12 & Higher Education

Introduction

The role of educators in shaping society can never be overstated. From kindling curiosity in kindergarteners to mentoring young adults in university settings, the importance of teachers is clear. However, there is a critical factor that often gets overshadowed in educational discussions—teacher wellness. Overlooked yet vital, the spaces in which teachers work directly influence their well-being, job satisfaction, and ultimately, effectiveness in educating the future. This article delves into the intricate relationship between teacher wellness and space design, looking at both K-12 and higher education settings.

Teacher Wellness Directly Affects Student Success

Before diving into the architecture and décor of educational spaces, it’s crucial to understand why teacher wellness matters. Multiple studies have established the direct correlation between teacher well-being and student achievement (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). An educator in a positive mental and physical state is likely to be more patient, creative, and effective in instructional delivery (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). With growing awareness of student well-being, it is only fair that we extend the same consideration to those who facilitate their learning.

Teachers who are stressed, anxious, or unwell can’t be expected to perform their best in the classroom. Studies have indicated that teachers with higher levels of stress report lower levels of teaching efficacy and job satisfaction (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2018). This decline in performance has a trickle-down effect. The more burnt out the teacher, the less effectively they can teach, and the lower the students’ academic outcomes (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016).

ESSER funds were allocated towards teacher wellness based on research indicating that teacher well-being directly impacts student success and academic outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). During and post pandemic, teachers faced unprecedented stress and burnout, which not only affected their own health but also had potential implications for the quality of education. The federal government recognized that addressing teacher wellness was an essential part of creating resilient educational systems capable of overcoming current and future challenges.

Teacher Wellness and Retention Rates

The education sector experiences some of the highest turnover rates among professions. According to the Learning Policy Institute, over 8% of teachers leave the profession each year, citing dissatisfaction and stress as key reasons (Carver-Thomas & Dar-



Where natural light and learning converge at the CATE Center in Jasper County School District.



Harnessing the power of natural light at Kirkland Ranch Academy of Innovation in Florida.



The seamless integration of collaborative and private spaces for optimal productivity in Kent ISD, Michigan.

ling-Hammond, 2017). High turnover affects not only teacher quality but also costs school districts a significant amount in recruiting and training new staff. Focusing on teacher wellness can help mitigate this drain of talent and resources.

The Current State of Workspaces

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 54% of teachers in K-12 settings reported having adequate workspace to perform their professional duties (2019). Higher education faces a similar challenge. A 2018 survey by The Chronicle of Higher Education found that many university faculty offices lack not just modern amenities but even the basics like adequate lighting or comfortable furniture.

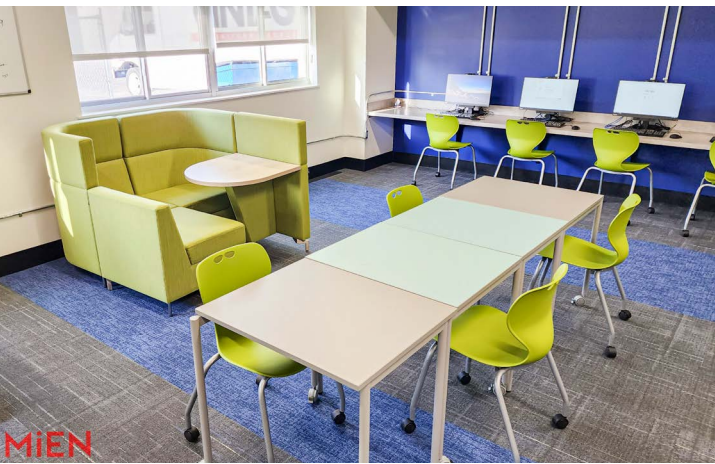
Key Factors in Space Design and Their Impacts

Ergonomics
The ergonomic design of furniture and workspace layout can significantly influence physical comfort, thereby affecting mental well-being (Karwowski, 2006). K-12 teachers, who often stand and move around, need spaces designed to minimize physical strain. Higher education faculty, who frequently spend long hours in seated positions, require ergonomic chairs and desks to prevent discomfort and long-term health issues.

Lighting
The quality of lighting in educational spaces should not be underestimated. Proper lighting can significantly affect mood, productivity, and even circadian rhythms (Küller et al., 2006). The use of natural lighting and carefully selected artificial light can make a substantial difference in both K-12 and higher education settings.

While K-12 teachers may have staff rooms and higher education faculty may have department lounges, these spaces are not always designed for either effective collaboration or solitude. Research shows that the availability of both is vital for mental well-being (Vartanian et al., 2017).

Aesthetics and Biophilic Design
The aesthetic appeal of a space, including its color schemes, wall decorations, and even plant life, can impact mental wellness significantly (Wolverton, Johnson, & Bounds, 1989). Both K-12 and higher education institutions can leverage aesthetics to create environments that are not just functional but also psychologically nurturing.



Where Unity Meets Solitude: Perfectly Balancing Collaboration and Privacy



Balancing Act: A Seamless Fusion of Collaborative and Private Spaces for Optimal Productivity at Kent ISD, Michigan.



Nature meets nurture with plants and a calming color palette at JetCo Solutions office space. Kent ISD, Michigan.

Real-world Implications and Case Studies

The Salford Study and Beyond

While the University of Salford’s study focused primarily on how classroom design impacts students, it found that space design could affect learning by up to 25% (Barrett et al., 2015). Although the study didn’t explicitly focus on teachers, it is reasonable to extend the concept. A space that is conducive to learning is likely also conducive to teaching, making the case for comprehensive studies aimed at understanding the impact of space design on teacher wellness.

Holistic Wellness Centers

Some innovative universities have begun to establish dedicated wellness centers for faculty. These spaces serve as hubs for exercise, relaxation, and mental health resources (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2017). Extending such an idea to K-12 settings, perhaps on a smaller scale due to budget constraints, could offer similar benefits.

Teacher Lounges: More than Just a Break Room

Traditionally, teacher lounges have been spaces where educators can relax during their breaks. However, modern design principles suggest transforming these lounges into multi-functional spaces that facilitate both relaxation and professional development (Doorley & Witthoft, 2012). A multi-purpose design approach can cater to the varied needs of educators, from taking a quick break to engaging in professional discourse.

“The teachers’ lounge that serves as a place in which to relax with coffee and exchange gossip is being transformed into an office-type setting. Spaces for reflection, research, and collaboration have become necessary as teachers become more professional and increasingly share their classrooms with colleagues,” said Dan Butin at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Educational Design at the University of Virginia. “Teacher work-



A haven for rejuvenation and collaboration at The Movement School, North Carolina

spaces encourage sustained planning and preparation time, facilitate interaction and collaboration among teams and departments, and foster the perception of a professional community across and within grade levels.”

To learn more about designing teacher work-room spaces focused on wellness, download the MiEN whitepaper, [Supporting Educators’ Professional Health and Wellness with Re-imagined Teacher Spaces](#).



Conclusion

Educational reform can no longer afford to ignore the design of spaces where teachers work. Teacher wellness is integral to the success of educational systems, and space design plays an undeniable role in fostering this wellness. By improving the spaces where teachers work, we set the stage for improved educational outcomes at every level.



Dr. Christina Counts, VP of Education for MiEN Environments, is a proven leader with a successful background in transforming learning spaces to modern engaging learning environments. Dr. Counts has worked in education for over 17 years with experience as a classroom teacher, district instructional leader, school administrator, and digital and innovative learning designer. In her most recent position, Christina leads a team of professionals that support schools making the transition to a flexible, collaborative, & student-centered learning space. She holds a doctorate in K-12 Educational Leadership, National Board certified, and an Accredited Learning Environment Planner (ALEP).



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CREATING PLACES TO BELONG IN EDUCATION

Creating a place where students, faculty, and staff feel like they belong is more than providing study spaces, cafés, or administrative offices. It's about connecting to a greater purpose and supporting individual needs. It's about balancing hybrid environments, prioritizing flexibility, supporting inclusion and belonging, and focusing on overall health and well-being.

Today's facilities are tasked with providing dynamic spaces that not only foster learning, but nurture school spirit. There are plenty of distractions in today's society, and your furniture shouldn't be one of them. From classrooms and makerspaces to student unions and staff spaces, furnishings play a critical role. **Facilities need to include flexible, dynamic settings that support traditional textbook learning as well as life lessons.**

TABLE & CART: KORE® BY KIMBALL, SEATING: PICADO™ BY NATIONAL

Gathering and Collaborating:

Socializing supports positive mental health. With digital device usage at an all-time high, sometimes personal interactions are skipped and opportunities are missed. Open spaces can feel cozy and inviting by creating vignettes that support individuals or multi-person gatherings. Within common as well as open concept areas, focus spaces create private coves for heads down time. Offering visual and audio privacy, these nooks are essential to student success.

Today's library spaces encompass much more than books. From project-based learning to individualized lessons, these dynamic environments need to accommodate a spectrum of activities. Creativity-inducing spaces offer hands-on activities that engage the mind and offer an opportunity to reduce stress. Recreation spaces provide a location to relax and connect or a comfortable niche to be alone while still among others.

Factoid: 73% of students said they missed the ‘friends and social life’ part of the physical campus experience. Source: Inside Higher Ed, Covid-Era College: Are Students Satisfied

Factoid: While the campus is essential for in-person classes, it is even more valued for connecting with others and facilitating daily routines. Hands-on activities and small class lectures are among the activities that students said they would return to campus for. Source: Gensler Design Forecast 2022

Learning Spaces:

Solutions that can easily be arranged and rearranged to meet everchanging needs are essential. This freedom gives instructors the opportunity to create stations for interaction and collaboration, as well as heads down and focus areas.

Student success soars when they have hands-on activities that allow them to experience the lesson. In classroom spaces, mobility, flexibility, durability, and tech connectivity are all necessary for today's learners. Makerspaces offer a place where students can design, experiment, and invent using a variety of tools and materials. It's a unique space that fosters creativity and develops problem-solving skills. As a fundamental component of active learning, labs and makerspaces provide a space where students can physically explore and discover.

Research suggests that higher education students who have a greater sense of belonging tend to have higher motivation, more academic self-confidence, higher levels of academic engagement, and higher achievement. Source: Journal of Further and Higher Education (2022)

Factoid: 68% of students and 74% of educators want a hybrid approach — a model that includes a combination of in-person and remote learning methods. Source: Gensler Design Forecast 2022

Café and Dining:

Today's café spaces are truly multi-use areas. Throughout the day, they are in constant transition. From providing a cup of coffee or a meal to supporting work on a collaborative project, these spaces accommodate a wide variety of users.

An increasing number of students are seeking both formal and informal learning spaces. Cozy coffee bars and cafés within libraries and learning commons provide this balance. Much like a home environment, these spaces are considered a hub where more than just dining happens. With a unique ability to provide an area to relax, socialize, and eat, they offer a retreat from daily activities.

Factoid: Many college students say campus dining halls are among their favorite places to socialize. Source: Best Colleges, Top 5 Benefits of Living on Campus

Outdoor Spaces:

Create beautiful, comfortable, and durable outdoor spaces to attract and retain students and faculty. By offering a variety of areas that cater to interaction or private thoughts, these environments can increase productivity and reduce stress. Offering durable and comfortable outdoor furniture can add a refreshed atmosphere to any space. From seating and tables that provide outdoor dining to comfortable lounge seating designed to withstand weather, outdoor spaces can improve personal well-being.

Factoid: Exposure to nature leads to improvements in attention, positive emotions, and the ability to reflect on a life problem. Source: American Psychological Association April 2020



SEATING: CINCH® & DITTO™ BY NATIONAL, FACILITATOR DESK: MANEUVER® BY NATIONAL, TABLES: UNIVERSAL™ TABLES BY NATIONAL



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PODS: OM POD & KOLO POD BY NATIONAL



SEATING: JOVALIE® BY NATIONAL, TABLES: WIXLER® BY NATIONAL

Factoid: Access to nature has also been found to improve sleep, increase happiness, reduce stress and negative emotions, promote positive social interactions, and even help generate a sense of meaning to life. Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness California Blog

Athletics:

Learning spaces provide students with exceptional academic and cultural experiences; however, athletics also play an important role. These environments for the student athletes and coaching staff include meeting spaces, locker rooms, study areas, training rooms, and faculty offices.

School spirit shouldn't be underestimated. Integrate school colors and custom logos to make a statement and create enthusiasm. Full of excitement and possibility, these spaces accommodate those dedicated to athletics. From private offices to spaces that house team meetings, these areas need to be dynamic.

Factoid: Former NCAA student-athletes who graduated from college between 1975 and 2019 were more likely to thrive in four of five areas of well-being than nonathletes. Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Gallup

Administration:

Functional and flexible solutions create spaces for focused work, shared activities, and the exchange of ideas. Coming together to enhance experiences for staff, students, and the community is essential to the success of an educational facility. From board meetings to brainstorming, these spaces spark ideas.

By selecting furniture that complements and supports individual work styles and requirements, private office spaces become an extension of the individual, boosting productivity and confidence. Define personal space yet encourage interaction by integrating shared workstations into the floorplan. These spaces provide individualized work zones that can be tailored to specific needs while accommodating collaboration.

Factoid: 74% of Educators would prefer to recognize a Hybrid work schedule. Source: Gensler Research Institute, Educational Engagement Index 2021

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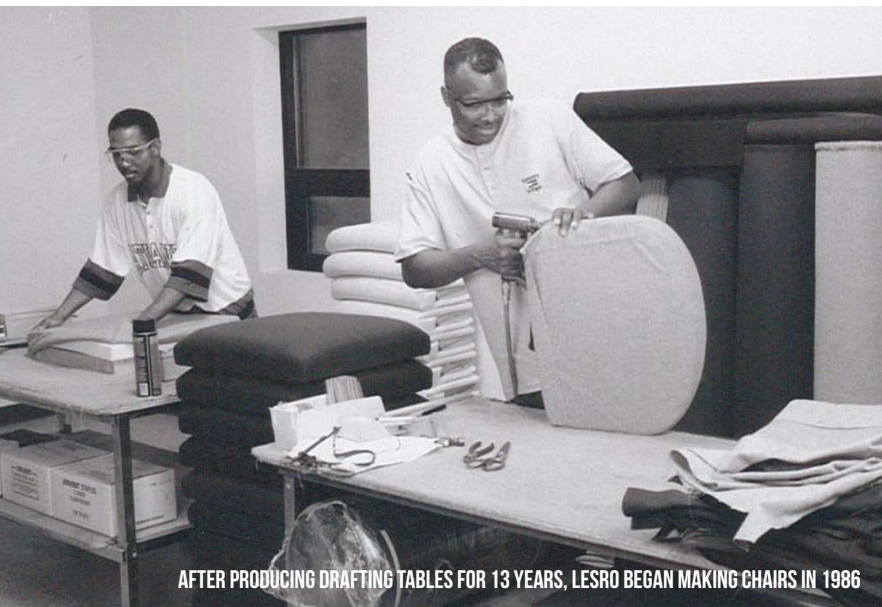


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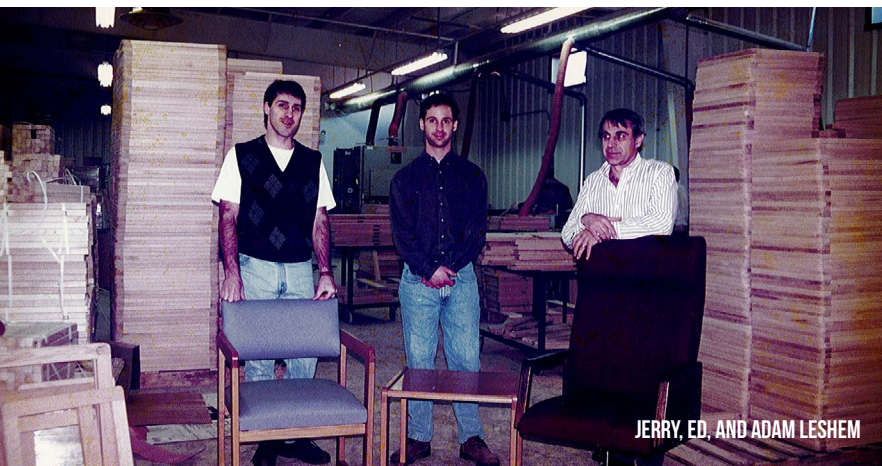
LINEUP



ALICE, JERRY AND ADAM LESHEM SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN THE US



AFTER PRODUCING DRAFTING TABLES FOR 13 YEARS, LESRO BEGAN MAKING CHAIRS IN 1986



JERRY, ED, AND ADAM LESHEM



THE VERSATILITY OF THE NEW LESRO CHAT CHAIR, SEEN HERE IN THE CLASSROOM

BLOOMFIELD BORN. CONNECTICUT MADE.

Lesro has been Sitting Comfortably for 50 years

50 YEARS

SINCE 1973

From modest beginnings, the Leshem family has quietly built an industry powerhouse singularly focused on manufacturing products that enable their customers to **wait comfortably**. What started as an innovative idea to patent and produce folding drafting tables evolved into a company that has produced 3 million seats and counting. Throughout the journey, Lesro has never forgotten the importance of their roots, their employees, or the greater community they serve. The story of Lesro is unique to America, and the successes are shared by many across central Connecticut.

It all began with an idea

Adam Leshem, an engineer by training, recognized that the drafting table he used at home was taking up too much space in their small apartment.

At the urging of his wife, Alice, to get the table out of the way, he began pondering the idea of a way to fold it up and tuck it away when not being used. And thus the design for a foldable drafting table was born. Shortly thereafter, armed with a U.S. patent and old-fashioned entrepreneurship, Adam and Alice set out to make their American Dream come true.

But the Lesro story began 30 years earlier in war-torn Eastern Europe, where Adam was born at the height of WWII. Despite growing up under tremendous hardship, he developed a love for engineering, soccer, and eventually his wife of over fifty years, Alice. They reached America with their young son Jerry in 1968 and settled in the Hartford, CT area. Adam was working as a nuclear engineer by the time their next son Ed was born. Having already successfully patented several processes related to nuclear power, it was in their tiny apartment where the idea to invent and patent the folding drafting table originated. And so, the dream of Lesro Industries was in sight. In 1973, Adam and Alice founded Lesro and a furniture manufacturing company was created.

After building a successful business around manufacturing drafting tables, stiff headwinds lurked around the corner. Between the rise of computer aided design tools and competition from cheap imported copies, the market for folding drafting tables diminished. Ever the entrepreneur, Adam diversified and expanded his operation to include chairs and tables. Reception and waiting room seating quickly became the dominant products at Lesro and expansion followed. Bringing their two elder sons Jerry and Ed into the business, Lesro hired more and more people and moved into ever increasing space to accommodate



growth. Jerry, with a business degree, and Ed, an engineer, brought complementary expertise to Lesro. Their input along with that of Sales Manager Dan O'Malley fueled a steady expansion of product lines that enabled Lesro to reach an ever-widening breadth of end user markets and applications.

Today, 50 years from its founding, Jerry and Ed co-run this family business that has remained true to its roots. Staying in Bloomfield, CT despite attractive lower cost locations, the Leshems employ more than 100 people with many having been at the company for more than 20 years. Back in 1973, Adam could only have dreamed of what Lesro has become. More than 3 million chairs later, Lesro occupies nearly 300,000 square feet of factory space producing 500 chairs per day. The expanded capabilities enable Lesro to produce custom-made seating in short order with the customer and designers deciding what materials are used. Whether it's a wood or steel frame, more than two dozen standard frames and tabletop finishes, or a nearly unlimited combination of upholsteries, Lesro provides a customer experience like no other where virtually no two orders are alike. The goal of which is not just to satisfy the customer but to delight them.

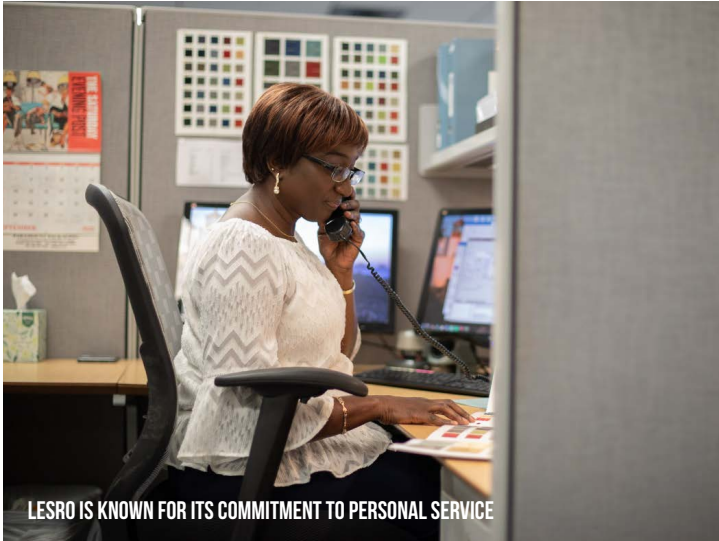
Lesro has had quite an education in the last 50 years

A company cannot last 50 years without doing many things right, and one of the most important things is hiring the right people. Lesro has benefitted from the enthusiasm, dedication, and professionalism of their people in every department. The customer-facing teams in sales, quality, engineering, finance, and customer service all work to-

gether as a unit to ensure everything is being done to support the customer from quotation to post-delivery. Lesro takes pride in exceeding the customer's high expectations for excellent service. Proper support begins with being accessible and responsive to the client's needs and having the phones answered by a live person. In the front office, a dedicated team of customer service reps frequently win praise for going above and beyond to ensure customers are delighted with their Lesro experience.

On the manufacturing side, custom-made high-quality products manufactured in industry leading lead times do not happen by accident. To produce the high-mix low-volume orders needed to service the wide variety of end users, it takes an incredible team of dedicated and trained operators who take pride in every chair that passes through their skilled hands. Like pieces of a complex puzzle, the men and women of the wood shop, metal shop, painting and staining, framing, foam, fabric cutting, sewing, upholstering, assembly, and packaging all come together like a well-choreographed ballet to make 500 distinct chairs each day, one at a time. Like the company's founder, many of these workers are recent immigrants and first-generation Americans building a life for themselves and their families in the Hartford area.

Much of this work is done by hand. The skill these factory workers demonstrate never fails to amaze all those who tour the Lesro production facility. The longevity of their employees provides proof of the affirmative corporate culture fostered by the Leshems. Lesro strongly believes in the adage made famous by Sir Richard Branson, "If you take care of your employees, they will take care of your customers."



Under Adam's management style and leadership, Lesro learned quickly how to build a successful business. Piloted by their guiding principles of fairness, doing right by your employees and your customers, and making products that last, the company learned what it took to achieve growth. Finding reliable vendors and partners, developing and re-developing channels of distribution, and hiring and training a cadre of competent and loyal employees took years of learning what works and what doesn't. Whether it is suppliers of wood or steel, foam or fabric, or packaging and hardware, the expectations Lesro has for their vendors are at least as high as the expectations their customers have for Lesro's products.

Giving back

Committed to conservation, the environment, and giving back, Lesro does more than talk the talk. Nearly 100% of the power used by the factory is generated from 3,200 solar panels attached to the roof. The manufacturing process includes procedures to reclaim and recycle waste that would otherwise go to landfills. Everything from sawdust to excess metal and upholstery are collected and sent off to find a second life elsewhere. Even the manner in which Lesro ships the bulk of their products is designed to reduce the overall carbon footprint and enable the company to be a more responsible corporate citizen. And it's not just about renewables and sustainability. Adjacent to the factory, the Leshem family owns 18 acres that are leased to a local farmer. The revenue from that lease is donated back to worthy veteran's causes each year.

Building products for the Education market

Although widely recognized for their commercial health-care grade seating, Lesro continues to provide chairs and tables well suited towards K-12 and Higher Ed applications. Whether it's soft seating for libraries and student lounges, comfortable guest and pull-up chairs for administration offices, or reception and lobby waiting area seating, Lesro offers stylish and sturdy seating options that are custom-made and competitively priced.

With the introduction of the Chat product line, Lesro expands into another area of the school, from the nurse's office to classrooms and cafeterias. This versatile stacker chair comes with or without arms or casters and is available with any combination of upholstered seats & backs. This easy to clean chair is made from fully welded steel tube construction and is durable enough to handle whatever is thrown at it.

Building a Legacy of Excellence

Looking back on the journey of Lesro Industries, you see a compelling story of innovation, dedication, and a profound sense of family. From the humble origins of a foldable drafting table conceived in a small apartment, to the almost unthinkable achievement of producing over 3 million chairs, Lesro's story is not just about furniture—it's a testament to the spirit of the American Dream.

With commitment and determination, the Leshem family nurtured their vision into a thriving industry leader, always rooted in core values that embrace both their employees and the community. As the landscape shifted and challenges emerged, Lesro's adaptability and resilience gave rise to a diverse array of seating solutions that adorn waiting rooms, offices, and educational institutions alike.

Beyond their commercial success, Lesro takes their obligation of sustainability and corporate responsibility se-



riously. Their dedication to environmental conservation, exemplified by solar panels and waste reclamation, paints a picture of a company whose concern with the well-being of the planet and its people drives action.

As the baton passed from one generation to the next, the spirit of Lesro endures—a balanced blend of tradition and innovation, craftsmanship and technology. The Lesro family's embrace of their employees is visible through the halls of the factory, where skilled hands shape each chair with care, a testament to the belief that true quality stands the test of time.

From the heart of Connecticut, where it was born and thrives, Lesro's impact radiates far and wide, touching lives and spaces, creating comfort and fostering connections. The Lesro legacy, built upon a foundation of excellence and shared values, continues to unfold, inviting everyone to sit within the story of a family, a company, and a community that has truly made waiting a comfortable art.



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STEVE ROZEBOOM

Co-Owner | Special-T
United States

PETER TASHEV

Co-Owner | Special-T
Gabrovo, Bulgaria

GABROVO GOES GLOBAL

PETER TASHEV AND SPECIAL-T'S INTEGRATED FACTORY IN BULGARIA

By Grant Tracy





In the heart of Bulgaria, nestled amidst the picturesque landscapes of the city of Gabrovo, lies a remarkable factory with a mission that extends beyond the production of table bases. The factory was founded in 2013 by Peter Tashev, the long-time friend and business partner of Special-T's owner, Steve Rozeboom. Their connection was more than just a business deal; it was a meeting of like-minded individuals who shared faith, values, and a vision for success. Their partnership has thrived for ten years, proving that business can flourish when grounded in shared belief. For the past decade, Peter has managed the production of table bases in Europe, but there's also a bigger mission behind the production.

A Strategic Location

Choosing the city of Gabrovo for the factory's location was no accident. This city is renowned for its expertise in metal and steel production and is home to a skilled workforce. The decision to establish the factory in Gabrovo was driven by the abundance of talented individuals and the cost advantages of this region compared to the other European locations. With 80,000 square feet of space and a dedicated team of 25 skilled workers, our factory

has become a cornerstone of the local economy. The factory is equipped with state-of-the-art machinery including laser cutters for steel plates and tubes, semi-robotic welders, and efficient powder coating lines, ensuring high-quality production.

A Visionary Leader

Peter Tashev is not just an entrepreneur; he's a man driven by a deeper purpose. He believes in creating a workplace that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of a factory. His faith and values guide his actions, leading to a unique company culture centered on helping each other grow and succeed.

As Peter explains, "I knew early on that this business is not for me only, but also to help all the people that are going to be involved in it."

This conviction has shaped the company culture, fostering an atmosphere of support, growth, and mutual success.



Empowering Through Employment

Peter shares the same values as Special-T US owner, Steve Rozeboom, for intentionally hiring workers who have various barriers to employment and giving those people a second chance to have a career. In addition, Special-T is committed to promoting from within and nurturing talent within the company, rather than seeking expertise externally. The factory provides opportunities for employees to enhance their skills through courses, ensuring personal and professional growth. Peter's philosophy revolves around authenticity and empowerment. He gives employees the freedom to make decisions and also welcomes their input, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among the workforce. In Peter's words, "People really open up and do their very best when empowered with a sense of trust and authenticity. They feel like an important part of the company, and they naturally want to see succeed."

Values Beyond Profits

The Special-T factory is not just about manufacturing; it's about making a difference in people's lives and the community. Our company places a strong emphasis on accountability and family

values. Employees are encouraged to prioritize their families and maintain a healthy work-life balance. They also receive support, such as interest-free loans and assistance when moving to new homes. Moreover, the Bulgarian Factory is a hub for community gatherings and events. The factory provides a space for church services, promoting faith-based values and principles. Peter and his wife, Ellie, have been servants of their community for over three decades, actively participating in various ministries and charitable activities.

Navigating the Pandemic

The last few years have brought unprecedented challenges to businesses worldwide, especially those in manufacturing. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global supply chains, leaving many companies struggling to survive. However, Special-T's strong relationships with its suppliers and unwavering commitment to its mission ensured its resilience. Peter Tashev recalls the early days of the pandemic, saying, "During the challenging times of the pandemic, we managed to gain a significant market share when companies left and right were closing because they didn't have anything to sell." Our unbroken supply chain allowed



it to continue manufacturing and fulfilling purchase orders from the United States, resulting in a positive impact on its market presence.

Global Expansion and Innovation

While Special-T is renowned for producing metal table bases, the company has also ventured into innovative design and production. Recently, we launched a new product line featuring elegant table designs that have garnered excitement and interest both locally and abroad. This expansion demonstrates our commitment to staying at the forefront of the industry and satisfying the evolving needs of its clients. Our focus on quality, innovation, and empowering our workforce positions us for continued success in the competitive manufacturing sector.

A Commitment to Values

At the heart of Special-T’s success story is its unwavering commitment to values. Peter Tashev and his team firmly believe in the power of faith, family, and community. Our vertically integrated company is a testament to what can be achieved when a visionary leader combines business acumen with a genuine desire to make a positive impact on the lives of employees and the community. When visiting Special-T in the United



States, Peter’s parting words encapsulate the essence of our mission: “Now we have Special-T U.S., we have Special-T Europe, and we are sharing the same mission. We are building tables, building communities, and rebuilding lives.” In the world of manufacturing, where profit margins often take precedence, Special-T stands out as a beacon of hope, proving that business can thrive while upholding values that truly matter. Special-T’s production facility in Bulgaria isn’t just a factory; it’s an embodiment of a vision where faith, values, and success come together to create something truly extraordinary.



daily transitions

1200 Series Personal Lockers™ are available with laminate or metal doors in a wide range of colors and finishes. All door fronts offer several locking options, along with high-quality hinges and double wall construction, ensuring security and durability in educational settings. Choose from several heights in three opening widths and two cabinet depths for maximum flexibility. A modular, sloped top is available to support housekeeping in eliminating unwanted articles on the top of the lockers. globalfurnituregroup.com

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GIBSON'S INTERIOR PRODUCTS

3rd Annual NeoKen Event

This year at the Gibson Showroom we completed our biggest refresh ever, with a full renovation of our 12,000 sq ft space of commercial lighting, furniture, and architectural products. We completed the refresh just in time to share our renovation with the A&D, end user and dealer community at our 3rd annual NeoKen event on July 20th!

NeoKen was created after years of hearing our clients tell us they can't make it to the industries #1 trade show event Neocon, so we decided to bring Neocon to them right here in our NYC showroom. The outcome was NeoKen, named after the principal and founder of Gibson Interior Products, Ken Gibson. NeoKen is a 1-day trade show by day and party by night event showcasing Gibson's manufacturers. This year we were lucky to partner with Synergy NYC, a leader in the lighting industry. Our showroom now features 2 first class agencies acting as the #1 resource for interior and exterior solutions in NYC.

We wanted to offer our clients the opportunity to meet with manufacturers, touch and feel product and most importantly become educated on the solutions Gibson can offer our clients. Our Doors opened at 10am to host showroom tours and CEU's. We hosted over 300 dealers, designers & end users! Our attendees enjoyed amazing food, cocktails, live music and entertainment!



NeoKen wouldn't be possible without our incredible participating manufacturers:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Arcadia/Encore | OFGO Studio |
| Darran | OM Seating |
| Enwork | SixInch |
| Func | Skyline Interiors |
| Ghent | Spec Furniture |
| Grand Rapids Chair | Takeform |
| KFI Studios | Tayco |
| Kwalu | Xchair |
| Lesro Industries | |

Synergy NYC lighting sponsors:

- Aldabra USA
- Indigoff
- Intra Lighting
- Folio Lighting
- Lutron
- Lux Illuminaire
- No 8 Lighting
- Rollease Acmeda

Special thanks to our NeoKen vendors:

- Martin & Fitch @martin.and.fitch
- Smooove Icecream @smoooicecream
- Allen He Magic @itsallenhe
- Collis Torrington @collistory
- Vincent Pinder @vincentpinder_1
- Mangia Catering @mangia_nyc_official
- Jonny Rosch & Friends @jonnyrok
- Joe's Coffee @joecoffeecompany
- Ess a Bagel @essabagel
- Decor by Amanda @stylishdecorbyamanda
- Printing Emporium @printing.emporium

Gibson Interior Products showroom is open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm for tours and pop ins.



Corporate Training Spaces, Content, and Delivery Refreshed with Custom Financing Solutions

By Janeen Waddell, CLFP

With this month's Delve theme of Education Design, I thought I'd take a slightly different approach and focus on corporate training, and how dealers and manufacturers can help companies create, and afford, the spaces and tools that set clients, their employees, and their training program up for success. **Class is in session!**

Developing and Delivering Content

I'm a financing expert, not a learning expert, however I do a lot of research when crafting these articles – and a few things caught my attention, starting with key considerations when developing and delivering content.

Corporate training content is more likely to succeed when **designed to benefit all with the ability to be curated**

for the individual. We all learn differently, and at our own pace. Designing content that has something for everyone, delivered in a variety of formats that can be consumed on an employee's own timeline has a higher success rate than taking a one-size and one-curriculum fits all approach.

One of the **fastest growing formats for corporate training is e-learning**, or on-line learning, which is expected to grow by more than 250% by 2026¹. E-learning supports remote workers and companies with multiple campuses, enables employees to access learning curriculum from anywhere, and offers opportunities for create content delivery, including gamification, as well as rewards structure when learning goals are achieved.

¹Global Corporate E-Learning Market Value Nears \$50 Billion by 2026 - ResearchAndMarkets.com | Business Wire

Creating and Supporting Corporate Learning Environments

Designing on-site, in-person workplace learning environments has evolved from the standard classroom style rows of tables and chairs to more lounge like, comfortable spaces where employees can relax and engage with content, the instructor, and each other. Designing for both on-site and remote learners adds an additional level of complexity to ensure the experience works for both. If you are looking for inspiration, look no further than your aligned manufacturer and any of the small-to-mid-sized education focused manufacturers.

Supporting e-learning and individual learning is less about the furniture, although a comfy chair keeps employees engaged in the content longer, and more about the technology and software design.

The good news is, everything you and your client needs to create, support, and maintain a successful corporate training program can be financed for greater affordability, and I can make it easy for you.

What can I offer you and your customer?

- No obligation quick quotes
- Financing up to \$1.0M
- Low fixed payments with terms from 12-72 months
- Structure that fit your customers cashflow
- Quick decisions with funding in days and little to no upfront money
- 50-100% deposit for qualified dealers

Lastly, I can offer you and your customer 25+ years of experience, peace of mind, a no stress experience and a custom solution.

There's no time like the present to take a fresh look at your corporate training program content, delivery options, and on-site learning locations. The [Ed Spaces conference](#) is just around the corner, and me and my team are ready to help with creative financing solutions to make your refresh a reality. Contact us! We can't wait to make it easy for you. And with that, **class dismissed.**



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Janeen Waddell is Vice President of Commercial Interiors with Navitas Credit Corporation, specializing in helping businesses acquire "anything commercial interior."

With 25+ years of industry experience, Janeen's number one priority is offering a Total Project Financing Solution and options that are quick, easy, and align best with Dealer and Dealer client business needs.

What To Expect When Working with Janeen.

Janeen's mission is to ensure clients have the best experience possible and view her as a trusted partner for commercial interior financing solutions. Adding Janeen to your trusted team of resources simplifies leasing and financing options, making it easier for everyone to move forward.

Janeen's passion and personalized approach to financing, and the commercial interiors industry, is why clients come back time and time again. If you are



Getting to Know **Dino + Associates,** Rep Group Feature

Dino+Associates is a manufacturers rep agency specializing in helping Architects and Interior Designers create distinct and memorable, cutting edge design features that are striking and functional. Attributes your clients would appreciate in an increasingly competitive marketplace.



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

A: The idea for starting our rep group originated in 2002 from the realization that Architects and Designers could benefit from our vast expertise and our carefully curated product lines. We wanted to work hand in hand with design professionals and the contracting community helping them to create environments and spaces where people can live happier, healthier lives. To work collaboratively with the design community—engaging, listening, questioning—until, together, we exceed expectations understanding that every project has its own unique challenges and needs.

Q: How has the company changed over the years?

A: Dino+Associates has undergone significant changes over the years, evolving, adapting and improving our product offerings. Hybrid work environments and travel are re-shaping the furnishings and architectural elements in the contract and hospitality industries.

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

A: Ensure multiple options for all designs, functions and cost situations. Out Service the Competition and always stay relevant.

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

A: The contract and hospitality industry is a dynamic and everevolving sector that encompasses a wide range of projects, including workplace, hotels, restaurants, bars, resorts, and other public spaces. These industries have a direct impact on people's experiences and emotions - this gets us excited about helping designers shape environments that evoke specific moods or atmospheres. Whether it's creating a new collaboration space, a cozy ambiance in a boutique hotel or an energetic space for a trendy restaurant.

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

A: At Dino+Associates we always challenge ourselves to bring new and exciting products that keep us relevant but most importantly, products that help give your projects that exclusive look. We seem to be known for our “Unique” Collections. In addition, in order to stay ahead in an ever-evolving and very competitive landscape we continuously invest in professional development and we stay up-to-date with the latest industry trends.

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

A: Dynamic - It's our ability to adapt to changing trends and client needs. Dino+Associate's products are characterized by our forward-thinking approach, cutting-edge and sustainable products that help create spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functional and environmentally responsible. With our diverse range of products we are able to span over various sectors, including corporate, hospitality, retail, education, health-care, and more.



IMAGE CAPTION





DESIGNED FOR EVERYBODY: EXPLORING INCLUSIVITY IN FURNITURE DESIGN

by Misti Yeager

In the world of contract furniture, overlooking the diverse spectrum of body types when specifying furniture can lead to more than just discomfort – it can result in the exclusion of a vast range of potential users.

Today I'd like to share a conversation I had with Bill Melnik, the CEO of Tayco and BRC, esteemed Canadian manufacturers of casegoods and systems. Our discussion shed light on the crucial importance of considering every BODY in the workplace. While no two bodies are the same, we often categorize them into percentiles, such as the 90th or 95th, leaving behind those who belong to the often-overlooked 10th percentile.

To set the stage, consider the recommended height range for standing desks, which typically spans from 22.6" to 48.2" (these measurement standards are provided from BIFMA and the US Government). This range is designed to accommodate 90% of the US population. But if you're like me and struggle with measurements, take a moment to grab a measuring tape and visualize 22 inches off the ground. Then move the measuring tape to 48 inches. This might seem like a large range to work within; however many tables don't even conform to the 90th percentile, let alone make accommodations for the 10% of the population still can't use the table ergonomically.

To delve deeper, I turned to my CEO, Bill, for insights into ergonomics and its role in design. Our discussion unearthed more than just measurements, here are some key takeaways.



Misti: Can you provide an overview of what ergonomics is and its significance in design?

Bill: Ergon means work, and nomos means laws. Essentially, ergonomics is the “laws of work” or the scientific study of people in the workplace. It’s about truly understanding how humans interact with work. Our bodies are designed for constant motion, and we are healthier and more productive when we find ways to keep our bodies active. When designing for ergonomics, we must consider the body and the various tasks it performs throughout the day. It’s about achieving great style, great design, and ensuring that people can stay active.

Misti: How does ergonomic design contribute to creating more inclusive products and spaces?

Bill: A well-designed ergonomic space caters to seating, working, vision, and storage, adapting to the diverse range of human bodies that will occupy it. For instance, when a workspace involves staring at a computer screen, that screen must be adjustable for different eyesight’s, glare-free, and scalable, not only for body types but also for varying vision strengths. Poor ergonomic design is a significant contributor to workplace accidents. For example, two people can be the same height yet have different arm lengths, so manufacturers should strive to accommodate the 90th percentile to ensure inclusivity.

Misti: What are some common challenges designers face when trying to incorporate ergonomic principles into their work?

Bill: The availability of well-thought-out products that support the environment. For example, there are countless chair options, but if a chair cannot adjust low enough for someone with short legs, they either need to seek another chair or understand the issue to find a suitable solution. Specifiers must have a deep understanding of ergonomic principles to provide the right solutions. There’s often a conflict between the perceived perfect workspace and the best ergonomic design. If we look at an executive office, designers and end users perceive a certain look; credenza, executive desk, seating, conference table etc. However, it may not be practical at all if you do not understand the end user who will be occupying that space. Rarely are they the right person for the desk chosen. To truly serve users, it’s essential to grasp the measurements of the individual who will occupy the given space.

Misti: How do we approach designing for users with varying physical abilities and limitations at Tayco?

Bill: Our top and first priority is to incorporate height adjustable products into the environment. We consider the mix of storage and work surfaces, ensuring that the height adjustable tables can accommodate all individuals. We try to think, can we setup this desk as efficient as possible for any body using it? Sometimes, clients have budget constraints or a dealer/designer wants to sell what is on their floor, and they opt for products that may partially accommodate different body types. While budget-friendly options exist, they generally do not cater to everyone. This doesn’t mean that the specifier doesn’t care, it may be a lack of knowledge or product offering.

Misti: Are there specific guidelines or principles that designers/specifiers should consider for inclusive ergonomics?

Bill: Absolutely, yes. Task surfacing should span the lowest lows and the highest highs to cater to different body types. Some individuals may need a worksurface as low as 22”, requiring designers to think beyond traditional measurements.

People need to feel comfortable in what you provide them, at the capacity that their body is most comfortable doing.

For example, let’s say there is a benching station, if you have a very tall person working back-to-back with a very short person, you need to accommodate them. You have

to provide for them, so they don’t feel awkward sitting or standing. Age and vision capabilities need to be adaptive to an inclusive workstation, is the person sitting at the station able to grab and pull their screen toward them. (Laptops are not inclusive). A monitor isn’t just proximal- closer and further away, but brightness/glare, can you influence them? It’s not just a work surface, not a monitor, not just your chair, not just reaching for your shelving, it’s making sure that these can accommodate different body metrics.

Misti: Can you discuss the relationship between aesthetics and ergonomics in design, particularly when creating visually appeal yet inclusive products?

Bill: Rodney Dangerfield said “it’s better to look good than to feel good,” which brings to mind the importance of aesthetics. However, we can flip this statement to emphasize that you can both look and feel good. A wide range of fantastic chairs, executive desks, and aesthetically pleasing options are available if you allow design to explore them. The easiest example would be, don’t sucked into the trendy inexpensive looking chair that pops up in your social media feed, because it likely was not designed to adapt to any body type, and you won’t be getting close to the 90th percentile. Do not get stuck in “it’s better to look good than to feel good”, with respect to design.

Misti: What advice would you give to designers looking to incorporate ergonomic principles into their work for more inclusive designs?

Bill: Think about the body in motion, think about everything a moving body requires spatially, ease of control and adapting to what that workspace is designed to do.

Don’t be satisfied with the status quo!

Think, how can I keep this body in motion?

How can I encourage them to stand and sit throughout the day?

How can I lessen their reach?

How can I lessen their joint compression, like doing typing all day?

How can I help them with their vision no matter what they are doing in that work cell?

Remember, it’s about looking good and feeling good simultaneously.

I hope you found something out of my conversation with Bill that perhaps you did not previously know, or maybe you looked at inclusivity in ergonomics through a different lens. As we strive to create environments that empower every individual, we must embrace the idea that diversity goes beyond appearance and extends to the unique needs of each body. By taking the extra steps to understand, accommodate, and inspire movement, we not only enhance comfort and productivity, but also CHAMPION INCLUSIVITY. It is a journey toward designs that not only look good but also make everyone feel good- a future where furniture isn't just functional or just beautiful, but truly for everybody.



Misti Yeager is an accomplished professional in the contract furniture industry, currently serving as a Western Regional Sales Manager for Tayco, a Canadian manufacturer. Known for being people and customer centric, Misti possess a keen intuition and offers unwavering support to both clients and colleagues. With a 19 year career marked by consistent success, Misti has established a strong track record in sales and management.

Additionally, Misti is committed to the values of health and wellness, both personally and professionally. Misti is a passionate advocate for pushing companies to think innovatively, always striving for solutions that benefit the greater good. Sustainability is a driving force in her professional journey, reflecting Misti's dedication to creating a more environmentally responsible business world.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Misti is a multifaceted individual who finds balance through teaching yoga and spending time with her 3-year-old son and 2 dogs. They all have a genuine love for the outdoors and make it a priority to soak up the sunshine whenever possible!



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BERCO
designs

EDUCATION DESIGN (AND BEYOND):

A Q&A With Audrey Metz

Berco Designs has a portfolio of education tables, which have a long history of spanning campuses nationwide. The design-led manufacturing facility in St. Louis, Missouri provides major design opportunities for major design choices. Creating a campus where students belong and feel at home. Berco Designs has helped rethink the future of college communities and the strength is in the numbers. Universities like Washington University, continue to choose Berco tables, bringing a custom design and an active customer service experience within reach.

**Washington University Motto:
Strength Through Truth**

CROWDER COURTYARD WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW.

Often, tables are an afterthought in the design process. The layout of a space is configured and the materials curated. Procuring tables for an active campus takes research and a strong understanding of how students will use them. Audrey Metz, Manager of Furniture and Design for Washington University, has chosen Berco Designs for durable tables without compromising aesthetic.

Below, Audrey Metz shares her thoughts on higher education design.

Q: Can you tell me about where these Berco Designs tables are located on campus and what the space is typically used for?

A: Crowder Hall is used as a dining and study area for the Washington University School of Law. The space hosts events every week, so the goal was durable and moveable tables.



Berco Designs Anyway table series featuring leveling glides and varying top shapes and heights.

Q: Has the concept of campus design—which is so central to the identity of a historic college such as Wash-U—changed today compared to the past?

A: It’s the same in a lot of ways. But the way we use the spaces has morphed over time.

Q: During the redesign of the graduate architecture & design studio, Berco Designs provided custom tables made for the specific needs of the architecture students. What would you say they add to that space?

A: We really needed someone to build what we wanted and I knew Berco Designs had an in-house engineering department dedicated specifically to that. It was convenient to have that kind of back-and-forth communication. Since Berco has that kind of relationship with us, we knew it would be engineered properly.



“Weil commons was designed for community and collaboration. The space is very open and active with a Berco Designs community table for gatherings,” said Metz.



Custom Berco Designs desks in the Wash-U School of Architecture Graduate Studio.

The desk design allows architecture students to spread out. The tops are solid surface, so they’re very durable. The students glue models together and the surface allows for more creativity without damaging the furniture. The design was intended to store large materials like foam core, large drafts and other project materials. The students can also provide their own locks for the custom drawer storage.

Q: What prompted you to opt for the innovative designs and finishes offered by Berco Designs?

A: Berco is great about providing any laminate we want. The cherry finish in the law school is very traditional. The custom heights and widths of the Parsons-style tables in the law school group study, make the space very active and lively, but at the same time, has the traditional wood finish to make the space cohesive.

Q: How important is it to strike a balance between durability and aesthetics when designing tables for educational spaces?

A: Durability is always first and foremost. But, I don’t think you have to sacrifice aesthetics to have durability. In educational spaces, the table has to hold up.

Q: Classroom and Dining: Are Berco Designs’ tables suitable for both environments?

A: Yes, we use Berco tables in diverse environments. In addition to student spaces, we design a ton of admin buildings. The medical campus is full of meeting tables and break rooms. We use Berco Designs for almost all of those uses.



Berco Designs Encore Community tables in custom widths and heights, Wash-U School of Law.

Q: What’s new for Wash-U?

A: We are looking at Oasis Berco privacy pods. In the past few months, we’ve noticed it’s more of an option if you want a modular look and want to keep from putting up drywall. We’re seeing more of a need for private spaces.

Q: How much does well-being and comfort have to do with it?

A: People in the design industry talk about well-being a lot. We are constantly researching well-being and design. We see that research and incorporate it internally.



Audry Metz, Manager of Furniture and Design at Washington University, has designed higher education spaces across campus for over 7 years. She specializes in Education Design and her start began at a furniture dealership. In her work, a great deal of attention is paid to safety and requirements, as well as sustainability. Collections of Berco Designs tables help furnish stimulating learning environments for students and work areas for over 10,000 employees on campus.

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Enhancing the Furniture Industry: The Vital Role of Small Business Manufacturers

By Michelle Warren

I am an endless advocate for small business, always have been and always will be. It is within my core. While at lunch with a government leader of a major dealership the conversation veered towards this subject very close to my heart - small business manufacturers: Why do these unsung heroes matter to the industry and specifically dealers?

I happen to have many answers and insight into this question!

With experience working for small business manufacturers earlier in my career, I now dedicate my efforts to supporting them through Catalyst. Additionally, I take pride in being a woman-owned small business myself. Through this lens, let's delve into the importance of small business manufacturers to our industry.

Let me start by saying, my goals on this topic:

- 1. **For Small Business Manufacturers:** Empower yourselves to harness your superpower and strategically position your business within your dealer network to thrive.
- 2. **For Large Business Manufacturers:** I encourage you to forge partnerships with small manufacturers to enhance your dealer support capabilities and foster industry innovation.
- 3. **For Large, Aligned Dealerships:** Recognize the value and ingenuity that small business manufacturers can bring to your business to elevate your offerings and meet customer demands.

It's important to understand that Small Business Manufacturers play an important role in the Federal Government's socio-economic goals.

Small Business Spend = 23%

- **5% 8(a)**
- **5% Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB)**
- **3% Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone)**
- **3% Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)**

These goals have been in place for many years, but recent changes to the Packaged Office (POC) program and to the SBA program have made the use of small business manufacturers mandated in certain situations. Here are some examples & tips in how to leverage small business status:

- **RFP Opportunities** - It is no longer allowed for the bid responder / 8(a) dealer / POC holder to be a small business and fulfill the requirements of an RFP that is a small business set aside. 100% small business manufacturers are required to represent up to 100% of the bid response.
- **Confirm if your Manufacturer is, in Fact, Small** - The majority of the manufacturers in the furniture manufacturing industry use one of the manufacturing NAICS codes that defines a small business as less than 1000 employees. To confirm if a specific manufacturer is small I would check in [e-library \(https://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/ElibMain/home.do\)](https://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/ElibMain/home.do) or on the [System for Acquisition Management \(www.SAM.gov\)](http://www.SAM.gov)
- **Socio Economic Status has Strong Marketing Power** - You can't expect that everyone knows your socio-economic status. Make sure you include this prominently on your website, literature and in your conversations!

Now that we know all of this GSA-rich information, what are the other benefits of working with a small business furniture manufacturer?

- 1. **Unique and customizable products** - Smaller manufacturers tend to focus on specific product categories and do those REALLY well. They also tend to have some more unique, innovative offerings in their categories and they are willing to work with the client for customization.
- 2. **Personalized relationships at higher levels:** They're "lean and mean"! With small manufacturers you have the opportunity to build relationships



By Michelle Warren

Michelle Warren is President of Catalyst Consulting Group, a firm specializing in providing strategic solutions to the commercial furniture industry to enhance their sales, positioning, and distribution.

With 25 years of industry experience on the dealer and manufacturer side of the industry, Michelle has been recognized as an innovator in selling to the Federal Government, State/ Local Government, Higher Education and Cooperative Purchasing. Her expertise includes: sales strategies, strategic planning, 3-5 year road mapping, targeted marketing plans, distribution development, hiring reps, and training for reps and/or dealers.

Michelle is known as a "serial networker" in the furniture industry and enjoys meeting people and making connections happen. If you're interested in connecting - reach out at: Michelle@strategic-catalyst.com, connect on [LinkedIn](#) or visit strategic-catalyst.com to learn more about her work.

• • •

with leaders of the company. This allows for better communication, faster problem-solving, and more tailored support, which can lead to improved customer satisfaction.

3. **You mean more.** You're really important to them: If you are a larger dealer or have larger volume to offer to a small manufacturer you could be a big fish in a smaller pond. A lot of times it is easy to get lost at a larger manufacturer especially if you are not doing very large volumes.

4. **Faster Response Times:** Both from a quote and from a delivery standpoint, in many cases small manufacturers can be more nimble and deliver faster.

5. **Design support:** A lot of small partners either do the quoting or the design for you. As the expert they save you time and possible errors.

6. **Competitive Pricing:** Some large manufacturers have great pricing, but there are also small manufacturers who can beat their pricing on some niche products helping you reduce your overall cost to the client and/or increase dealer margin.

7. **Higher Profitability:** In my experience, small manufacturers are open to being partners in the business with you. They are open to discussions about dealer service

fees, deeper discounts on large quantities, and many offer spiffs (even on GSA!!!) This puts more money in your pocket and you're doing a good thing at the same time!

In summary, small business furniture manufacturers bring diversity, innovation, customization, and a personal touch to the industry. They provide a valuable opportunity for dealers to differentiate themselves in the market, cater to specific customer needs, and offer a wide range of high-quality, unique, and sustainable products. Additionally, working with small business manufacturers, dealerships contribute to local economies. Creating jobs. Supporting local communities. This tells a great story and may become a part of their business values.

Ultimately, the choice between a small business manufacturer and a large manufacturer depends on the furniture dealer's specific business strategy, target market, and priorities. I believe there is a lot to be said for the unique offerings, personalized service and potential higher profitability that small business partners can offer and I would encourage every dealer, especially those selling on GSA, to have a small business manufacturer plan in place.

Can you think of other reasons dealerships should be working with small business manufacturers? Let me know! I want to hear from you! michelle@strategic-catalyst.com



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Build Your People; Build Your Business.

By Rob Langejans

As a business owner or leader, how do you determine your budget for training? A better question might be if you even have a training budget! As an employee, do you have learning opportunities that are necessary and motivating?

It's understandable that business owners and leaders may have reservations about investing in training fearing that employees may leave after acquiring valuable skills, however the evidence overwhelmingly supports the notion that training is not just an expense, it's an investment that yields substantial returns beyond the sense that "it's the right thing to do".

Three Reasons for Training

There are three reasons why it's important to invest in your employees through training.

The first reason seems obvious: to develop their skills to do their own job better with greater efficiency and effectiveness. This happens when:

The employee/learner takes the training seriously.

The manager supports the time spend in training.

The experience is engaging, applicable, and meaningful.

A second reason for developing the skills through ongoing training and development of your team is for employee retention and engagement. Consider these statistics:

- [A study by LinkedIn](#) found that 94% of employees would stay longer with the company if it invested in their career development.
- [Several studies show](#) that organizations with a strong culture of learning enjoy an increase in employee retention rates and profit margins.
- According to [Gallup](#), highly engaged teams show a 21% greater profitability.

Build employee knowledge and skills and they will build your business.

The third reason to invest in your employees through training comes from doctor Robert Cialdini in his book, *Influence*, where he writes about the psychological principle of reciprocity. People have a natural inclination to return favors and kindness when they receive them. To apply this principle to training, make some training opportunities optional. Work hard to make the training attractive so people enroll, but when it's not mandatory and scene as a gift, your people will be engaged and less likely to leave.

Does FREE fit your budget?

Now you may be thinking to yourself that I'm writing this article because I'm in the training business. Well, that's true, and I do provide training opportunities for sales and leaders in communication and presentation skills along with team building and assessments, but here are ways business leaders can provide learning opportunities without an outside resource:

- TED talks provide a free way to bring great ideas and new opportunities for learning to your team. Consider watching a Ted talk at a team meeting and then discuss how that topic applies to each individual or each work group or for deeper learning, ask for a volunteer to find a TED talk they find valuable, and share a summary with the team. Talk about how to apply the learning on the job.
- Check out [HubSpot](#) the popular CRM website. Go to their [Academy](#) section and you'll find courses and certifications that are free. You can also check out their eBooks and guide's section. I find [LinkedIn Learning](#) to be high quality courses too, but you'll need a premium account to access the library.
- Use ChatGPT to help you build a class. I asked Chad to write a short training plan on how to better manage time and it replied with a 10-day course! That's longer than I had in mind, so you may need to offer better



Rob Langejans is Principle of [AlwaysStrategic, LLC](#) and [AlwaysPresenting](#). He works primarily in the A/E/C and Contract Interiors industries with deep expertise in helping leaders, sales, and support staff communicate with impact. His businesses are founded on the belief that "people buy (or buy-in) from people and that face-to-face communication is the most influential channel. Contact Rob at rob@alwaysstrategic.com to explore ways he can bring valuable training opportunities to your team virtually or in-person!





Innovation Centers: Maximizing Your eSports Dollars

By Joyce Degen, mediatechnologies

eSports in education is all the buzz. So much so, that you may find yourself wanting to jump right into the game. Or maybe you are hesitant... maybe you are not exactly sure why it's become such a huge phenomenon, or what the benefits are to your school community and the students who play, or why you need it at all.

More Than Just a Game

On the surface, generally one's first reaction to eSports programs in schools is the same as the stereotypical response to video games ... perhaps your parents felt negatively towards video games, or maybe even you do not feel they're a productive use of time. After speaking with

many parents and colleagues about their opinions of video games, the common theme was often a negative opinion until they realized what eSports has to offer. The fact of the matter is, on a basic level, adolescents learn through play. The question with eSports is not are they learning, but what are they learning? Just as traditional youth sports improve life skills like goal setting, time management, work ethic, empathy, negotiation, increased empowerment, personal responsibility, and self-control; eSports programs can reach students traditional sports may not. "80% of eSports teams are comprised of students that have never participated in extra-curricular activities." Archambeault, L. (2020, February 10). It's Time for Schools to Embrace Video Games. [NationalSchoolBoardAssociation](#).

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As a family, we are so proud of Ben and where he has gone with his performance in Rocket League. Having played for years prior to joining the eSports program, it's amazing to see his confidence level rise."

Clarissa McCann, Florence 1 student parent

Games like FIFA and Rocket League build 21st Century soft skills that students may not learn in other areas of academia and life. eSports is all-inclusive regardless of gender, race, age, and athletic ability. The inclusivity of eSports programs opens the door to build community among students and build soft skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, negotiation, adaptability, self-control, creativity, and critical thinking. At the same time, a student's self-worth and confidence grows with every practice, through the acceptance and well-being of belonging to a community. eSports in education teaches time management, goal setting, passion, and drive. catapulting students into the desire to set new goals, tackle bigger obstacles and strive to try things they may not have tried before.

Just as with traditional sports, building an eSports community brings people together for entertainment and provides a sense of belonging. The difference being, you can play with anyone, anywhere at anytime and the relationship is not any different than if that person was in the same room as you. eSports opens the door to meeting and gathering with larger groups of people from various regions in the world!

eSports in education provides students with an alternative track to play a sport, be an athlete, and belong to a team. Designed and developed in 2019 and installed by 2020, [Florence 1 eSports Arena](#) has held many competitions and



Florence 1 Schools (SC): Product and design provided by mediatechnologies and Co-Designed by PinnacleNS (SC)

has gone to the playoffs every year since its inception.

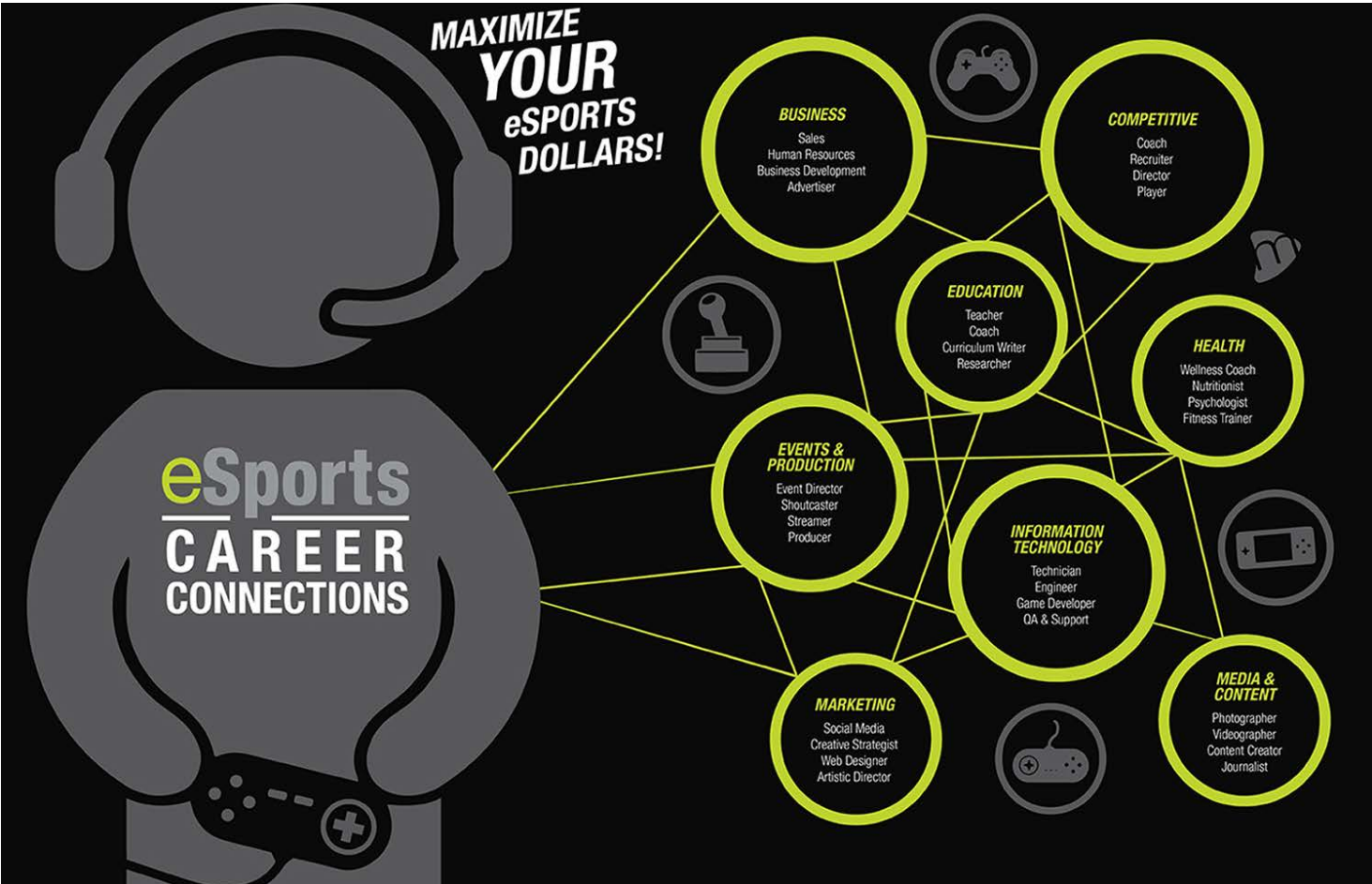
Ranking in the top 8 and 16 in the nation in the High School Esports League, with a top 4 in Valhallen Esports League. When not in the regular season leagues, F1S has traveled and competed in the CEC Invitational, located in Concord, NC winning 1 competition per trip. Also worth mentioning, F1S has competed biannually with Florence Country Park and Recreation, where they have consecutively placed for three years.

Five students have received scholarships since the program began: one student for Rocket League in the first year, three students for Overwatch in the second year, and one for Overwatch just this past year. There are roughly 200 programs currently offering varsity scholarships for eSports athletes and this list continues to grow. In 2020, "Colleges offered over \$16M in scholarships" according to Forbes Magazine. (Venero, B. (2020, February 6). Is Good for Schools, Students And Even Employers. [Forbes.com](#). Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil>)

Consider how your students may benefit from the social emotional, soft skills, community, and confidence that eSports programs have to offer. Do you recognize a need for this in your school?

Reimagine Your Space

There are two ways to look at this. One is your physical space and its capabilities (more on that later) and two, what will you want to accomplish in your space? Let's dive



What does a gymnasium, cafeteria, and a media space have in common? They are rooms that were intended or designed to accommodate a special purpose and although that special purpose is quite clear, we often find multiple uses for each space. The same can be said for Innovation Centers. Consider the main purpose of your Innovation Center to be an eSports program, while adding other uses that would allow the space to be used throughout the entirety of the school day for curriculum-based classes as well as after school for eSports club gaming and competition, utilizing the opportunity to create CTE pathways.

Academically speaking, students who take part in an extracurricular activity are more engaged and less likely to drop out. Like traditional sports, grades must be kept up in order to remain eligible. eSports involves many career avenues beyond professional gaming and having an Innovation Center to support students' success is essential. Careers such as game design, marketing and/or team management, journalism, live broadcasting, and program-



ming just to name a few are fantastic pathways to careers that are derived from esports and teachable in education-based programs.

What other areas might we see eSports being used to create benefits? Perhaps an area where you would least expect it – the military. MGL: Military Gaming League, built

for American Heroes to bring military families together. Think of the United States Military as our country's Innovation Center. Some of the goals they aim to achieve with eSports are:

- **Recruiting** – attract gamers/younger generation.
- **Connect to Society** – give insight into what it means to be a military professional.
- **Training** – developing skills needed for combat and readiness, physically and mentally.
- **Community** – building communities for active, retired personnel as well as families of military professionals.

For comparison, let's look at what your goals may be when planning your Innovation Center:

- **Recruiting** – students who haven't found their niche in more traditional based school activities.
- **Training** – developing skills for STEM/STEAM careers.
- **Scholarships** – opening the door for more students to acquire scholarships for college that they may not have had access to before.
- **Community** – inclusivity, a sense of belonging and pride for students, gamers and spectators.

The goals of eSports in Education and the military are similar. When considering an eSports program for your school, ask yourself ... How can we add eSports and maximize usability?

We Know the Game

When approaching a design for eSports facilities, the exploratory process brings forth what facilitators and administrators really want to see in their space. Conversation and planning questions to aide in this process fall into four categories:

- 1. **General** – extracurricular (club and afterschool gaming) or tied to a curriculum?

2. **Room Design** – existing space to remodel, or new construction? How many zones are needed/desired? Is there a need to incorporate branding of school spirit and possibly sponsors? Is this an innovation center made to incorporate more than eSports? If so, what else will this space be used for?

3. **Curriculum** – is there existing CTE to support or does one need to build? How will STEM/STEAM be connected?

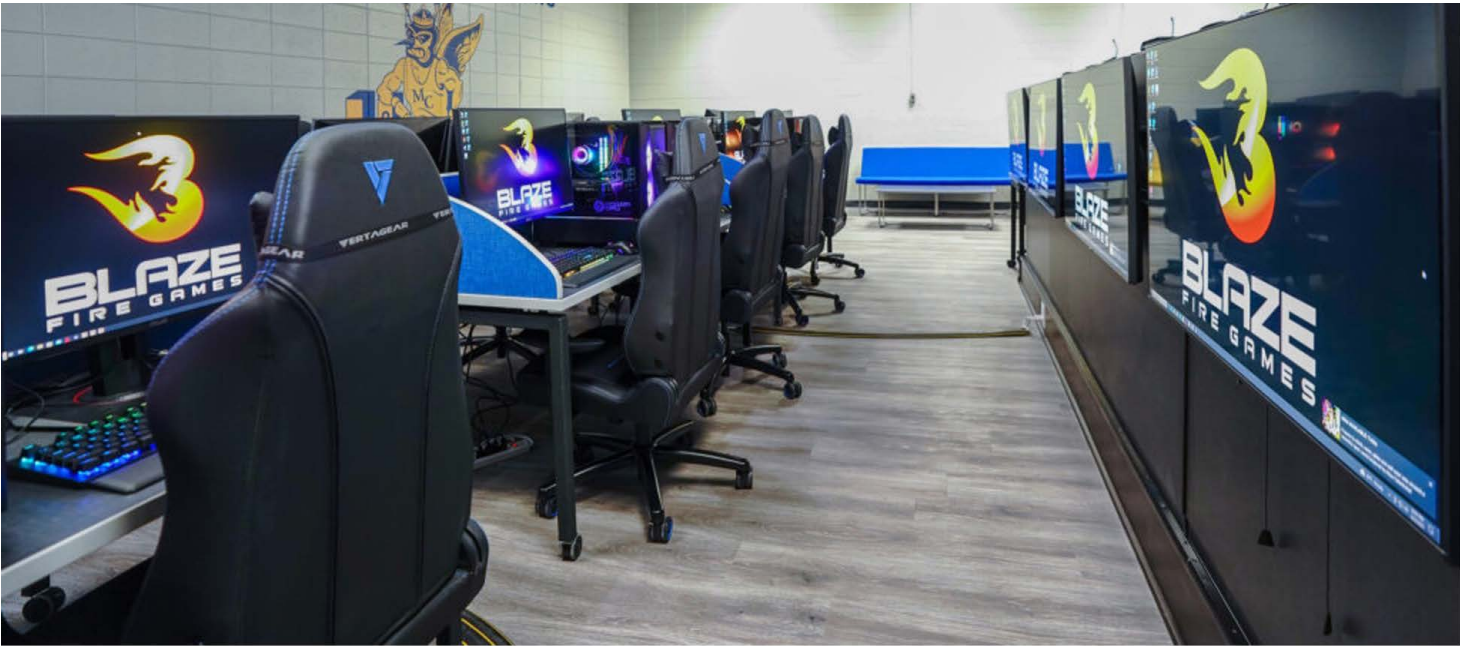
4. **Technology** – what is the equipment list? What games do we want to compete in?



Darlington County School District (SC): Product and design provided by mediatechnologies and Co-Designed by PinnacleNS (SC): your eSports

To create an eSports program, you'll need a team coach or advisor, gaming equipment, and a room in which to house the program's physical attributes. Depending on the resources available to you, this could be as simple as converting a computer lab or as robust as a new construction eSports arena, complete with space for announcers and live spectators. Whatever your budget and needs, exploration of the design with eSports design experts, who listen and support you is key.

Will the space be Varsity or Club level? You'll either have an Arena environment, sponsored by and for the school, focused on competition at a national level Or a Club environment where gaming is after school and more about students getting together and gaming often playing different games than that of the Varsity team. They still compete, but at a different level.



Morris College (SC): Products and design provided by mediatechnologies and Co-Designed by PinnacleNS (SC)

Keeping that in mind, Innovation Centers/eSports labs usually contain the following zones:

Varsity Competition Arenas

- Gamers (typically for 3 v 3 and 6 v 6 competition)
- Spectators
- Commentators
- Huddle/Training
- Storage and/or charging
- Broadcasting

Classroom/Lab/Club

- Facilitator
- Commentator
- Students/Gamers (typically 1 v 1, and used for warmups when in a room with Varsity play)
- Collaborative/Programming
- Breakouts
- Storage and/or charging

In some eSports facilities, it is necessary to have zones for both Club and Varsity eSports in the same facility. For example, for [Morris College](#), the center had to include Varsity and Club zones, as well as Spectator and Facilitator zones. The solution was to design the space to incorporate a Club Zone comprised of mobile workstations that could later be replaced with lounge furniture to accommodate a Spectator Zone for Varsity competition.

Including your staff, community and students in the planning process will further enable a space that is designed to enhance school spirit and pride with a sense of ownership, bring forth ideas to maximize the spaces potential and allow you as educators to meet students exactly where they are in today’s ever-changing digital world. Careers that didn’t exist before will blossom from this program, allowing impactful curriculum to be delivered and create an environment where students can flourish and grow.

Coach, Gavin Cribb stated that his “favorite aspect of the Arena at Florence 1 in South Carolina was that the space offers multiple ways to watch he kids play. Specifically, from the outside, we have all the televisions that show the kids’ perspective of the game that they are playing. The kids’ favorite aspect of the space is the stadium itself, it’s elevated and has its own area where they can talk and communicate, everyone can see each other together and communicate in a line compared to if they were at home.

Growing an eSports program requires interest from key stakeholders, such as students, parents, and administrators. Funding by way of community and/or grants, and strong ergonomic furniture that supports the technology needed to run your program. Unlike the world of professional sports, eSports in education focuses more on connecting, learning, and playing in and out of the classroom so students, educators and families can experience interest-driven learning. eSports also focuses on building community and developing marketable skills as it relates to STEM/STEAM as well as providing the same social and emotional learning (SEL) benefits as traditional sports, such as teamwork, leadership, and sense of belonging and creating opportunities for safe and engaging spaces.

The eSports community is large, and eager to help you develop your team as part of their community. The opportunities that come from eSports are growing by the day, offering funding and sponsorship, as well as scholarships for students just as traditional sports.

Furniture, technology, and design enhances education and community. Knowing why, how and who will use your Innovation Center to its maximum potential is the key to building your eSports program!

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Link to full/original article: <https://essentials.edmarket.org/2023/07/innovation-centers-maximizing-your-esports-dollars/>

Joyce joined mediatechnologies in July 2013. Recently promoted to Marketing & Creative Director, Joyce is responsible for all marketing and communications for the company. She directs media relations, social media, branding, advertising, content creation, website development, and finishes program. As a member of the company’s Management Team, Joyce participates in the strategic planning and direction of the company’s short-term and long-term goals. She has more than 10 years of experience in the commercial furniture industry. In (2015), she led mediatechnologies in the rebranding of its logo and redesigning its website.



5 Questions

TO GUIDE YOUR CASE STUDY DEVELOPMENT

By Matt Spaulding

Case studies are essential for B2B businesses, especially those in the commercial architect, design and building products industries. When done correctly, they show how your products or services solve a customer’s need. They can also be powerful tools for your sales force – as well as a great content for your website and social media. They can even be leveraged to drive media coverage in trade magazines.

But beware: Case studies can be time-consuming. Depending on the scope of the project, be prepared to invest time and resources. Time will be required to set up and conduct interviews. It will also take time to write and edit the copy. You should also allow time to obtain photography. Then of course, you should budget time for gaining approvals from all parties. This can be a challenge, especially if there are legal departments involved.

With all this in mind, you’ll want to pursue only those case studies that will have the biggest impact for you.

Here are five questions to keep in mind before developing a case study:

1. Does it meet your business need?

If you’re a manufacturer, your products are likely used in a number of different ways by a number of different customers. This means you probably have no shortage of potential case studies you could pursue. But it’s important to take a critical look at the project. Does the project – and your product used in the project – align with your business goals? For example, if you are trying to grow marketshare in the healthcare sector, a case study can be a nice tool for helping reach that goal. So, of all the different case studies you could pursue, it’s probably best to invest your time, resources and budget on a case study for the healthcare vs. another one in which you’re already established.

The same could be said of your products. Let’s say you really want to promote a new and improved product over an existing product you’ve offered for a long time. Building awareness and then getting customers to switch to this new and improved product can be a challenge. A case study can help. But the case study must clearly show why and how the new product is an improvement over the existing one, and how it solved a customer’s need.

If you’re a designer, the same principles can be applied. What recent project best showcases your skills, your thinking, your services, and the results you created? And does that project show where you want to go strategically as a designer or a design firm?

2. Does it have a compelling story?

This can be subjective. But the essential ingredients of a strong B2B case study are: The customer faced a unique challenge. Your organization or brand offered a solution. The results met the client’s needs and/or exceeded their expectations. If your potential case study meets these criteria, you’ve got a good start.

Other compelling factors could include: Is it a one-of-a-kind project? Is there an environmentally positive aspect? Does it involve well-known people or brand names? Is there an inspiring societal or education benefit to the project? Is the location of the project in a unique, interesting or well-known area? Is the customer well-known or does the customer have an interesting mission?

3. Does it have great photography?

This is a must have, especially for those of us in the architect, design and building community. It’s a cliché but it’s true: A picture tells a thousand words. Great photography is what catches people’s attention and draws them in. It’s also what can help sell the project to a publication. So, before you dive too deep into the process, it’s a good idea to evaluate the kind of images you can get from the project. Would the photography tell the whole story? Would the photography look captivating and shine the best possible light on your product or the environment? Once you’ve determined this, you can begin the process of getting photography taken. Sometimes the cost for photography will need to be picked up by the design firm. Other times it can be a shared expense between the design firm, the manufacturer and even the end-user/customer.

Matt Spaulding is the founder and president of [Spaulding Communications](#), a strategic marketing communications firm that works exclusively with commercial architecture, design and building product brands to help them discover and share what makes them great.

4. Are all partners on board?

For any commercial project, there might be a number of different partners involved. There is typically a design firm, a contractor, installer or dealer, and the end-user or customer. Before charging ahead in drafting a case study, it’s a good idea to reach out to each partner and get their initial OK. Remember to also ask if any partners require legal sign-off. And, be sure to get OKs if you plan to promote the case study to the media.

5. Do you have the resources to maximize it?

A well written case study is a dynamic piece of content that can be leveraged in multiple ways. For example, it can be a short piece that resides on your website. It could also be converted into a downloadable PDF, where customers and your sales team can save it and share it.

A case study could also be developed into a story with more details and quotes in the form of a blog article. Of course, the content and the photography can also be used for your social media posts and in other marketing materials.

Finally, don’t forget about pitching the case study and its photography to your key publications. Architect and design magazines are consistently looking to showcase great projects in their magazines and on their websites.

Next Steps

Answering the questions above can ensure you’re thinking through all of the steps about a case study before you begin. This can save you time and resources. It can also ensure the case study you do develop is maximized to the fullest extent.

KEEPING CONNECTED

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

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

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

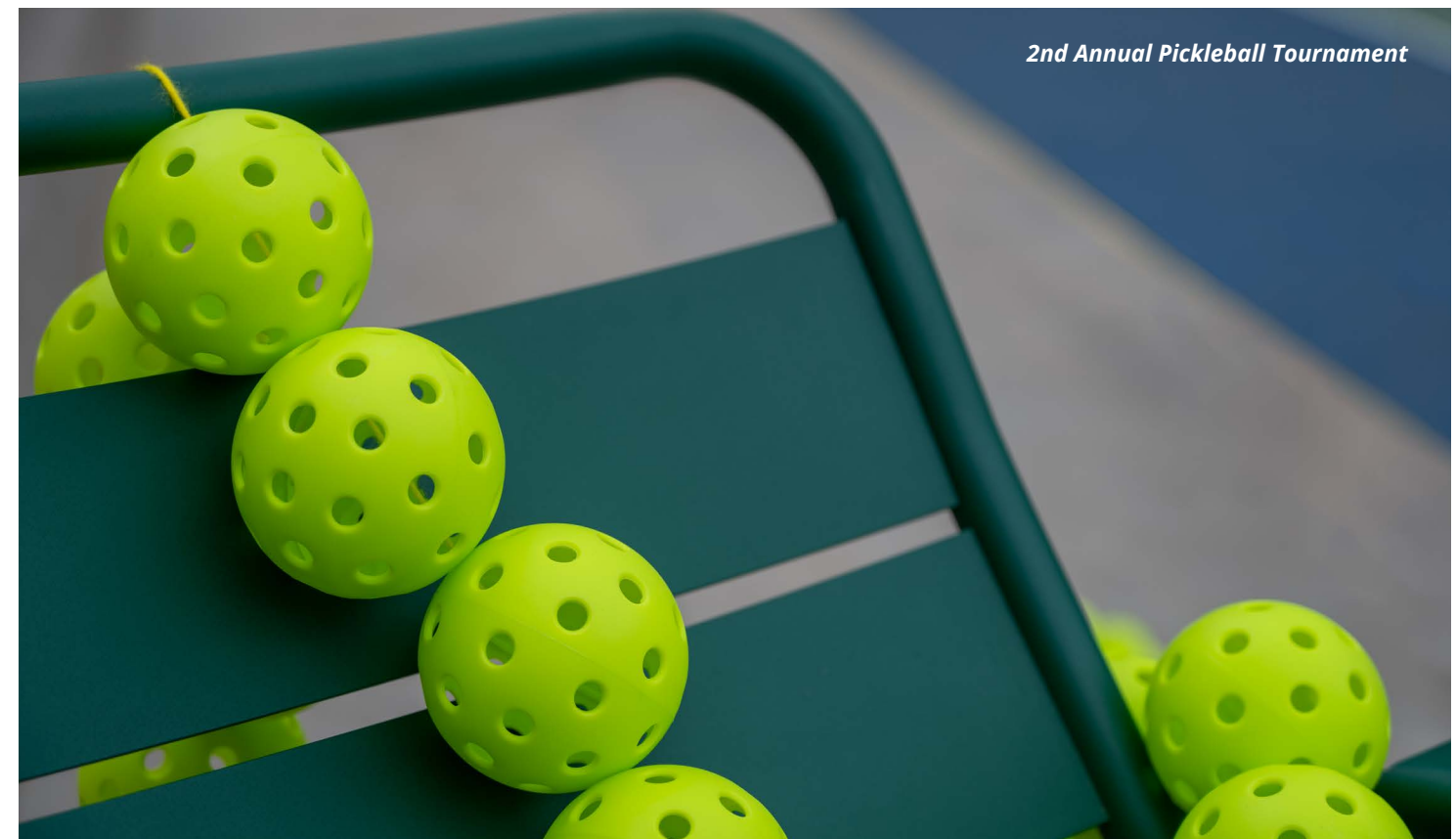


Luck Rep Group and Carrot Rep group

The 2nd Annual Colorado A&D Pickleball Tournament was held in August; hosted by Luck Rep Group, Shaw Contract, Carrot Rep Group and Fireclay Tile. 22 teams consisting of firms and industry partners came together for some friendly competition!

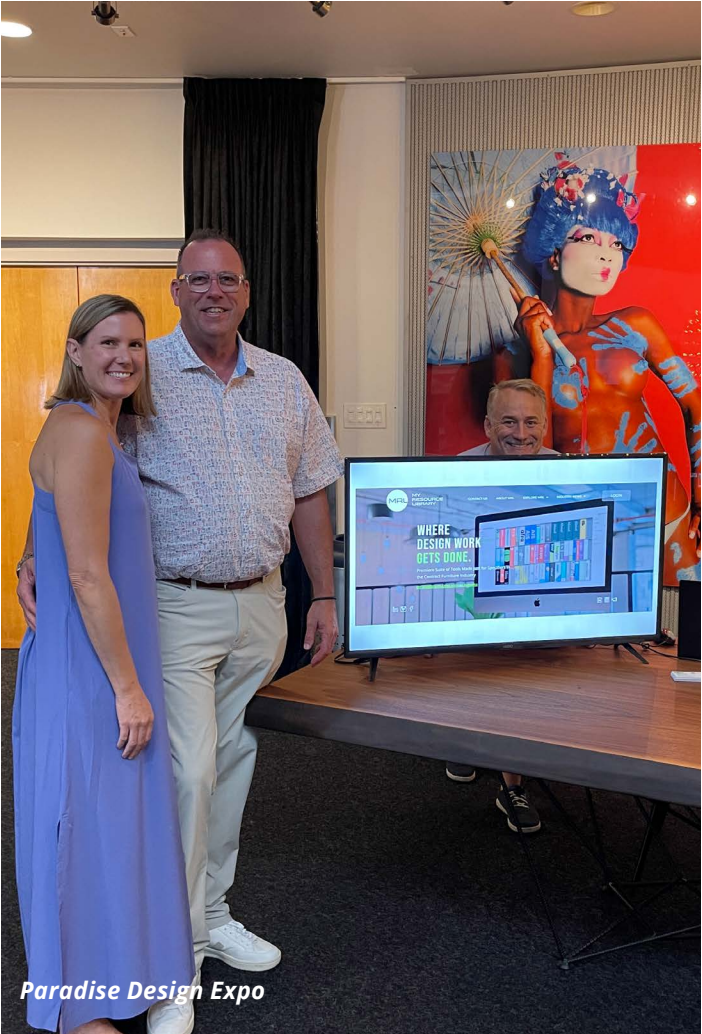
Photography and Finishing Touches by Kaylyn Schmer, Composition Creative, LLC.

Visit the [Luck Rep Group](#) and [Carrot Rep Group](#)



Kaylyn Schmer is a Designer and Photographer based in Denver, Colorado. You can book your next photoshoot with her on compositioncreative.com.





Paradise Design Expo



Paradise Design Expo



Paradise Design Expo



Paradise Design Expo

Paradise Design Expo

This past week, Rodenbeck, in conjunction with IIDA Hawaii Pacific, hosted the Paradise Design Expo, a captivating convergence of creativity and innovation within the realm of commercial interiors. The design community along with our distributors and end-users were able see first-hand, cutting-edge designs and products showcased from Fellowes, Krug, Momentum, My Resource Library, Source International, and Via Seating. Set against the backdrop of the Cupola Gallery at the Honolulu Design center, attendees enjoyed an evening of great products, amazing food and drinks and networking among industry friends. We also were able to raise some funds to the Maui Food Bank in response to the tragic fires in Maui.



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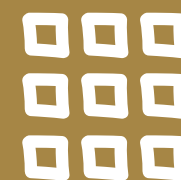
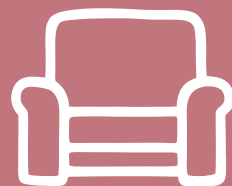
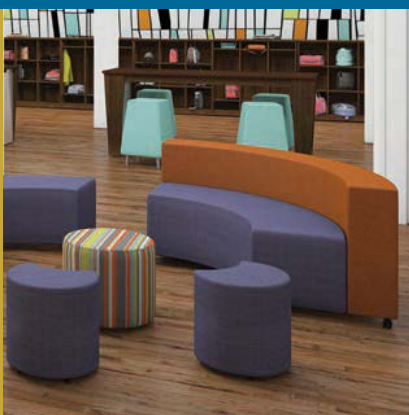
EDspaces Booth 427

High Point Furniture Industries, Inc.

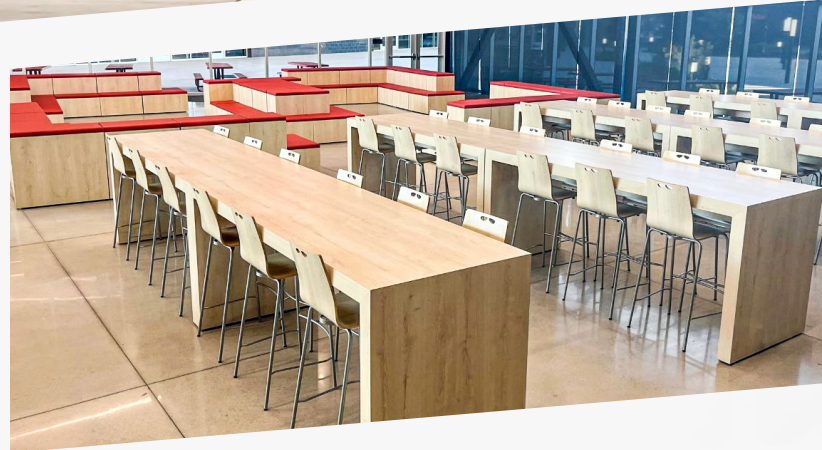
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