

The cover features a light pink background with a large, slightly open white envelope in the center. Scattered around the envelope are numerous small, colorful heart-shaped confetti pieces in shades of pink, orange, and white. The title 'delve' is written in a bold, white, lowercase sans-serif font on a black rectangular background in the top left corner. The issue information 'FEB 2024 V47' is printed in a white, uppercase sans-serif font in the top right. The main title 'A Love Letter to the Contract Industry' is written in a large, white, cursive script font across the middle, with 'to the' in a smaller, white, uppercase sans-serif font below it. The subtitle 'A Compilation of Stories: Why We Love Contract Design' is at the bottom in a white, uppercase sans-serif font. A decorative bar with segments of blue, purple, orange, and green is at the very bottom.

delve

FEB 2024 V47

A
Love Letter
to the
Contract Industry

A Compilation of Stories: Why We Love Contract Design

contents

FEB 2024 V47

DELVING INTO THE PUBLIC SECTOR
BY MICHELLE WARREN 05

PRODUCT ROUND UP
BY MY RESOURCE LIBRARY 07

DESIGNING SPACES
BY ANGI HEISKELL WITH CLEAR DESIGN 09

THE SOFTEST SHEETS
BY BENJI 10

FROM SKETCHES TO SPACES
BY LAURA CARLSON 13

REPURPOSING SPACES
BY MUZO 15

COVER: LOVE LETTER TO CONTRACT DESIGN
COMPILATION ARTICLE 18

DEALER FEATURE
BY THE SUPPLY ROOM 23

BRANDON BOONDOGGLE EXP.
BY MY RESOURCE LIBRARY 26

REP GROUP FEATURE
BY MARC SHORE & ASSOCIATES 29

KEEPING CONNECTED
BY MY RESOURCE LIBRARY 31



MUZO: Muzo examines how repurposing spaces can boost your social and environmental performance.



COVER STORY: A fun compilation of stories and perspectives on why we love the Contract Design Industry.



INDUSTRY EVENT: First hand account of this popular industry event.

ADVERTISE WITH MRL



My Resource Library
is the best way to reach
the Contract Design Industry
with your message!

Learn about all of the
unique advertising options
now offered by MRL.
Our team will help guide
you to build a personalized
advertising plan that
will help you meet your
advertising goals!

LEARN MORE

editor's note

Dear reader,

In the spirit of reflection and appreciation, we welcome you to our latest issue of Delve Magazine, dedicated to celebrating the profound love we hold for the contract design industry.

As we explore the stories behind the people, projects, and innovations that have shaped our industry, we invite you to join us in recognizing the profound impact of design on our lives and communities. This issue serves as a love letter to the transformative power of contract design, celebrating the creativity, ingenuity, and resilience that define our collective journey.

Thank you for being a part of our community and for sharing in our appreciation for the extraordinary world of contract design.

- The Delve Magazine Team

industrynews@myresourcelibrary.com

**THE
MY RESOURCE LIBRARY
FAMILY**



**Durable® Power Series
ZG Exam Lift Recliner**

Functioning as a recliner, exam surface, and sleep space, the ZG Exam Lift Recliner is fully powered and brings enough versatility to enhance any healthcare space.

learn more



L A Z B O Y
HEALTHCARE

KNÜ





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.



Delving into the Public Sector

Looking back on 2023 and forward to 2024

One of the most asked questions I hear is “How did sales look in 2023 for Public Sector and what is the forecast for 2024?” Everyone knows I love data and one reason that I love the public sector is that there is a lot of data available publicly if you know where to find it. I find it much easier to find Federal data than State/Local/Education/Cooperative (SLED), but we can see enough to allow us to understand which sectors of SLED grew and which went down last year as well as how they are purchasing.

Let’s start by looking at federal spending fiscal 2023 (Oct 2022-Sept 2023) as it pertains to furniture and industries that could help us “forecast” what the next couple of years will do.

- \$15B in new construction up 15% from 2022 and up 50% from 2021. This has obviously been a focus for the Federal Government over the past couple of years.
- Total federal contract awards up by approximately 1000 contracts
- Overall federal furniture spend was up about 10% according to USA Spending with a total furniture spend of \$1.02B
- Furniture sales on GSA contract up around 16% according to D2D reporting with a total spend of \$756M.
- Small business spend for furniture under GSA Contracts down 7%.
- National Stocking Number (NSN) program through GSA showed big gains with some contract holders having 100%+ growth.
- VA had its largest spend year ever and the VHA IDIQ is going strong with around \$130M in sales. Reminder, these sales do not show up under GSA contract sales since this is an open market contract.
- Air Force Seating BPA is in its final year and had its best year yet around \$7M in sales
- Lots of moving numbers on 33721 and 33721P due to the changes made to the Packaged office contract rules last year.

INDUSTRY HOT TOPICS

SLED Spending 2023 January-December

- Continued increased use of Cooperatives by SLED agencies.
- Total cooperatives sales reached \$60B and OMNIA represents over \$30B.
- There is no furniture reporting under cooperatives, but multiple sources say it is 2-3 x's federal spend so \$2-\$3B.
- Total furniture spend in SLED sectors was up 15% over 2022 reaching \$5B in sales
- State and Local spend saw a marginal decline due to budgets, sales still in excess of \$1.1B
- K-12 was basically flat year over year sitting just over \$1.3B and latest survey shows over 25% of K-12 purchase off of cooperative contract.
- Higher Education has the highest spend growth year, 229% over 2022 to reach \$2.1B in 2023.

What a great year 2023 was for Public Sector!! But what does 2024 hold? I want to start by addressing the elephants in the room before I share Catalyst's teams thoughts and predictions:

1. There is no federal budget. As of the writing of this article we are in continuing resolution through early March which will affect spend at least through then if not further.
2. We are in an Election year.

What will 2024 look like considering everything we have seen so far and the 2 above-mentioned state of affairs? My team put our heads together to "predict" what we think 2024 will look like. I will preface the comments below with these are what 4 consultants expect based on our vast public sector experience in the furniture industry.

- Big Buyers/Federal spending priorities will show growth. DOD (including Defense Contractors), VHA, DHS (Border/FEMA), FBI & related security agencies, Transportation.
- Co-op Gold: The cooperative space is really growing and they say they are only at 5% market share. Higher

Education will show the most growth with a lot of state, local and federal money being pushed that way. We also expect an increased spend with Local Law Enforcement, Healthcare (County/City/State), and Urban Transformation investment.

- Continuing Resolution Effects: Assuming we can get a budget passed and avoid a shutdown, a CR does tend to cause ripple effects, but what we've seen in the last 3-5 years is it doesn't really hold up the day-to-day transactional business. It doesn't hold up some of the smaller projects. It might delay some of those larger projects, but you do end up, depending on how late they pass the budgets, with pent up demand which adds some frenzy to the end of the fiscal year.
- Election year: Furniture sales data does not support any ups or downs during an election year, but remember, the election is actually in FY2024 and if there is a change it does not happen until 2nd quarter. You will definitely see a difference in which agencies get money and how much change if there is a change.
- Categorically, we saw an increase in seating sales last year and we anticipate that this will continue.
- Hybrid Work/ Employee empowerment will lead to increase in new and different furniture solutions.
- New construction and expansion should contribute to growth in large projects for the next 3 fiscals.

To sum everything up as far as predictions, Public Sector will continue to outpace commercial. Federally, there is money to be spent. It is just a matter of when and possibly which agencies.

Remember - The public sector furniture market exceeds \$6B so there is ALWAYS room to take market share in any category. If you have any questions about how your business could benefit from public sector selling strategies - please reach out to me at any time! It's what I love to talk about!

Future of Work and the Path Forward" and "Workplace 2030." According to McIntyre, the purpose of PBS is to "design, deliver, and maintain safe, smart, and sustainable workspaces that enable employees and agencies to serve the American people best."



6 OF MRL'S FAVORITE PRODUCTS FROM ACROSS THE LIBRARY

The following represent 6 of our favorite products currently on My Resource Library. The products are listed in no particular order.

ROCK ELEMENTS 1-6

SIXINCH

Rock Elements are a carved out polygonal rock benches made from FlexPlus™ coated foam. The sharp edges mixed with the soft foam create a crisp inviting look. This multifunctional piece is designed for use in high traffic spaces like retail, education and public places.



MYA

AFRA FURNITURE

Die-casted aluminum frame armchair with polypropylene seat available in 3 colors and textile backrest matching seat colors. Frame is available in powder coated finish for indoor or outdoor matching seat colors or polished aluminum and brushed aluminum base available for indoor only. Stackable 6 pcs. Available with linking device.



QUIETFORM™ TILES

ACOUFELT

QuietForm™ Tiles are a thermal molded acoustics product, designed for a three-dimensional wall finish with transformative soundscaping functionality. Drawing inspiration from the captivating essence of timeless architecture, our QuietForm patterns pay homage to the grandeur of history's most iconic structures.



PEBBLE

ALLERMUIR

Pebble is a superb seating option for informal meeting spaces or corporate breakout areas. This comfortable design allows creativity with colour and shape as they can be nested together to create infinite combination.

CUBBY

SNOWSOUND

Snowsound Cubby Wall Panels are a highly unique acoustic panel board system, utilizing sound-absorbing polyester foam to create a phone booth anywhere it is installed. The walls of Snowsound Cubby are built with a patented internal padding technology.



FOLIAGE

KARTELL

Foliage collection is a family of soft chairs. The key players are a two-seater sofa and an armchair, that seem to have grown "naturally": the frame provides support for a comfortable seat reminiscent of the crown of a tree, with top-stitched leaves.





Lacheln Watch

Be Bold

www.lachelnwatches.com





Designing Spaces, Fostering Connections: A Journey with Clear Design

A Love Letter to the Contract Design Industry

The past couple years working in the office furniture industry have provided an abundance of opportunities to grow, learn, and create meaningful interactions. Alongside fantastic partners, Clear Design gets to contribute to impactful workspaces that help teams build long-lasting relationships, foster a sense of community, and allow passion to shine.

Witnessing the community that is built around furniture in our own office is really inspiring, and knowing that every interaction with reps, dealers, and designers can contribute to fruitful workspaces for others across the country motivates me every day.

Working interdepartmentally with the collective goal to create positive and memorable experiences for everyone we interact with has been a huge driver for me wanting to continue down this path. It is truly an honor to be a

part of an industry and company that creates impactful experiences and spaces for people to come together, and it makes me feel empowered to help others daily.

Seeing the dedication from dealers, designers, rep groups, and our team is inspiring and motivates us to continue to innovate and elevate our offerings. As I continue this journey with my Clear Design team and our partners by my side, let us cherish the impact we have on shaping office environments where meaningful connections really flourish.

With lots of love from Clear Design.



Angi Heiskell
Inside Sales Team Lead
Clear Design

Everything You Need To Know About Benji's "Softest Sheets You've Ever Slept In"



We had a conversation with Ben & Mark, the co-founders/ brothers behind the Benji brand. Here's how this bedding company is delivering heavenly soft sheets, and changing the bedding industry along the way.

Benji was founded with a simple mission: to deliver the softest damn sheets without the ridiculous markup, and to break the status quo when it comes to buying bedding

Q: Why did you decide to sell bedsheets and how did you get started?

A: "When it comes to buying bedding, we always found ourselves asking the same questions...What fabric makes the best sheets? Does expensive equal quality? What does thread count really mean? We saw an industry that was stuck in its ways and wanted to dig in a little deeper to find out what is the best and softest material and if we could work directly with the manufacturers, can we cut out all of the retail markups and supply chain that drive up prices in the big box stores?" said Ben.

Q: What's your brand identity?

A: "We want Benji to be a painless way to get great bedding at a price that makes sense. At the end of the day this is a product that you use every single day for a long period of time... around 33% of your life. Buying bed sheets is not something that many people look forward to doing.

We want to take that experience and make it extremely easy and something that they look forward to receiving and sleeping on. That feeling of buying clothes or gifts online then receiving and trying them on.. we want to translate that to bedding products," said Mark.

Q: What sets your sheets apart from the rest?

A: "We tested and purchased many of the bedding options that you can find out on the market because we were curious to see what really is the difference maker.

There is always this notion that a higher thread count equals better sheets. After testing materials and speaking with industry experts we found that thread count isn't as important as they want you to think. The majority of the high thread count sheets you find on the market are made up of additional cheap materials that beef up the thread count so you look at the label and think 'these must be good' and pay a premium.

The real secret to really soft sheets is the right fabric. Specifically high performance, double brushed smart microfiber. It was by far the softest material we could manufacture at a price that's affordable.

It's not just about being soft though, it's also temperature regulating, sweat wicking and hypoallergenic. It really helps with night sweats and you don't wake up with damp sheets like traditional cotton or linen alternatives," said Ben.



BENJI SLEEP: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

Q: So are you guys drop shipping?

A: “No, our team actually packages all of the orders and ship them directly from our warehouse. We like to control the supply chain from start to finish as much as possible, plus its more fun,” said Mark.

Q: How much is shipping?

A: “We offer FREE SHIPPING on orders over \$150 and an \$8 flat fee on orders under that. We wanted a product that we could stand behind that didn't have any hassle, that's why we offer a 100 night sleep trial. If you find they aren't for you, we'll send you a return label free of charge or ask you to donate them to a local charity or shelter. Like we mentioned before it's all about simplicity. Instead of shipping them all the way back to us, donating them allows someone else to enjoy them, who might really need them,” said Mark.



Q: What other bedding products does Benji offer?

A: “We have sheets, duvet cover sets, comforters, pillows, throw blankets and sleep masks. Basically everything you need above the mattress.

We have always listened to our customers and when they ask for something new, we work really hard to make it happen. Whenever we are launching a new product we follow the goldilocks principle, where the balance between price and quality is just right.

We're actually working on launching an amazing line of towels, but that's top secret information, I don't want to give to much away,” said Ben.

Q: Want to learn more?

A: You can check out Benji [here](#).

Benji

**LAURA
CARLSON**



From Sketches to Spaces:

A VALENTINE'S TRIBUTE TO THE COMMERCIAL INTERIORS INDUSTRY

DEAR COMMERCIAL INTERIORS INDUSTRY,

Looking back on my love for all things design and my entrance (formally 1993, Freshman, School of Design, Architecture, Art, and planning – University of Cincinnati) into this incredibly vast but tiny industry I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and admiration for the amazing journey that has brought me to you. From the moment I first laid eyes on the captivating world of design and interiors as a little girl, I knew that this was where my heart belonged. Today, as the Director of the Architectural Division at My Resource Library, I am honored to express my unwavering love and commitment to this industry that has shaped my life in countless ways.

My journey in the commercial interiors industry has been nothing short of extraordinary, fueled by a passion for design and a deep appreciation for the transformative power of beautiful spaces. From the earliest days of my career, I have been captivated by the intricate dance of form and function, texture and color, that defines the essence of interior design. Each project presents a unique canvas upon which to weave stories, evoke emotions, and create unforgettable experiences.

But beyond the allure of aesthetics, it is the people I have had the privilege of meeting along the way that truly make this industry so special. From fellow designers and architects to clients and collaborators, I have been inspired by the spirit of creativity, camaraderie, and innovation that permeates every corner of our community. The bonds forged through shared vision, mutual respect, and a relentless pursuit of excellence have become the cornerstone of my professional journey, enriching my life in ways I could have never imagined.

One of the greatest joys of my career has been the opportunity to collaborate on successful projects that bring dreams to life and exceed expectations. There is an indescribable thrill that comes from witnessing the seamless integration of design elements, the harmonious blending of styles, and the realization of a shared vision. Whether it's transforming a tired office space into a vibrant hub of productivity, or being a part of an educational design team that sparks innovation and ignites curiosity, the satisfaction of seeing our collective efforts come to fruition is truly unparalleled.

**LAURA CARLSON:
FROM SKETCHES TO SPACES**

In today's fast-paced world, technology has emerged as a powerful ally in our quest to push the boundaries of creativity and efficiency. I literally was a fifth year design student when AutoCAD became a thing - am constantly amazed by the transformative impact that technology has had on our industry. From advanced rendering software and virtual reality tools to cloud-based platforms like My Resource Library, technology has revolutionized the way we work, collaborate, and bring our ideas to life. By leveraging the latest technological advancements, we have unlocked new realms of possibility, streamlining processes, and unleashing our creative potential in ways that were once unimaginable. Not going to lie - I still will "sketch" out a thought on a napkin, back of an envelope, edge of a notebook.

As I reflect on my journey in the commercial interiors industry, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the opportunities, challenges, and experiences that have shaped my path. Each day brings new adventures, new insights, and new opportunities to make a difference in the world through the transformative power of design. It is a privilege to be part of an industry that celebrates diversity, fosters collaboration, and continuously pushes the boundaries of what is possible.

So, to the commercial interiors industry, I offer my

heartfelt thanks for welcoming me into your fold, for inspiring me to dream big, and for empowering me to make a meaningful impact through my work. Together, let us continue to push the boundaries of creativity, embrace the spirit of collaboration, and harness the power of technology to create spaces that elevate the human experience and enrich the world around us.

Commercial Interiors Industry, Will you be my Valentine?

XOXO,



LAURA CARLSON
*Director, Architectural Division
My Resource Library*



How repurposing spaces can boost your social and environmental performance

BY MUZO

Social and environmental performance in business refers to the extent to which a business operates in a way that benefits society and the environment, in addition to generating financial profits. This includes factors such as reducing carbon emissions, using sustainable materials and energy sources, treating employees fairly, and contributing positively to the communities in which the business operates. Companies that prioritize social and environmental performance often have a broader purpose beyond just maximizing profits, and are increasingly seen as important leaders in creating a more sustainable and equitable world.

Implementing adaptable spaces and repurposing real estate can play a vital role to achieving high social and environmental performance in several ways:

- **Reduced Environmental Footprint:** Repurposing rooms and implementing flexible spaces can reduce the environmental footprint of a business by minimizing the need for new construction and reducing energy consumption. By repurposing existing spaces, businesses can avoid the environmental impact of constructing new buildings, while also reducing the energy and resource consumption associated with new construction.
- **Increased Resource Efficiency:** Repurposing rooms and implementing adaptable spaces can also increase resource efficiency by making better use of room occupancy, existing spaces and resources. This can include using natural light instead of artificial lighting, utilizing energy-efficient appliances, and reducing the amount of water and other resources used in the building.

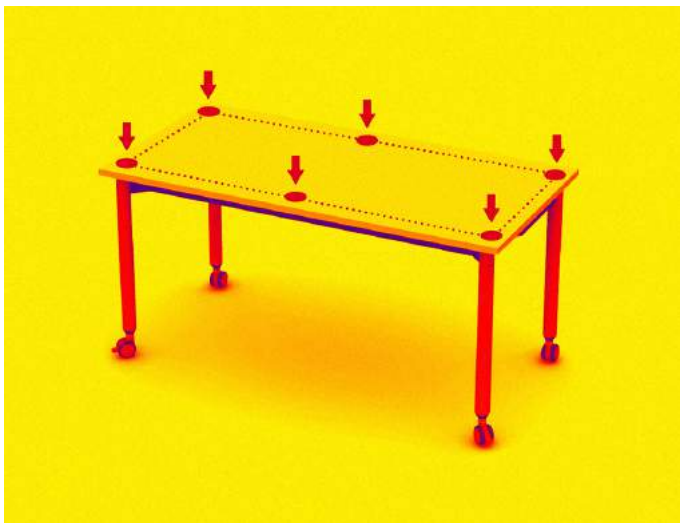
- **Improved Employee Experience:** Implementing flexible spaces can improve the experience of employees, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity. For example, providing employees with optional workspaces and breakout areas can foster collaboration and creativity, leading to better business outcomes.
- **Enhanced Social Responsibility:** Repurposing rooms can demonstrate a company's commitment to social responsibility and sustainability. This can help to build trust with customers, employees, and other stakeholders, and can contribute to a positive brand image.

Overall, implementing these ideas can help businesses to achieve high social and environmental performance by reducing their environmental impact, increasing resource efficiency, improving the employee experience, and enhancing their social responsibility.

**MUZO:
REPURPOSING SPACES TO BOOST SOCIAL
AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE**

Where do we start?

Repurposing any space starts with Identifying underutilized areas. It may be an office with low occupancy, a wide corridor with slow traffic or even a storage cupboard. Then we can explore a new purpose or ideally multiple purposes. The more adaptable a space is, the higher your social and environmental performance will be. Furniture design will determine the success of a multi purpose space. So we just need mobile furniture that can be reconfigured right? Wrong! The misconception about mobile 'flexible furniture' is that it's only role is to move around as and where needed. Let's look at the most overlooked equally important necessities:



Durability and Longevity

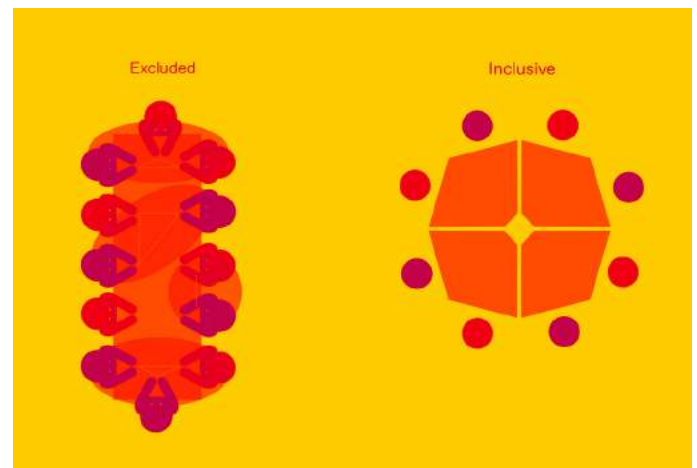
- People sit, lean and stand on tables. Does the under frame support all sides and all corners of the table top? With most flip top tables the answer is no, it's only supported by one central beam that runs down the center. Frames bend and break and then need to be replaced.
- Your table moves around on castors and you apply the break with your foot to keep it in place. It's the most abused and important component of any piece of mobile furniture and yet it's the most undervalued and remains an afterthought. In fact the castor should be the center of attention as its performance will dictate

the success or failure of any portable furniture design. Most casters are made from cheap plastic and can't handle the strain of daily use of different terrains required for a truly multifunctional space today. Castors break easily and require replacements time and time again which is counter productive to a higher environmental performance.

- How many people are required to safely operate the mechanics of a folding, mobile piece of furniture? Does it involve lifting a large amount of weight that risks injury to the user and damage to the furniture if dropped? Furniture that folds, moves and stacks often requires a procedure to follow in order to avoid damage and risk of injury. The better the design, the less we depend on human error.

Inclusivity and Psychology

- Does your furniture provide a clear line of sight between group work participants and help eliminate barriers for those of us with disabilities such as hard of hearing, impaired vision, restricted mobility?
- Without a clear line of sight, people in certain positions during collaborative work can be made to feel inferior and often lack the confidence to contribute their full potential.
- In terms of seating or standing positions, does everyone have their own equal elbow space and room for their knees under the table? In most cases no, somebody has the discomfort of having their knees pressed against the table legs. This also restricts the accessibility for wheelchair users.



MUZO: REPURPOSING SPACES TO BOOST SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE



Power Accessibility

Almost every space requires the ability to power technology. For years and to this day we still depend on sockets on walls, floors and extension cables. Unsightly plastic ports and trunks are integrated into beautiful wooden tops only to house several cables often tangled up with one another. So how can a space be truly repurposed and reconfigured if the power source can't move with the furniture? The answer is investing in wireless battery technology. Wireless power solutions can contribute to better environmental performance in the workplace in a number of ways:

- Wireless power solutions can eliminate the need for cords and cables, which often consume energy even when devices are not in use. By using rechargeable battery technology, for example, devices can be charged or powered only when needed, which can help reduce energy consumption and save money on electricity bills. Batteries can be charged overnight during less demanding consumption hours.
- When cords and cables become damaged or outdated, they often end up in landfills, contributing to e-waste. By using wireless power solutions, there are fewer cords and cables to dispose of, which can help reduce e-waste and its environmental impact.
- Reduced use of toxic materials: Some cords and cables contain toxic materials, such as PVC and lead, which can be harmful to the environment and human health. By using wireless power solutions, there are fewer cords and cables that contain these materials. Overall, wireless power can help create a more sustainable workplace by reducing energy consumption, e-waste, and the use of toxic materials. This can not only benefit the environment, but also lead to cost savings for the organization and promote a happy mobile workforce.

Here at Muzo our commitment to Sustainability and environmental responsibility is a significant part of the Muzo culture and our success. Environmental stewardship is integrated into all aspects of our business starting with the way we design our unique, robust multi-functional furniture products. We have a strict policy of only selecting sustainable materials and Fabrics. Via innovative design, Muzo provides products that stand the test of time. This product longevity keeps them out of landfill and means additional resources and processes are not used to produce replacements. At the end of their life, Muzo products can then be easily recycled.

Examples of our thinking include our globally successful Kite folding table system with wireless battery power capabilities and our unique dual locking castor which is so strong we offer a lifetime warranty!



muzo

A Love Letter to the Contract Industry

Delve Magazine is thrilled to present "A Love Letter to the Contract Design Industry," a heartfelt compilation that celebrates the unwavering devotion and boundless admiration shared by leading voices across the field. Through thought-provoking questions and candid reflections, we invited voices from all corners of the industry to share their deepest sentiments about what makes the contract design realm so special to them.

As you immerse yourself in the stories, insights, and anecdotes shared within these pages, we invite you to reflect on your own journey in the contract design industry. What drives your passion? What fuels your creativity? What inspires your dedication to shaping the world around you? Join us in celebrating the profound love that binds us together as we pay tribute to the remarkable industry that we proudly call home.

What initially drew you to the contract design industry and keeps you passionate today?

MICHELLE CHRISTIE

Design & Marketing
HPFi

Every opportunity is unique and full of challenges, creativity, innovation, and collaboration with other professionals.

ALLISON KAUSAR

VP of Marketing
Via Seating

What initially drew you to the contract design industry and keeps you passionate today?

Family (Chas is my Dad) and the incredible people of Via Seating have become just like family. I have the very best mentor in Nora Fenlon, our CCO, and she empowers me as a leader. We also have the best reps in the industry. I can't count how many things I've learned from our reps & how often I rely on them. They're great people & actively work with us to get the best product, brand & experience for our customers.

CHRISTY EVANGELISTA

Manager, Marketing & Communication
Stance Healthcare

During my adolescence, I randomly spent hours daydreaming and drawing the blueprints of homes. Although juvenile designs, these drawings featured expansive windows and huge interior gardens. As a child I seemingly understood, at some level, the importance of natural light and greenery. As I entered my twenties, my passion shifted toward yoga and overall well-being. Yoga provided a sense of calm during challenging times in early adulthood. It's almost poetic that my background in business marketing led me to the dynamic and passionate world of contract furniture, especially within the healthcare and behavioral health markets. This industry encapsulates everything I love: design, marketing, health, and well-being.

BRIAN NEVINS

CEO
Nevins

I was initially drawn to the contract design industry by its abundant opportunities and dynamic nature. Today, my passion is sustained by the exceptional community of professionals who inspire and motivate me. While the initial attraction was the abundance of opportunities, it is the remarkable people in the contract design industry that keeps my enthusiasm alive and thriving.

CHRIS DAWSON

Marketing Manager
LightCorp

I kind of fell into contract furniture by way of manufacturing, but what a happy accident that was. It's a privilege to work in an industry that has such a profound influence on the experience of work itself. We dedicate one third of our lifetime to the pursuit of work... shouldn't it be as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible?

SUSAN CLAUS

Director of Marketing
GMi Companies

I can't say I sought out the contract design industry, but instead it found me. As a marketer, working in a field that helps create motivating workspaces is fulfilling. One notable aspect of this industry is its impact on how people work and interact. Commercial furniture goes beyond just practical items; it fosters communication, collaboration, productivity, and well-being. Knowing that the products I promote contribute to improving individuals' daily experiences in professional settings drives my motivation.

CHRISTINA COUNTS

VP Strategy & Development
MiEN Environments

As a former classroom teacher, I was constantly adding tennis balls to combo desks to make them mobile. I was painting chalk paint on desk surfaces, bringing in bean bags and furniture to organize my classroom. I knew there had to be better design strategies and products to transform the physical space to support better learning outcomes and strengthen social emotional wellness.

What keeps me passionate today is the ongoing challenge and opportunity to contribute to educational environments. The landscape of education is constantly changing, with new pedagogical theories and technological advancements shaping the way we think about learning spaces. Being part of an industry that can directly influence the effectiveness of education by designing adaptable, inclusive, and inspiring furniture is incredibly rewarding. Every project is a chance to make a tangible difference in students' and educators' lives, and this potential for impact motivates me to push the boundaries of design and functionality.

The feedback loop from seeing our designs in use, learning from them, and then innovating further to meet the ever-changing needs of educational spaces is what keeps me engaged and excited about the future of educational furniture design.

BRANDON REAME

VP of Sales & Marketing
Enwork

The industry has such a great mix of caring people, innovation, and opportunity. Culture will always evolve, and it's exciting to design new products to meet emerging needs.

Can you share a memorable experience or project that made you fall in love with contract design?

MICHELLE CHRISTIE

Design & Marketing
HPFi

I have had several memorable projects based on my relationships with my clients for the past 20+ years. Some of favorite experiences was with a local Community College creating student common spaces full of color and energy. Even now I have the privilege working on a few renovations where I can let my imagination fly.

CHRIS DAWSON

Marketing Manager
LightCorp

After my first NeoCon in 2017 I was hooked! How lucky are we to have an industry that is so celebrated that it gets an event of this magnitude? The inspiration! The networking! The parties! It's the highlight of the year for me.

SUSAN CLAUS

Director of Marketing
GMi Companies

I find myself fortunate to collaborate with an exceptional team on projects that significantly ease the tasks of those involved in the search, specification, and sale of our products. A few notable projects stand as a testament to our commitment to innovation and efficiency. We successfully launched our CET extension, providing a seamless experience for users. Consolidating our brands under the flagship Ghent brand was another significant milestone, streamlining our market presence. Building our proprietary Product Builder tool from the ground up showcased our dedication to creating valuable tools for our users. Currently, we are immersed in crafting a new showroom experience in theMART. While large-scale initiatives optimize workflows, our team thrives on solving day-to-day challenges—finding efficient communication methods, enhancing user interfaces, and addressing user pain points. This iterative process keeps us engaged, motivated, and ensures our products stay user-friendly and effective in the market. Whether it's finding more efficient ways to communicate information, improving user interfaces for our tools, or addressing specific pain points reported by our users, every day brings a new set of challenges to tackle.

BRIAN NEVINS

CEO
Nevins

One memorable experience that solidified my passion for contract design was my first job at the Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta during the 1980s. It was an exhilarating time marked by extraordinary design concepts and the collaboration with forward-thinking individuals. Working with a team of creative minds on a project of such magnitude was not only professionally rewarding but also personally inspiring, igniting my love for contract design.

CHRISTY EVANGELISTA

Manager, Marketing &
Communication
Stance Healthcare

There isn't one particular project or experience. What I love about contract design is seeing how a designer can breathe life into a space with color, lighting, texture, and accessories, especially in challenging Behavioral Health spaces where design has more obstacles to overcome. Ultimately, what I love most is seeing how a designer specs furniture to help pull a space together. I'm always amazed to see a designer bring their vision to life!

BRANDON REAME

VP of Sales & Marketing
Enwork

Spending time with end-users is so impactful. Conversations with passionate educators, school faculty, and others inspire us to design products that help bring their visions to life.

ALLISON KAUSAR

VP of Marketing
Via Seating

Can't pick one! I love seeing the interaction between our production workers & the dealers and design groups that visit our factory. It means a lot to our production team when those groups show appreciation to them directly in person & it means a lot to those groups to see how passionate our workforce is.

CHRISTINA COUNTS

VP Strategy & Development
MIEN Environments

Reflecting on my experiences in educational furniture contract design, one project stands out as particularly transformative, RB Stall High School. Stall was a title one school beginning their journey into personalized learning.

The project involved extensive research into ergonomic design, material sustainability, and the psychological impact of space on learning outcomes. We focused on creating modular furniture that could be easily reconfigured by teachers and students to support different teaching methods and learning activities, from individual study to group projects and presentations. This adaptability was crucial in promoting a more collaborative and engaging learning experience.

One of the most memorable aspects of this project was the co-design process, where we involved teachers, students, and administrators in the design process. This participatory approach was enlightening; it provided invaluable insights into the daily challenges and needs within educational environments.

The culmination of this project was not just in delivering a product but in seeing the positive impact it had on the school community. Post-implementation feedback revealed significant improvements in student engagement, comfort, and overall satisfaction with their learning environments. Teachers reported that the new furniture design facilitated more dynamic teaching strategies and that students were more motivated and involved in their learning process.

This experience was transformative for me; it transcended the boundaries of traditional furniture design and ventured into shaping the future of education. It underscored the profound influence that thoughtfully designed educational spaces can have on teaching and learning. This project made me fall in love with educational furniture contract design, as it embodies the potential to make tangible differences in the lives of educators and learners by creating environments that are not only functional but also inspirational.

A LOVE LETTER TO THE CONTRACT INDUSTRY

How do you see contract design positively impacting society or the world, & how does that influence your affection for the industry?

CHRIS DAWSON

Marketing Manager
LightCorp

In this post-pandemic era, we have such a unique opportunity to rebuild the experience of work to better support the individual. In the past 4 years, we have learned so much about ourselves, our jobs, what matters most to us, and what we require to do our best work. It's such an exciting time for this industry to rewrite some of the rules for the better!

BRIAN NEVINS

CEO
Nevins

The positive impact of contract design on society is profound, as it maintains meaningful connections and offers valuable insights to enhance people's lifestyles. The thoughtful and strategic approach to design fosters a sense of balance in how individuals interact with their surroundings. Personally, this aspect of the industry inspires me to cultivate connections and contribute to a harmonious environment.

MICHELLE CHRISTIE

Design & Marketing
HPFi

As design, technology, society, and global awareness are becoming intertwined the more tools and products available to create the unique spaces that relates our client as a whole and the individuals within.

ALLISON KAUSAR

VP of Marketing
Via Seating

Reinforcing real ergonomics that actually contribute to human health & wellness, by questioning green washing & answering with real impact sustainability initiatives and by being a leading industry for employing & promoting a truly diverse workforce as a whole.

CHRISTY EVANGELISTA

Manager, Marketing &
Communication
Stance Healthcare

Research has indicated that layout, design and structure has a positive effect on patient outcomes in healthcare spaces. I love the passion and creativity of contract design, and that, as an industry we are always looking for solutions and striving for the best outcomes of a space. For Behavioral Health facilities specifically, layout and design has come a long way from the institutional look and feel to one that promotes healing through safety, choice, aesthetics and comfort. I'm proud to be part of an industry where the dignity of patients is front and center, and the ultimate goal is to support patients on their healing journey.

BRANDON REAME

VP of Sales & Marketing
Enwork

The needs and preferences of users will always change with an evolving culture. Our industry is exciting because the foundation is all about connecting and inspiring people the way technology and other solutions cannot.

CHRISTINA COUNTS

VP Strategy & Development
MiEN Environments

In my work with contract furniture in the educational sector, I directly observe its significant impact on learning environments!

Well-designed educational furniture can significantly improve the physical learning environment by providing students with comfortable, flexible seating and workspaces that support a variety of learning styles and activities. This, in turn, can increase engagement, concentration, and overall academic performance.

By taking into account diverse needs, including those of students with disabilities, educational furniture design can make classrooms more inclusive and accessible. Adjustable desks, chairs designed for various body types, and furniture that accommodates different learning scenarios ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and participate.

Ergonomically designed furniture supports students' physical health by reducing strain and fatigue, thereby enhancing their well-being. Moreover, materials and construction methods that prioritize safety and durability contribute to a secure learning environment, minimizing the risk of injuries.

The focus on sustainability in educational contract furniture design promotes the use of eco-friendly materials and manufacturing processes. This not only reduces the environmental impact but also teaches students the importance of sustainability and responsible consumption.

My affection for the industry is deeply rooted in the understanding that educational contract furniture design plays a crucial role in shaping the future of education. It's about much more than creating functional and aesthetically pleasing furniture; it's about contributing to an environment that nurtures the intellectual, physical, and emotional development of students. Being part of an industry that has such a direct impact on educational experiences and outcomes is both motivating and rewarding.

It underscores the importance of thoughtful, user-centered design in creating positive social change, and it drives my commitment to innovating and improving educational spaces.

A LOVE LETTER TO THE CONTRACT INDUSTRY

Can you describe a moment when you felt deep pride or satisfaction in your work in contract design?

CHRISTY EVANGELISTA

Manager, Marketing & Communication
Stance Healthcare

I have pride in all that I do at Stance. I enjoy bringing products to market that are comfortable, innovative, and safe for patients, family and caregivers in healthcare and behavioral health spaces. Our mission at Stance is improving lives by design, which goes beyond the furniture we manufacture but is rooted in the culture where our day-to-day work allows us to give back to the industry and the community.

MICHELLE CHRISTIE

Design & Marketing
HPFi

I had this moment just recently. I was working with one of our sales representatives on a new project thanks to the praise from a previous client to the new client. I like feeling appreciated for what all I can bring to the table.

ALLISON KAUSAR

VP of Marketing
Via Seating

Designing & launching out our custom Spec It build & quote software with a positive reception from our reps.

BRANDON REAME

VP of Sales & Marketing
Enwork

Every year at NeoCon! Connecting with industry friends and colleagues that I've known for a decade or more brings great satisfaction.

CHRISTINA COUNTS

VP Strategy & Development
MiEN Environments

It is too hard to choose just one project or moment that I felt a sense of deep pride and satisfaction. I feel this way for every project that we complete! My favorite memories are always when we unveil new spaces and seeing the students' and teachers' excitement and hearing their positive reactions firsthand is deeply gratifying.

But the moment that truly encapsulated my pride and satisfaction was when a teacher shared how the new design had transformed their teaching experience.

They spoke of increased student engagement, more dynamic and interactive lessons, and an overall improvement in class participation and academic performance. The teacher emphasized that the thoughtfully designed environment had not only enhanced the quality of education but had also fostered a stronger sense of community and belonging among the students.

This feedback was a powerful affirmation of the impact of contract design on educational environments. It underscored the importance of our work in shaping spaces that not only meet functional needs but also enrich the educational journey.

Knowing that our project had made such a positive difference in the lives of students and educators alike filled me with a profound sense of accomplishment and purpose.

BRIAN NEVINS

CEO
Nevins

Reflecting on a moment of deep pride in my work in contract design, I vividly recall our involvement in the reconstruction of Norwest Bank in Minneapolis during the early 90s. Being entrusted with such a significant project not only showcased our team's expertise but also allowed us to contribute to the revitalization of a crucial institution. The satisfaction derived from playing a pivotal role in reshaping a prominent space further solidified my passion for contract design and its tangible impact on the built environment.

SUSAN CLAUS

Director of Marketing
GMI Companies

At NeoCon 2022, we unveiled our consolidated brand in a big, bold, graphic way. The milestone was a significant marker in Ghent's 45 year history. The way people work has changed and with that comes changes to how our partners want to interact with us. It was the perfect place to make the big announcement with NeoCon constantly pushing what is possible with design. The launch included a new showroom experience featuring bold colors, larger than life graphics, and award-winning products. This set up our ability to increase our presence in 2024, with yet another new showroom experience, showcasing our offering that helps people work better, together.

Getting to Know The Supply Room



B'More Design Expo hosted by the MD Coalition for Interior Designers. L to R: Marianne Lane, John Flynn, David Posten, Linda Kauffman, Will Tallent, Kim Coleman, Ann Bilbey

The Supply Room is the second largest independent furniture and office supply dealer in the United States. We started in 1951, and we are now third generation owned and operated. In addition to The Supply Room, we are proud to include Rudolph Supply, Source Office & Technology, Douron and Office Images as part of our family of companies. In addition to Commercial Interiors, we have a strong focus on the SLED markets.

Locations:

Ashland, VA
Elkridge, MD
Virginia Beach, VA

Profile Contributor:

Kim Coleman,
Director Furniture Services

DEALER FEATURE



Q&A with The Supply Room

What drove or influenced your decision to go Pro?

We wanted to enable our library to be accessible by all of our sales reps, regardless of whether they were working from the office or remotely. In addition, it gave us a much more reliable and easy way to communicate our Internal Information so it was accessible by our team. The Project Tool has been an extra added feature that is extremely helpful.

How do your team members use MRL?

Our sales reps are using MRL as an alternative to dragging multiple binders and brochures to a customer. They are sharing projects with customers and prospects to act as Idea Starters and using it to present our complete offering of items within a certain category.

MRL is used most by our design team to locate the

right product for the job. They use it as a reference and inspiration tool. The Enhanced Search feature and Internal Information sections are critical for this team.

We have begun using MRL for our project closeouts, providing our customers with everything they will need in terms of project information, warranties, care instructions, installation photos. It is definitely considered a value-add to our customers. Thank you to Nicole Farragher, MRL Client Support Coordinator, for the idea.

We have created small MRL projects to highlight some of the additional items we offer such as Artwork, Ergonomics and Accessories, and Workplace Wellness. Each sales rep has added these links to their signature. MRL's analytics allows us to see who has clicked on the links, giving us the ability to follow up and maximize on those opportunities.

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

Q&A with The Supply Room



Designers Ann Bilbey (L) and Ruby Vaught (R) at our 12 days of Christmas (Ugly Sweater Day) Holiday Luncheon.

The MRL Pro Dealer's Enhanced Search feature streamlines our operations by enabling our team to locate specific items as well as alternatives that can be offered in bid situations or when we are looking for something unique. This process is much more efficient than going through individual binders or websites. We have the ability to discover new products and bring on new vendors that we may not have been exposed to in the past. The Inspiration galleries allow our salespeople to provide customers with examples of vignettes to help the customer identify their specific design aesthetic and functionality. It fosters greater communication between the customer, the sales rep and the design team so that we are providing an end solution that perfectly hits the mark.

MRL Pro's Internal Information section has been instrumental in keeping track of all of the discounts, freight, spiffs, etc. It allows me to easily maintain our specific information in a secure place that our teams can access from anywhere at any time.

Nicole Farragher, our MRL Client Support Coordinator, has provided in-depth, user-friendly training sessions for each of our groups. Nicole's responsiveness and willingness to share tips for navigating the projects tab as well as templates has enhanced the end product that we share with our customers, making us a more valuable resource.

We have been using MRL Pro since 2021. Like most businesses, we have adopted a more hybrid model for some of our teams. MRL has allowed our salespeople to have a full, more complete and updated library at their fingertips, that can be shared with their customer at any time during the sales cycle. We have been able to re-focus our design libraries to emphasize more fabrics and finishes as we no longer need to maintain so many binders. As we continue to grow our business, we are utilizing MRL in more creative ways to communicate with our customers and provide information more quickly and professionally. Our commitment to excellence is evident in the value-added elements that enhance every aspect of our service.

**Furniture &
Interiors**
by **The Supply Room**

Celebrating Camaraderie and Appreciation: The Bandon Boondoggle Experience



In the heart of winter, amidst the misty Oregon coast, Dave Eaton, the visionary behind Eaton Group Reps, orchestrated an unforgettable event that transcended the ordinary. The Bandon Boondoggle, a four-day golf extravaganza at the renowned Bandon Dunes, wasn't just about hitting the greens; it was a celebration of camaraderie, appreciation, and the enduring bonds between clients, manufacturer partners, and friends.

While the term "boondoggle" may suggest wastefulness, those who embarked on this journey can attest to its profound significance. Picture this: traversing the breathtaking Bandon Dunes golf courses – Bandon Dunes, Bandon Trails, Old MacDonald, Pacific Dunes – all nestled among the top 10 golf courses in the United States. Yet, it's not merely about the prestige; it's about the experience. Walking nine miles a day, no golf carts in sight, challenging oneself on some of the most demanding courses – it's a testament to resilience, determination, and the sheer joy of the game.

But let's not forget the unsung heroes of the Bandon Boondoggle – the caddies. Through rain and cold, they stood by our sides, offering invaluable guidance as we navigated the rugged terrain. Their dedication mirrored the spirit of this event – unwavering support and commitment to excellence.



The Bandon Brotherhood is an interesting mix of contract furniture professionals that come together to enjoy each others company but gain industry insights and a network like none other. I could count on these guys in so many more ways than just some professional favor. I am honored to be a part of it.

- Mike Blessinger, VP Sales and Marketing, Indiana Furniture



The gathering at Bandon always strengthens existing industry relationships and provides opportunities to build new friendships with manufacturers, dealers and reps. Of course, that could happen anywhere, but Dave Eaton's event being small group, invitation only, is one of a kind & always a blast. - Vic Shay, 360-OS

The 24 individuals who braved the elements – from rain-soaked fairways to pre-dawn warm-up sessions on the driving range – embodied the true essence of the Bandon Boondoggle. Led by this year's co-chairmen, Dave Eaton and Doug Sackville, each swing, each putt, was not just a shot at glory but a moment of shared adventure and camaraderie.

At its core, the Bandon Boondoggle is a gesture of gratitude, a tradition started by Dave Eaton to express appreciation to his clients and manufacturer partners. The guest list evolves with each passing year, but the spirit remains unchanged – an intimate gathering, by invite only, where bonds are forged and memories are made.



This year, My Resource Library was honored to be among the esteemed guests, alongside a distinguished roster including:

- Andy McLain - *McLain Group in Washington DC*
- Anthony Pepe - *Director of Business Development with Pacific WRO*
- Bill Falk - *Retired Montgomery Partners, Napa CA*
- Byron Smith - *V.P. in Charge of Keeping Danez Happy, Salem SC*
- Charlie Kelly Jr. - *Owner People Signs, Allentown PA*
- Dave Kuntz - *Retired President American Office, Baltimore*
- Doug Sackville - *Retired President COI, Seattle WA*
- Frank Cross - *King of Montana*
- Jared Butterworth - *Owner CDA Interiors, Missoula MT*
- Joe Mathieu - *National Sales Manager, COE, Miami FL*
- Larry Rivard - *Director Sales, Sit On It, Orange County CA*
- Lowell Gordon - *President, The Creative Office, Olympia WA*
- Mark Canez - *Managing Director, PeopleSpace, Portland OR*
- Mike Blessinger - *VP Sales Indiana Furniture, Holland IN*
- Nathan Weber - *VP Sales Office World, Eugene OR*
- Richard Russell - *Owner, Russell Ventures, Acworth GA*
- Rob Kirkbride - *Editor and Chief Office Insight, Grand Rapids MI*
- Scott Brewer - *General Manager, The Creative Office, Olympia WA*
- Sean Comer - *Owner Workplace Logic, Seattle WA*
- Thomas White - *Sales Manager Nu Idea, Sumter, SC*
- Vic Shay - *VP Contract Furniture 360 Office Solutions Montana*

Each individual brought their unique perspective and shared in the collective experience of the Bandon Boondoggle.

**INDUSTRY EVENT:
THE BANDON BOONDOGGLE EXPERIENCE**



"The hype surrounding Bandon and its reputation as one of the top five courses in the US is absolutely justified. For years, I've heard about the legendary trip organized by Dave Eaton from the Eaton Group. It's been a fixture on my bucket list, and although snagging an invite isn't easy, I now understand why. Nobody wants to miss out on an experience like this, and after finally receiving an invitation due to a last-minute dropout, I eagerly accepted.

The camaraderie among the 24 attendees was unmatched, with a wealth of industry experience spanning dealers, reps, manufacturers, and writers, and of course the biggest Teddy Bear of all, Jeff from MRL. Only those within the furniture industry can truly appreciate the joy of bonding over conversations about furniture, rounds of golf, and the exchange of stories.

In our fast-paced and often chaotic industry, moments like these remind us of the importance of connection and shared experiences. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Dave Eaton for curating such an exceptional group and organizing an unforgettable trip." - Andy McLain, McLain Group

As the rain-soaked fairways fade into memory and the echoes of laughter linger, we reflect on the profound impact of this event. It's not just about the golf; it's about the connections forged, the memories shared, and the appreciation felt. The Bandon Boondoggle may be labeled as a "project" or "activity" by some, but to those who experienced its magic, it's a testament to the power of friendship, gratitude, and the joy of living life to the fullest.



"Another Bandon Boondoggle and already looking forward to next year. Why? Well, there is golf. World class golf! What else? The people are really the most important. 24 guys from all aspects of the furniture industry enjoying stories both good and bad. The older guys talking to young guys about the current challenges and assisting in any way. Young guys listening and thankful for the advice. How about the sincere hugs among the guys that tell us we are all important to each other? Finally, I believe that any of us could send a message of need to another, and assistance would be swift and heartfelt. The next Boondoggle is on my calendar. " - Doug Sackville, retired owner of COI

**REP FEATURE:
MARC SHORE + ASSOCIATES**



Getting To Know Marc Shore + Associates

*Marc Shore + Associates have been proudly serving Florida for over 20 years!
As your local Florida furniture representative, we pride ourselves on taking care of all of your needs.
Specializing in office and commercial furniture, we are ready to fulfill all of your business needs.
www.marcshoreassociates.com*

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

A: Marc Shore began his furniture career installing and repairing products his Dad sold. He found himself spending his summers working in the industry, working in some of the finest furniture factories in America. He built furniture and learned the Furniture Industry from the ground up. Eventually, he also began representing furniture manufacturers under his Dad's watchful eye.

In 1992 he took a chance and moved his family to Florida to help Howard Shore Associates expand their sales in the South East and by 2001, he founded Marc Shore Associates. We pride ourselves on our reputation of being one of the most respected and successful rep groups in the country. We credit our success to our amazing customers and manufacturer partners, most of whom are personal friends and family.

Q: How has the company changed over the years?

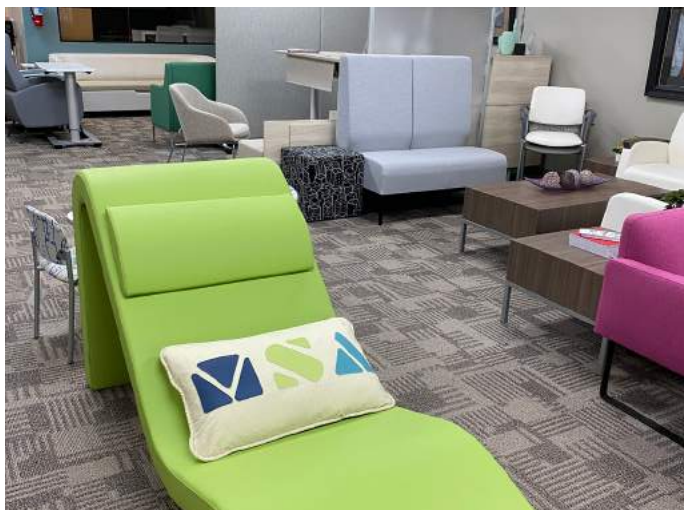
A: We have come a long way since our humble beginnings in 2001. Marc Shore was a one man show and covered the entire state of FL on his own. He spent his days on the road calling on Dealers, Designers, and End Users; and his nights at Motel 6. Eventually, Marc's wife Donna came on board to help Marc with customer service. Now, we have a total of 4 outside sales reps and 2 in house customer service team members to cover the state.

A major shift occurred over the last few years due to the Covid pandemic. Thanks to resources like MRL, we were able to stay in contact other reps and industry leaders throughout the country to brainstorm ideas on how to keep the industry moving forward. Thanks to these connections,

**REP FEATURE:
MARC SHORE + ASSOCIATES**

we were able to grow as a company and learned how to better utilize some great new tools that were available to us. The power of social media became immediately apparent to us, and we embraced it. While most of the country was shut down, we were able to utilize virtual product shows to our advantage. We also were one of the few to do pop up shows in parks and parking lots. Designers and end users loved these individualized, in person shows! These pop up shows became very popular and we continue to utilize them as often as we can.

Another major change has been the technology changes over the years. Cell phones and Computers have allowed us to accomplish things in the field we never thought possible. Thanks to online specification programs and the MRL, we can locate, share, and quote products with lead times, discounts, renderings, and detailed spec information in just a few minutes. We have even seen the use of AI chat programs used in response to bids and customer inquiries. Because of this, customers demand quicker response times and more support from the rep side of the industry than ever before, which we are happy to provide.



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

A: There is no single secret to our success, it's more of a thousand little things, starting with every member of our team showing up every day. We really believe it is the little things that make the big differences: responding to emails and voicemails quickly along with showing up in person to meet with dealers, designs and end users. Another secret is our world class customers service! Pavia Lehman is our Customer Service Leader and is our "eye in the sky" while Jake, Dennis, Marc and Louie are on the road making calls. Pavia is a huge reason why we are able to do what we do. We are always happy to bring out samples and present our products. We really want to become a resource for our customers. Even if they are needing a product we don't have, our customers are comfortable calling us and asking for advice and we can help provide information to point them in the right direction.



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

A: The most exciting part about being a furniture rep is the challenging and creative work environments that comes with helping people achieve their design goals. Every single day provides a new challenge and new opportunities. The excitement comes from building great relationships and knowing that the customers are extremely happy with the end results.

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

A: The Contract furniture industry is constantly evolving and, even after 22 years as an independent rep group, we are not immune to these changes. Increased use of technology will continue to revolutionize the industry. With the rise of virtual design and sales tools such as CET, online product builders, and AI programs such as chatGPT; we will need to learn to embrace and use this new tech if we want to continue to be leaders in the industry. We strive to stay ahead of the curve in marketing ourselves and our manufacturers by using these tools as we continue to learn about new ones.

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

A: Persistent



KEEPING CONNECTED

In a world where staying connected is more important than ever, we're continuously inspired by the creative ways our Rep Group partners foster and maintain relationships.

In the "Keeping Connected" section of Delve Magazine, we'll showcase snapshots of their innovative approaches to client engagement and team building.

Join us in exploring these strategies that emphasize the enduring value of strong connections. We hope you find this feature both informative and inspiring.

If you have photos of an event you'd like to share with us, please send it to industrynews@myresourcelibrary.com.



Pringle-Ward

Pringle-Ward is a NYC based independent manufacturer representative organization who has been selling commercial office furnishings since 1992. We are located in The NY Design Center and cover the 5 boroughs, Long Island, lower NY State and Northern New Jersey.

Photos from attending Pantone Event in December.

pringleward.com

KEEPING CONNECTED



“The Professional Development team of the IIDA South Florida Chapter (SFC) recently organized the Furnish to Flourish event as part of the Synergy Summit last week. We extend our gratitude to The Bierman Group for hosting and to our panelists for fostering an engaging dialogue, contributing to the success of the event.” - Erica Orofino via LinkedIn

The Bierman Group

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

thebiermangroup.com/

KEEPING CONNECTED



Danika & Co

Currently representing ancillary furniture, acoustical lighting, wall and ceiling solutions / textiles and demountable glass wall line.

“We love hosting our designers in the Unika Vaev showroom for CEU’s and tours. Thanks to the team at Faulkner Design.”
- Danika Leeks

danikaandco.com



EPIC trends

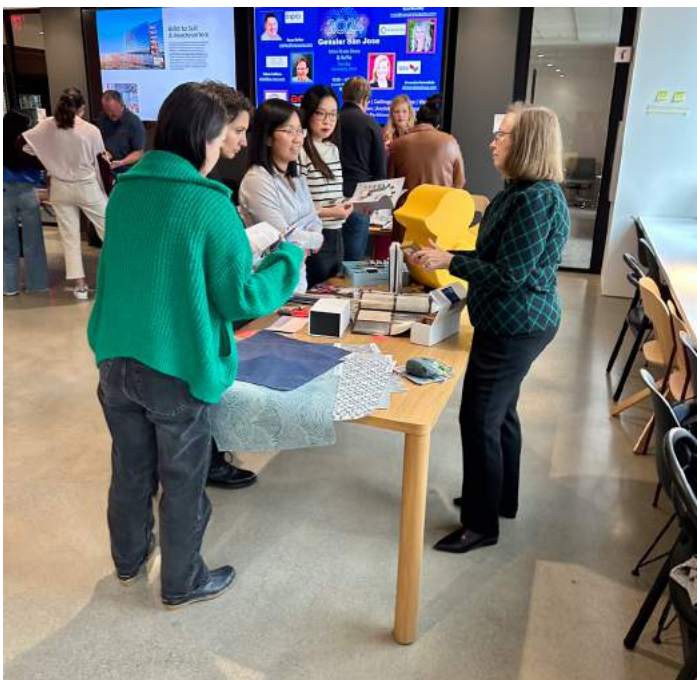
EPIC trends proudly wrapped up our second annual Bringing Christmas Home campaign this past Christmas. Over 200 trees were donated to industry professionals to participate in a decorating contest showcasing their design skills and EPIC creativity in various categories. The entries blew us away, and choosing the top in each category was hard, but the spirit of Christmas really took hold when the trees were delivered to CHLA, Orangewood, Laura’s house, Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation Nevada. Where patients and residents got to take them home to add a little cheer to the holiday!

EPIC is a multi-rep design firm headquartered in Southern California with operations in Hawaii and Southern Nevada with a focus on education, healthcare, hospitality, and contract furniture.

epictrends.net



KEEPING CONNECTED



Debra Calkins Associates

Kim Campbell and Deb Calkins of Debra Calkins Associates recently showcased new products from Arcadia, Encore, Mayer Fabrics, Modern Nature Design, Parcel Furniture, Segis, and SIXINCH at Gensler locations in both Oakland and San Jose, as well as at Perkins + Will in San Francisco. Additionally, DCA actively participated in exciting events, including the IIDA Design Expo in Silicon Valley and Sacramento, along with the See and Be Seen Healthcare event in Oakland.

dca-reps.com



delve^{MRU}
FEB 2024V47

Published by
MYRESOURCELIBRARY.COM