



Need For Green Work Environments and Furniture That Supports Sustainable Efforts

Green Work Environments

Green commercial building practices and sustainable design aren't just good for the planet; they're very good for the workplace. Companies that encourage environmentally responsible design, purchase sustainable furniture and implement green workplace programs report considerable benefits. Studies cite improved employee morale, improved collaboration as well as increased employee engagement as top benefits.

These findings also indicate "green" workplaces are particularly attractive to younger workers. "These potential employees check the background of organizations and look for green initiatives as important characteristics of future employers."

Green Furniture

Why bother with green furniture? What environmental harm could office furniture possibly cause? Not much while you're sitting there, talking on the phone. But furniture manufacturing in the past has been a problematic source of emissions. And in this eco-conscious world, there is growing consideration given to what happens to furniture after it fulfills its useful life.

Office Concepts, the leading Steelcase Office Furniture Dealership in Chicago, recognizes the need for green work environments and is committed to helping customer's space plan and select furniture which supports sustainable efforts and meets environmental initiatives. Our product knowledge, experience and access to the best research as well as our active involvement with the United States Green Building Council keeps us on the leading edge in providing environmentally preferable solutions.

What constitutes green furniture? Many manufacturers feature products made from recycled materials and reclaimed wood: others boast low-chemical content or emissions. Steelcase's approach embraces five phases: the materials that are used, production methods, transportation, use and end-of use.

Sustainability is at the heart of every product made by Steelcase, the world's leading manufacturer of office furniture. Steelcase and its subsidiaries have more cradle-cradle certified products than any company in any industry. What is C2C (cradle-cradle) certified? "The C2C process analyzes component materials against 19 human and environmental health criteria. In addition to materials assessment, C2C measures four other sustainability criteria including energy use, water stewardship, recyclability, as well as the manufacturer's record of social responsibility. Together, Office Concepts and Steelcase help organizations make the best choices regarding green furniture.

How to Choose Green Furniture?

Furniture accounts for the largest surface area in the interior environment. This represents a significant investment financially and in terms of selecting a style and design. Today, many government agencies, universities and corporations make environmental considerations a priority as they develop furniture standards. For example, the Denver office of the EPA is moving to a new green building this year, and developed a set of environmental criteria for the shift. Among other things, furniture must meet the certification standards of Greenguard, a nonprofit that evaluates products' effects on indoor air quality.



In addition, the EPA is requiring work-surface substrate (the base material beneath the laminated finish on desks and tables) be made from non-wood agricultural fiber, wood used elsewhere be FSC-certified, and laminated surfaces be adhered using water-based or bio-based glues.

When considering furniture purchases consider Steelcase's Life Cycle Thinking approach to product design and development - one that considers the potential environmental impact of all stages of a product's life – from material selections to end of use strategies.

Benefits of Green Work Environments and Green Furniture

Work in today's office environment is first and foremost a social activity. In order to fully support effectiveness and efficiency we must understand that financial, social and environmental issues are interdependent.

By applying the LEED principle of "loose fit and long life" (flexibility and adaptability) to an office interior, organizations can realize the full spectrum of sustainable design benefits: social, environmental and economic. Features of a green space are open floor plans to promote lots of natural light, and better air circulation. A typical layout has employee workstations next to windows, with meeting rooms, washrooms, storage areas and elevators located in the building's core. Ideally, the floor plate is long and narrow, so all workstations can be accommodated close to natural light sources. Collaboration happens more readily in this kind of open workplace environment and creates more engaged workplaces, a design bonus that appeals to organizations.

Another economic advantage of applying "loose fit, long life" to clients' projects is a reduction in floor space requirements. The more specific and compartmentalized an office design, the more floor space it tends to require. Since every square foot of built space has a cost, reducing a building's size brings immediate financial benefits.

With everything we do, Office Concepts and Steelcase consider the impact of our work on the environment.

For more information please visit www.officeconcepts.com or www.steelcase.com.
