



Office Solutions 2010

FLEXIBILITY IN FURNITURE SYSTEMS CREATES OFFICE HARMONY

by Laurie Jones

With 2010 shaping up to be an exciting year in Canada, the office furniture industry has a collection of products ready to meet the challenges ahead.

Teknion Corp. introduced its W/R/S — a new Wall Rail System at NeoCon 2009 to rave reviews. Wall-mounted and easily reconfigurable, W/R/S supports work surfaces and storage, includes a broad fascia program, and provides power and data management capability.

"Walls, by nature, tend to be limiting in that they create boundaries by defining space. In contrast, our new wall rail system provides users with the freedom to create highly functional and visually stimulating work environments in these very same spaces," says Martin Chenette, Teknion's industrial design supervisor on the W/R/S project. "W/R/S links architecture to furniture — simply."

Unique to W/R/S are its frame options. In addition to a full-height frame, W/R/S offers above- or below-work surface heights. Applications can also be modified with add-on frame kits as requirements change.

Simo Corp. has just launched its IMT (Interactive Media Technology), a state-of-the-art office system that encompasses an attractive piece of furniture with conferencing technology. Reaction from the corporate world has been positive. "We have IMTs specified in a law firm in Calgary,"

Depending on the size of the table, the trough can accommodate up to eight individual technology plates. Each consists of four slots configured with two power duplexes and four telecom plates or four telecom plates. Telecom plates come in 25 standard configurations or can be customized.

The PRINCETON™ desk line from Global offers a unique design that wraps around the user on three sides, with a standard desk, side table over a lateral file cabinet, and a bench on the third section that doubles as extra storage. With a hint of the cubicle style of past office designs, PRINCETON is fully modular and almost every piece is freestanding. This desk system also has esthetically pleasing additions including tempered glass shelves and rolling glass doors.

Steelcase Inc. has introduced its mediascape™ that can now host high-definition (HD) videoconferencing systems, enabling distributed teams to view content and each other simultaneously. mediascape, coupled with HD videoconferencing, boosts collaboration by helping teams connect.

As businesses work to reduce costs, travel is often being replaced with high-tech tools like HD videoconferencing. Most HD videoconferencing systems tend to be hosted in dedicated rooms that are costly, serve only one purpose and are more focused on the technology than on the people and the meeting experience. Steelcase sought to create a solution that could deliver an HD videoconference with improved collaboration and a space that supports user needs beyond HD videoconferencing. To accomplish this goal, Steelcase turned to its mediascape solution that merges furniture with technology. mediascape can now host the HD videoconferencing system of a client's choice within the mediascape setting. HD video content switches automatically to a mediascape display screen through the use of proprietary firmware designed to auto-sense when a high-definition videoconference system is connected. This level of simplicity builds on the "open. connect. share." mantra of the mediascape product line.

Herman Miller's award-winning Sense made its debut in 2009 at the NeoCon World's Trade Fair in Chicago. A modular and free-standing offering, Sense is unique in that its assembly is tool-free. Its components lock, click or snap into place, which makes it a flexible platform that can be built, disassembled and re-assembled easily. Centred by a mono-beam structure, Sense's parts connect intuitively to create an array of layouts, from freestanding tables to 120-degree clusters for teams.

Sense also accommodates linear planning applications, which provide more translucent divisions of space. A lower cost alternative to traditional systems workstations, its light scale, low height and numerous work surface configurations combine for comfortable, open plan work stations, and a reduced footprint. Katie Lane, Herman Miller's director of product management, says, "An extended vocabulary means Sense can be applied to all areas of the office. The fun, modern finishes and simple frame structure of Sense allows for facility-wide application." ■

says Verna Leask, president of Valadar Design in Partnership Inc. "They want this unit because it changes the location of where the white board, audiovisual and media screen has to be placed. There was no special wiring to install as it can be run through standard data and communication outlets. It is seen as a furniture item rather than equipment fixed on the wall. We can move it from room to room easily, so there is flexibility."

A Crestron Panel Unit that operates motorized blinds and the lights in the room can be installed on the desktop of the IMT credenza. Minimal training is required for the end users, which saves costs on manpower. The IMT can be applied to any business that uses teleconferencing for presentations. It can also be used to watch television, making it useful for both commercial and residential applications.

Global Total Office has two new products that are attracting attention. Its Foundation™ desk system acknowledges that meeting and conference rooms are multipurpose spaces. "We want people to choose the technology solution that is right for them," says Rick Galbraith, vice-president of sales. "We have a full range of pre-configured power monument inserts or a built-in technology trough that offers virtually limitless configuration opportunities."



Left: Simo Corp.'s Interactive Media Technology. Above: mediascape™ from Steelcase.