

5 Design Trends That Were Everywhere at NeoCon 2019

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By Megy Karyde s



Business casual is taking on a whole new meaning in today's workplace. Like our workforce, our physical workplace is expected to be flexible, productive, well-connected, and mindful of our health and wellness. Those trends were definitely reinforced at this year's NeoCon, the contract furnishing industry's trade show that hosts more than 50,000 design professionals eager to see the latest ideas and introductions that will shape the built environment of tomorrow.

We've consistently been seeing a cultural shift from the traditional hierarchical office setups in favor of a more egalitarian atmosphere. From the continued need to accommodate privacy in open floor plans to being mindful of the health of our spaces, today's workspaces require flexibility and creativity. Here, AD PRO shares the biggest trends we spotted among the 500 companies and thousands of lines that showed at Chicago's the Mart in June.

New Developments in Ergonomics

Businesses realize that in order to attract key talent, including wellness-oriented millennials, employee health needs to be considered. This includes healthier office spaces. As one now expects to find in the contract space, there were plenty of ergonomic chairs and desks that prevent slouching and pain often caused by hours spent at a desk or looking at mobile devices.





Davis Furniture's Muse bar stool.

To accommodate a number of workspaces and workstyles, including the need for impromptu breakout spaces, several companies introduced dynamic seating solutions, including a fair number of stools. Humanscale introduced its Alto stool, designed by legendary designer Don Chadwick, who is known for his work in ergonomics and seating designs. Davis Furniture debuted the Muse bar stool by designer duo Jehs+Laub, a sophisticated sculptural barstool whose silhouette embraces the body of its sitter.

The new Slade chair from Frasch is an acoustical piece made using recycled water bottles. Inspired by Santa's sleigh, this version features wheels that allow it to easily be moved. Lighting is getting into the charging space, too. The Atlas Light Pendant, designed by Most Modest and available through Hightower, features a USB port to charge digital devices.



The Atlas Light Pendant, designed by Most Modest.

Natural Inspirations

Along with the real thing, nature made a strong showing in the form of leaf-shaped acoustic solutions, moss-hued products, and similarly green-minded products.

Slalom's OASIS features a palm tree-like sculpture complete with recycled P.E.T. felt leaves. The structure can be easily moved to create acoustic shelters and includes the integration of plug-ins such as tables and charging units for electronic devices. Acoustic design company Luxxbox made its NeoCon debut this week with its Waffle Leaves and other noise-management tools. The freestanding and leaf-shaped Waffle Leaves are designed to help increase productivity by lessening noise. Snowsound revealed its Botanica design by Mario Trimarchi. Whether it's the wall, ceiling-mounted, or freestanding version, each is composed of a decorative leaf-shaped sound-absorbing panel made with patented technology and held by a chrome metal support.

Biophilic design continues to pop into our workspaces as studies show nature-influenced design can reduce stress levels, positively improve our mood, and help increase our productivity. The Naava Healthtech Green Wall brings workers into contact with nature through its living wall, which can serve as a clever divider, and will be available as early as this summer.



Luxxbox's Waffle Leaves.

Customization, Tackling Noise, and Lack of Privacy

Flexible and coworking spaces will continue to flourish as technology allows us to remain connected wherever we may be located. To solve issues of noise, distractions, and other factors typically associated with open spaces as well as smaller office footprints, designers are creating pieces that can serve multiple purposes and provide flexibility for customization of a space.



Teknion's Bene Box.

WOLFGANG ZLODEJ

Teknion's Bene Box, available in September, is a multifunctional modular furnishing system that can be easily assembled and disassembled to create whatever settings are required. Simply combine the boxes to create desks, tables, stools, shelves, or storage space.

Stylex introduced Free Address, a coworking system for commercial interiors developed by Jay Koback and Ehren Gaag of Gensler's award-winning product design group. For clients seeking more flexible solutions, the versatile "kit of parts" allows the combination of surfaces, seating, storage, and privacy to create a unified solution for individual, space-efficient work settings.



Stylex's Free Address.

Distractions are common in almost any modern workplace environment, but open floor plans and coworking spaces make noise and lack of privacy even more pronounced issues. It's not enough to create spaces for individuals; companies are creating larger pods to accommodate meetings with others, too.

Building off its success with its retro-meets-futuristic Loop Phone Booth, Canadian company Onetwosix launched Loop Cube, a two- to four-person phone booth-cum-meeting room. Loop, which uses a sustainable, close-knit supply chain in Edmonton, Alberta, features a built-in desk for laptops, an LED light, a two-fan circulation system, an ergonomic seat, and a 10mm glass door.



Loop Cube by Onetwosix.

Iconic Inspiration

Several textile companies used NeoCon to introduce lines created as a tribute to design icons. Designtex paid homage to the women weavers of the Bauhaus, the short-lived but influential German design school celebrating its centennial this year. The Bauhaus Project comprises eight upholstery textiles and eight digitally printed wall covering designs by Gunta Stözl and Anni Albers, two of the most talented and significant textile designers of Bauhaus schooling.

Camira recreated textiles by design icon Jens Risom, the prolific Danish-American midcentury designer who died in 2016 at the age of 100. Zap is a classic dobby weave with vibrant contrasting colors or tone-on-tone cross colors, like jelly beans, and comes in a palette of 30 colorways. Armadillo has added texture and depth of color and comes in a palette of 12 selected colors.

Sustainability

Sustainable interior design is becoming more important for clients, and companies are responding by being more mindful and creative about how they produce their products. The NeoCon launches included carpets made with ECONYL, regenerated and regenerable

nylon created from waste, including fishing nets and old carpets. The company works with other flooring companies, such as Interface, which designs carpet tiles using ECONYL yarn.

Duvaltex introduced its new Clean Impact Textiles, the first recycled biodegradable polyester textile for commercial interiors. The technology allows the company to create high-performance fabrics that can withstand the use and wear of commercial interiors, which has long been a challenge of the contract furnishings industry.



Material Bank's NeoCon booth.

Megy Karydes

Finally, one way design professionals can become more efficient in their design and building practices is to consider how they source their materials. Material Bank is a game changer because it allows designers to receive samples, whether of carpet or stone, in a sustainable fashion. Samples are available from more than 150 leading brands and are sent overnight in a single box. Unneeded samples can be sent back to Material Bank to be reused, helping reduce waste in the industry.

