

MAY 2010

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2010 NeoCon Preview

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines "fluent" as: "flowing, effortlessly," and "polished." It is easy to see why officials at Kimball® Office selected this word as the name for a new and full line of office furniture. Fluent™ successfully meets a variety of design requirements with a presentation that is elegant in its simplicity.

According to Jay Henriott, market requirements designer for Kimball Office, Fluent is the company's comprehensive response to what clients were expressing to its salespeople and company officials. "We kept hearing that there was a desire for a more progressive, holistic furniture solution. Fluent was developed with a contemporary, modular and minimalist design in mind. The line can flow easily from private to open office and from reception area to collaborative workspace."

Company officials selected David Allan Pessa, principal with New Studio, LLC, to collaborate with the company's own designers on the project. "This is the third project that we've done with David," notes Henriott. "He helped design our Adagiatio® and Delano™ seating lines, and his design style works well with the company's brand. Like us, David wants to develop products that meet both the current and potential future needs of the marketplace."

The process began when Pessa and officials from Kimball Office attended Orgatec in Cologne, Germany, in 2007. The team's review of the products on display at the show planted the seed for the direction of the new line's design.

"We introduced Fluent in June 2009 when the country was in a recession," explains Henriott. "While business conditions were not ideal, we found that many in the industry were re-evaluating their furniture and space needs based on these less-than-ideal conditions. Fluent's design fit what many clients wanted and continue to want in their furniture."

A RESPONSIVE Solution

Fluent, the result of a collaboration between Kimball Office and designer David Allan Pessa, provides a sophisticated, contemporary furniture solution that is perfect for use in any office environment.



The many components available in Fluent enable users to tailor individual workstations to their personal preferences, especially for storage.

The Fluent line includes worksurfaces, tables, storage elements, and privacy screens. Easily adaptable for changing demands, the available configurations include private offices, open plans, reception stations, singles or doubles, and multiple work modes such as collaborative spaces, knowledge sharing, conferencing, and huddle spaces.

For his part, Pessa believes that the design industry is in the midst of a paradigm shift, and that Fluent is the right product for these changing conditions. "The corporate hierarchy is flattening—companies want smaller workstations; technology demands continue to increase, and organizations

must accommodate a multi-generational workforce," he says. "Fluent's design and construction provides a comprehensive solution to these and other marketplace conditions."

A closer look at a few of the line's features helps to illustrate Pessa's point. The design flows technology support around users rather than limiting that support to select locations. Cords and cables pass through desktops and twist into the worksurface support rail. The available technology modesty panels shield the undersurface area from view—eliminating any unsightly cable cluttering—and route cables

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Fluent works as well in open plan arrangements as it does for private offices or individual workstations. Storage and privacy screens can be easily rearranged as needs change.

toward the necessary power source.

"By 2015, individuals who are considered as Generation X will comprise 25 percent of the workforce in the United States," notes Pessa. "Individuals in this group are accustomed to social multi-tasking and need abundant plug-and-play options. This factor, coupled with current and future technology, meant that our design had to be technologically supportive of the way people work while also featuring elements to help keep the workplace uncluttered."


One of Fluent's most important design elements—and yet one that will go unnoticed by the untrained eye—involves the line's clean pedestals and compound-mitered boxes, which are machined, finished as flat panels, and then assembled. In most instances, it is common for a wood craftsman to only make one piece of furniture using miter joints because the assembly and manufacturing is so complex, which obviously does not work well for mass production.

To achieve its sleek appearance, Kimball Office partnered with a manufacturing machinist company to develop a new machine to produce Fluent. A patent is currently pending on the new machinery, which will allow mass production of the compound miter joint construction. The result of this investment is a sleek appearance on every edge of each piece of furniture.

"Fluent is obviously very large in scope, not only in terms of the components but also in terms of finishes and material offerings," says Pessa.

"The line works with Kimball Office's other products and includes veneer, plastic laminates and paint finishes. Each detail—every material and finish—was thoroughly analyzed in order to provide a product that can meet the requirements of any organization or design."

Clients who desire products with strong environmental attributes will appreciate the line's sustainable properties. Fluent was designed using both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Design for Environment (DfE) standards and the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) protocols. The line meets DfE standards for indoor air quality, and wood components are sealed with Pura™, the company's proprietary water-based UV finish. The furniture can be easily disassembled at the end of its useful life and various components can be recycled.

Both Pessa and Henriott report that clients have been very positive about Fluent and its design elements, including extensive interest from personnel in the financial, legal, creative, and government communities. 

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details



1. Fluent's leg-based construction is clean and simple and will withstand extensive use and rearranging.
2. The under-surface bookcase provides private storage.
3. Fluent's miter construction required an investment in special equipment to achieve the desired level of finish.
4. Fluent's clean, sophisticated lines make it perfect for any executive office.