



INTRODUCING

Fiellø

OFFICE DESIGN FOR HEALTHY, HAPPY WORKERS

Wellness in the workplace equals productive, engaged employees.

THE TREND STARTED WITH TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES.

Now it's everywhere: Open offices have proliferated across corporate America, muscling out individual offices and even cubicles as companies seek to increase collaboration, improve productivity, and, at the same time, cut costs.

Some open-office workers have discovered downsides to the arrangement, but those who are bothered by noise and distraction, or those who crave a little privacy, will soon get relief. A new generation of furniture designs for the workspace is addressing concerns of this nature—as well as basic employee health and well-being—and offering employers new ways to attract, retain, and even increase the productivity of their workers.

Products made for the changing workplace will go on display this month at the 48th annual NeoCon event at The Mart in Chicago. The most important commercial interiors show in North America, it is expected to draw 50,000 attendees during its three-day run on June 13–15. “Open offices are great,” says Byron Morton, The Mart’s vice president of leasing, “but people still need a place to do quiet, focused work, and people still need privacy.”

Programmed Nap Time

Commercial designers are devising innovative solutions to meet those needs. The show’s 450 exhibits, which also encompass products for restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and other non-office work sites, will

include sound-absorbing materials for walls, modular soundproofed environments in which up to four people can carry on a conversation, and special zero-gravity chairs with privacy features and built-in speakers that allow users to take preprogrammed 20-minute naps.

“Seven or eight years ago, green building was the big deal,” says Morton. “Sustainability is now a given. Today, wellness in the workplace is an ongoing evolution.” NeoCon’s keynote will be delivered by Paul Scialla, founder of the International WELL Building Institute, which has created certification standards for healthy buildings and work environments based on air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, and comfort.

Standing Meetings

Among the hottest products designed for employee well-being are adjustable-height desks. Their popularity has climbed in the wake of several studies in the last few years linking prolonged sitting to an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and early mortality. (A Mayo Clinic study compared sitting at a desk all day with smoking.) Standing conference tables can even make meetings more productive and improve employee performance, according to a 2014 study published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

However, many workstations with sit-to-stand capability have suffered from a slapdash, add-on approach, says Scott McPartlin, president of SiS Ergo, a manufacturer and distributor of ergonomic

furniture, who points to “wires hanging down, monitors in the wrong position, the brackets interfering with the legs.” The company, which began in Denmark almost 50 years ago by offering adjustable typewriter stands, occupies a permanent showroom in The Mart. It will introduce a new adjustable workstation at NeoCon, created in collaboration with the venerable design firm Gensler. Says McPartlin: “We are excited because Fiellø has been designed for the user and represents the transformation of a height-adjustable desk into a height-adjustable workstation.”

Phoenix-based ESI Ergonomic Solutions, with a showroom on the 10th floor of the Chicago Merchandise Mart, is introducing new products that improve workplace productivity and well-being. The company is involved in research studies to determine the impact individual workstations have on productivity and well-being at work. ESI uses the research to develop flexible products that allow employees to adjust their workstation to fit their needs.



◀ Fiellø desk by SiS

reduced health costs and absenteeism, according to a survey on wellness initiatives conducted by Virgin HealthMiles Inc. Such upgrades are also beneficial in recruiting and retaining talent. “It’s a new marker for the amenities equation,” says Steve Meier, who directs an interdisciplinary workplace studio at Gensler. “As millennials and recent grads look at workplaces, they’ll ask, ‘Are you progressive in terms of appropriate food facilities and standing workstations?’”

Design experts agree that millennials are driving the evolution in office environments. Still, older workers stand to benefit as much—or more. A study presented at the 2014 ErgoExpo conference found that people 25 to 30 years old and 60 to 65 years old stand the most at work. “It’s an issue for everyone,” says Meier. “Just as with residences, we’ll have to design workplaces for aging in place.” ●

“When it comes to workstations and how people prefer to work, one size does not fit all,” says ESI CEO Carol Keogh. “Providing employees with work tools that make them comfortable and more efficient at work is a simple way to achieve positive long-term benefits.”

The Case for Wellness Upgrades

Companies that make workplace wellness upgrades are likely to experience

Improve Productivity & Well-being at Work

- Adjustable Monitor Arms
- Sit-to-Stand Desks
- Flexible Keyboard Trays
- LED Desktop Lighting



48 HOUR SHIPPING

Manufactured By: SiS Ergo
Project Design Lead By: Gensler

SISERGO.COM

NeoCon®