

The Business of Furniture | November 6, 2019

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*Shedding Light on Misconceptions About LED
Modular Lighting Instruments
Morphing to Next Level*



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While the topics covered opinions on product and process innovation, perhaps nothing enlightened the audience more than when the conversation shifted to the ways in which dealers and manufacturers could best support designers.



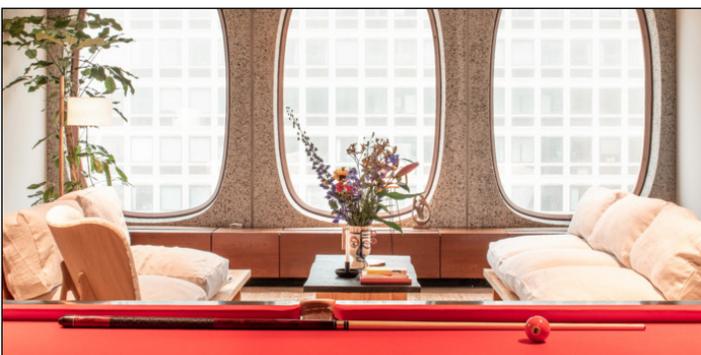
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The Business of Furniture



Editor-in-Chief, Bellow Press Rob Kirkbride

Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Publisher, Bellow Press Melissa Skolnick

Vice President, Content Production, Bellow Press Todd Hardy

Staff Writer, Marketing Manager, Bellow Press Emily Clingman

Workplace Guru, BoF Stephen Viscusi

Training & Development Columnist, BoF Sid Meadows

Contributing Writers, BoF:

Bruce Buursma, John Q. Horn, Stef Schwalb,

Jennie Morton, Michael Dunlap, Carolyn Cirillo, Kevin Budelmann

Illustrator, BoF Jamie Cosley

Copy Editor, BoF Linda Odette

Publishing Headquarters

382 NE 191st St, Suite 253

Miami, Florida 33179

877-BELLOW9 (877-235-5699)

Email: info@bellow.press

Include us on your PR distribution list.

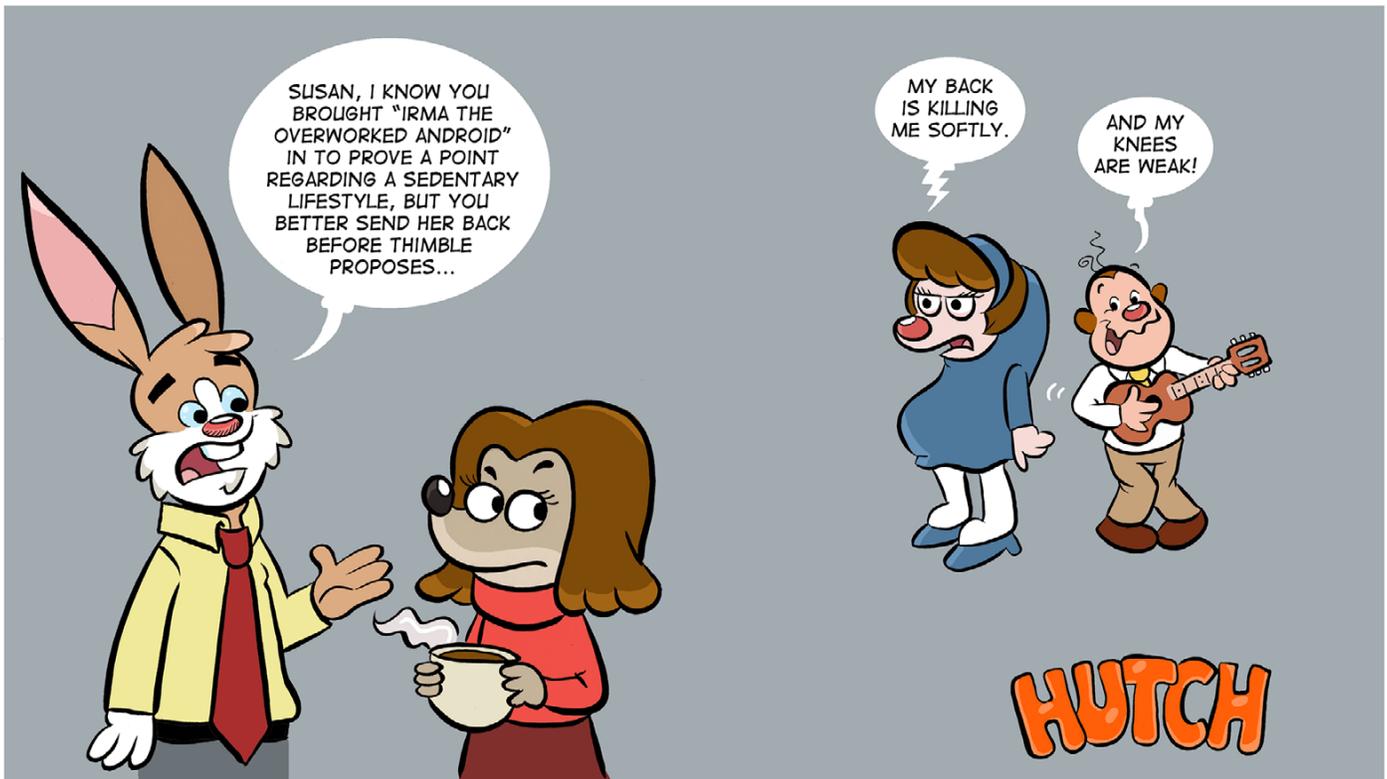
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Business of Furniture and *Workplaces* magazine are the go-to sources for keeping you informed about everything that is happening in the industry. From trends that affect your bottom line, to new products that will help your customers work better, to stories that will help you run a better, more informed company.

ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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WORKPLACE DESIGN

OM Asks Important Question with New Product: ‘How do You Werksy?’

THE WERKSY ROCKER STEMMED FROM THE IDEA OF CREATING FREEDOM OF MOTION IN A CHAIR.

by Rob Kirkbride

All great chair designs come from exploration: tapping into curiosity and seeing where it leads. For OM, that design exploration led to one of the most unique chairs the industry has seen in some time, Werksy.

At its core, Werksy is a smartly designed shell chair that comes as a stackable guest chair and simple action tilting seat. But it is the third model — the rocker — that is creating an entirely different spin on active seating. I mean, really, how many height-adjustable swivel rockers with auto return have you seen on the market?

The company never set about to design a rocker. Instead, OM wanted a collection to fill spaces that supplement the formal workspace. Your desk chair is one, a light scale tasker could be another. And the company found that a rocking chair sitting in a collaborative environment ends up being yet another.

“At the outset, the rocking chair wasn’t necessarily the prime focal point of the entire development,” said Wilson Chow, OM president. “It came from the idea of proving it out. And as we were doing that, and we saw the rocking chair ... I got to understand how much possibility it had.”

The Werksy rocker stemmed from the idea of creating freedom of motion in a chair. OM worked with designer Henner Jahns of Gecco Vision on Werksy, and as they began developing Werksy the idea of a rocking chair seemed to lend itself toward the idea of active seating — a key component in all of OM’s offerings.

That led to the design team adding even more features to promote movement. Different iterations of the chair emerged, including one that cut out portions of the arm rest and contouring the seat so the user could sit side-saddle and still be comfortable.



“We were simply looking to make a chair that would really be visually provocative and that would fill supplemental workspaces and informal workspaces,” Chow said. “But we ended up finding it to be so much more in the sense that it could really engender or create a whole type of environment in a sense, like a collaborative space that allows you to converse as well as engage.”

At times when OM designs a new chair it knows exactly what it wants out of the product and doesn't stray much from the design brief. Werksy is not one of these times. It grew out of prototypes and seeing where the value of the product might be. They were flexible and just let it adapt from the original spark of creativity.

Developing the rocker had its challenges. OM developed strengthening plates inside of the shell because of the rocking action. The company was exploring the unknown with a rocking chair that swivels and is height adjustable. When the company tried to plan out what it thought could go



wrong with it, it added the extra strength and stability. Those steps led to other to-do lists, Chow said.

“We had to devise certain tests that might not have existed before,” he said. “We had to work around challenges that come up from us producing it a certain way that’s not really normal for that type of a shell chair.”

Since the Werksy rocker is literally in a class of its own, OM had to be creative with marketing. It isn’t easy convincing designers to add a product that has no peers. So, OM went into its marketing campaign by being true to the nature of the design story and also being unconventionally playful.

“Everybody has this goal of telling a good story about their product,” Chow said. “But from our point of view, we want to come to it as originally as we can, and we want to let people understand how they might use the product. So when you look at our marketing, we try to do some things that reflect the unbound nature of that particular chair. And also at the same time to promote and or inspire people to imagine their own way to Werksy.



So you can see evidence of this throughout, if you look at it from the unconventional name. I mean it's called the Werksy, which comes from work plus easy."

The name is playful as well, he said, an unconventional word that you can use and adapt however you want. OM wants the user to appropriate it and use it as their own. That led to ideas like "Werksy how you want," "How do you Werksy?" and "Whistle while you Werksy."

That led to unconventional marketing, like shooting the Werksy in a warehouse with raw bricks, covered in graffiti. OM also created a Mad Libs like brochure that let customers fill out the story of Werksy. The company also made unconventional videos to help tell the Werksy story.

As the chair launches this month, OM is already booking sales. Chow said they are having success in high-tech firms, college environments and hos-



pitality settings. “We’ve had a lot of really great responses to the product overall,” he said.

In many ways, Werksy is like an iPad or Apple Watch — products that create a new market for people who don’t know they need it until they experience it. Chow said he already has anecdotal evidence of people using Werksy to reimagine how they work and relate to a chair.

Chow said, “I’ve been in trade show settings where I’ve been trying to explain to a designer how this chair is going to work, where it would work, and she turned it around on me, and she started pitching me on things and saying, ‘No, you need to be able to use it this way, and you can use it in that way. You need to tell people you can also adapt it that way.’ And she kept giving me new ideas. At one point I joked with her, I said, ‘Hey, can you be our spokesperson?’” **BoF**