

The Business of Furniture | March 8, 2017

BOF



BOSS
Builds Brand
in North America



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The Business of Furniture

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10 **UPFRONT:** Steelcase and Microsoft Announce Development of Technology - Enabled Spaces to Boost Creative Work

Companies joined forces to develop a range of technology-enabled spaces designed to help organizations foster creative thinking and better collaboration.

38 **COVER: Boss Builds** Brand in North America

Boss Design is the latest to build its furniture in the U.S. And after just six months of seriously focusing on making its products here, the move is paying dividends.

48 **Road Trippin':** Loctek Lands in Livermore to Help You Get Moving

The company, founded 20 years ago in China, has made a name for itself by building low-cost options to get people moving in the office.

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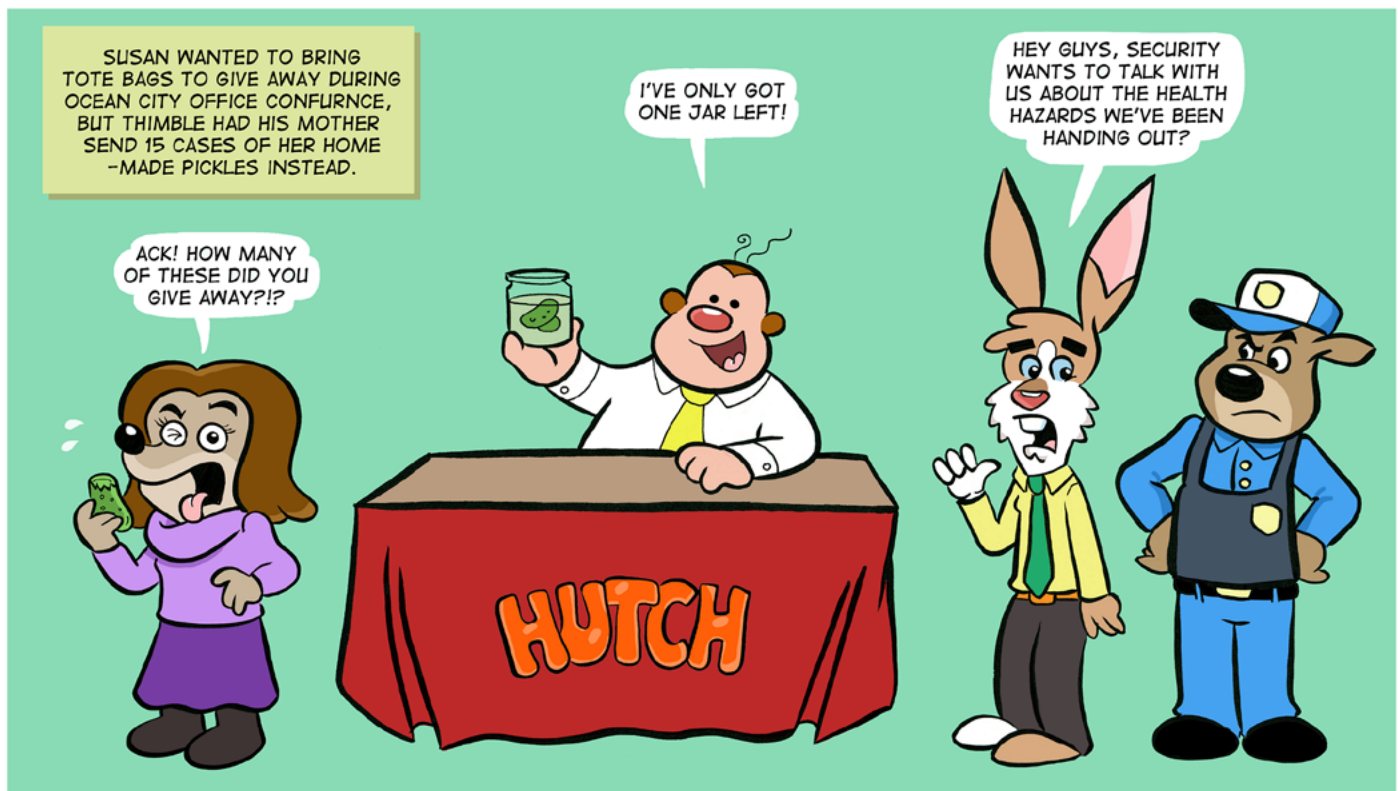
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ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



OM Studio Collaborates with CSULB Industrial Design

OM'S PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TEAM PARTNERED WITH THE STUDIO INSTRUCTORS TO DEVELOP THE PROJECT, THEN PROVIDED PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTION AND FEEDBACK DURING THE TWO-DAY, ON-CAMPUS WORKSHOP.



Smart seating resource
OM recently collaborated with the Cal State University, Long Beach (CSULB) Industrial Design Department to develop and launch a product design mini-workshop and competition. Targeted to students in the Senior Studio course, the project was intended to provide a

“real life, real time” scenario that would bridge the gap between academic practice and professional experience.

With this purpose in mind, OM's product development team partnered with the studio instructors to develop the project, then provided professional instruction and feedback during

the two-day, on-campus workshop. Students were challenged to develop a product concept for use in a higher education collaborative environment such as a design studio, library, lab, or student union. The concept had to be innovative, comfortable, and able to be mass produced. The instructional intent was to en-



courage students to work quickly and create a visually arresting product that addresses the stated criteria, as well as present their concepts persuasively both visually and verbally. The exercise offered OM firsthand insight into the needs of students in contemporary educational environments while exposing students to realistic working parameters.

In the first full-day session, students were given an overview of OM and a brief history of educational seating, divided into collaborative groups to pursue further research, and asked to return end-of-day with an initial direction for their individual projects. Senior Studio instructors

Max Beach and Chris Collins, and OM's team – which included the senior product development manager, design and product development manager, president, and marketing staff, each offered commentary relevant to their perspectives. Students were then given a week to deliver a presentation that included sketches and rendered drawings as well as product positioning and marketing direction that identified the problem solved and the environment served.

One week later, students returned with concept boards to display in the department's gallery. A judging panel, which consisted of the studio instruc-

tors, OM's team, and the editor-in-chief of *Interiors & Sources* magazine, selected ten students to present their concepts to the assembled class and the panel. The process – from accurately understanding the problem posed, to research and design development and presentation – teaches students skills they will need as working designers. All elements of the project, from the engineering feasibility of the concept to the students' ability to persuasively express their ideas, were considered when selecting the finalists and ultimate winners. The panel was encouraged by the quality of the students' thinking, their curiosity, and the





breadth of ideas showcased in the final projects. Three finalists were recognized for their overall achievement.

“From the group research to the product direction presentations and the final deliverable, the students not only impressed us with their ability to execute and rise to the occasion, but most importantly they got the judges discussing and debating their designs and concept directions (something that is no easy feat by the way). The ability to spark and ignite creativity in others is one of the great achievements of designers. The three finalists clearly did that,” said Chris Collins, Senior Studio instructor and principal of Cubed Design.

Wilson Chow, President of OM, added, “We’re grateful to

the team at CSULB for having the imagination and fortitude to recognize this project as a good idea, and give us so much of their studio time to make it happen. The students were optimistic, daring problem solvers, and all demonstrated strong abilities as developing professionals. It was not only a worthwhile endeavor, I also personally found it to be inspiring and I’m hopeful we can make it an ongoing collaboration.”

The where’s and how’s of doing business, and the forms of the modern workplace and educational space, have evolved dramatically over the past decade. Radical changes in technology – both how it is used and what it can do – as well as demographic and cultural shifts in business

and education (not to mention most forms of interaction outside the home) – all influence our needs for sitting, standing, collaborating, and encouraging productivity. The tools we use, the way we apply them, and how we interact with others have all adapted to meet this new paradigm. The best way to help students’ develop the skills they will need for a changing workforce and for business to have access to designers with the requisite imagination and practical realism, is for business to partner with schools and to be involved in the academic-professional dialogue. Projects such as the OM-CSULB Design Studio are a step in this direction. **BoF**