

Team activities, workplace trends bring need for flexible features in furnishings

by Becky McCarville

With a new generation entering the workforce and more traditional employees exiting, companies are capitalizing on the casual, yet professional, trend in office furnishings, said Tim Goddard, director of sales at Sheppard's Business Interiors.

Flexible features that encourage teamwork and can be used in different settings, including offices, lounges, meeting spaces or reception stations are gaining in popularity, according to Jay Bolding, president and chief executive officer of Bold Office Solutions.



Bolding

"Not having the latest technology available to your business and employees can cost efficiency, productivity and money," said Mark Warren, general manager with JQ Office Equipment. "Keeping old equipment impacts the reliability of the unit, causing more downtime and loss of production."

In order to succeed in today's global economy, according to Bolding, companies are leveraging the intellectual assets of their employees. He noted one popular way to accomplish this is through collaboration.



Director of Sales Tim Goddard of Sheppard's Business Interiors.

A more open office space with lowered cubicle walls lets in more natural light, heading away from the typical "cube cities" to cultivate a collaborative environment, Goddard said.

"We are seeing more opportunities for benching style work stations and areas," he said. "Height-adjustable tables, improved

lighting options, ergonomic designs and ways to keep people mobile rather than stationary all day are trends this year."

According to Bolding, AWS, or Alternative Workplace Strategies, uses technological advancements to "allow a highly mobile, agile and widespread workforce to conduct business anywhere at any time. Technology plays a critical role in enabling people to work

from remote locations whenever face-to-face interaction isn't necessary."

The demand for mobility among workers is increasing, and employers need to be flexible and identify the technology that will suit



Warren

the people and places where the work is being done. Working in open office spaces, satellite offices or remote locations are becoming more common.

"Organizations could increase productivity if furnishings are selected to match employees needs rather than requiring workers to fit in an environment that is not suitable to their work style," Bolding said.

Managed Print Services, or print outsourcing, is a fast-growing market in the office equipment industry, helping businesses manage their output devices — copiers, printers, multifunction devices and fax machines.

Depending on the needs of the business, managed print services can manage all of the current printers, for example, at a single cost per image, including service, repair parts and supply items.

"There are many different brands and sizes

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Flexible office features

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es of office equipment and individual pieces that are designed for specific applications," Warren said. "The suggestions we make are based on the clients' wants and needs."

The Samsung line of office equipment has kept prices down by not including 11x17 ledger paper and only running standard printer paper and legal paper, allowing all the parts in the unit to be smaller, according to Warren.

Security is a big issue in office equipment — copiers have hard drives that retain information permanently. Employers should consider secure printing, hard drive encryption, data overwrite security and removable hard drives, Warren suggested.

According to Goddard, businesses need to answer some basic questions before choosing office furniture and equipment lines:

— How much power and data am I going to need for each employee?

— How do I want this power and data

supplied — through the ceiling, floor, wall?

— How much space does each employee need?

— What kind of work is each employee doing for privacy issues?

"Before selecting furnishings for an office, it is important to first consider employees' work modes, organizational styles and habits to determine their needs and wants," Bolding said. "Once this is established, organizations can work with dealers and designers to select the line(s) that offer the ideal solution."