

Workplace Insights

NeoCon: A Look at What's Next

Over the summer, Hixson's Colleen McCafferty and Julie Morgan, members of the firm's Interior Design team, attended NeoCon 2018 at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. Celebrating its 50th year, NeoCon, the largest design exposition and conference for commercial interiors in North America, attracted 50,000 design professionals and showcased work and products from more than 700 leading companies.

Key themes that dominated at the event this year, as reported by Colleen and Julie included:

- **Well-being**...is still a dominant topic in the industry. Manufacturers are discussing their role in creating a healthy workplace through their manufacturing practices and the use of products to enhance the Workplace. Nature-inspired materials were represented with more random, large patterns and varied textures, with both strong and subtle color variations. Biomimicry was apparent in the many waterfall fountains placed in the showrooms.
- **Partnerships**...have evolved to settle the demand for the "Resi-mercial Transformation." Much is being done to make work feel more comfortable, just like home. Manufacturers have created partnerships with others to create a more robust collection of furniture and other products, including lighting, rugs and accessories for the office. Soft seating has become even softer in some cases, allowing more leisure seating in productive settings, while auxiliary combinations of storage, shelves, and tables add to the functional use of spaces.



*Salmon with a touch of pink is back!
(not-the-mauve-we-used-to-know).*



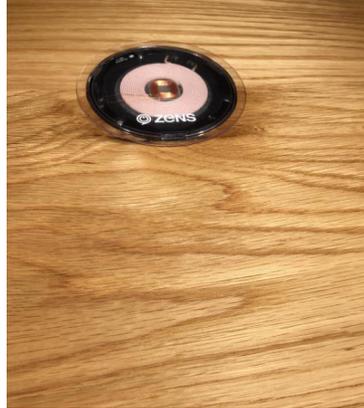
Color and pattern in strong combinations

- **Focus + Collaborative + Transparency**...solutions are being addressed. Employees want the ability to see others and collaborate, yet the sense of focus during the workday has to be discussed. For those working in open office environments, or just needing more quiet, alternative areas to work in for intense focus is addressed in rooms set up for one employee to work in, with as much soundproofing as possible.

- **Technology integration**...is happening throughout all interior spaces & has been integrated into all aspects of the furniture world! New surfaces are “smart,” allowing for the ability to plug in, or in some cases, to be wireless. This is only the beginning of the integration for technology: The near future holds promise for new innovations throughout the industry, making work easier for all of us.



Strong wall, partition, and seat patterns



Acoustical patterns on the walls to create a statement or focal point

- **Color, texture and pattern**...are making a strong comeback! After the lengthy use of gray in the commercial world, strong and striking patterning is making a resurgence. Once again, it's a choice – bold, large scale and strong versus subtle, organic patterns. Graphic elements are evoking energy, while the use of bright colors along with more neutrals create a dimensional quality showing light and shadow, like sunlight through trees. Some new colors were introduced this year, such as soft blues, multiple shades of green, and salmon. Natural wood combined with laminates, reminiscent of the Mid-century Modern furniture of the 1970's, adds a new warmth to spaces.

How will the latest trends change the landscape of the workplace and other commercial settings in the years to come? Only time – and future NeoCon events – will tell!

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