

Orgatec Report 2008 – Cologne Germany

'The futures bright, the future's orange'. If written from the furniture industry's perspective, is the 'future's bright and is most definitely white'. The most prominent trend with respect to work surface finish and trim details was that white is the flavour of the month. There is a trend every two years witnessed with respect to surface finish. It was evident that for mainstream systems furniture, white is the most popular option being promoted. Where timber finishes were on display dark walnut finishes were popular as were some mid toned highly grained reconstituted veneers. Overall, the general trend for finishes would be white laminates/mfc's, walnut tones, silver and stainless steel trim details.

With respect to general desking design, never before has 'benching' been promoted as much as at this most recent exhibition.

Even traditional beam based desking systems not designed for pure benching applications were being presented showing their suitability in offering benching type solutions. Whilst the merits of benching are understood by industry professionals, it will be interesting to see how welcome this product will be received for companies that work in a more traditional way.

For ease of reference of this report we have developed a number of headings that summarise the variety of Orgatec 2008.

Trends

An enhanced level of detail has been brought to the most economic of furniture ranges. Each exhibition manufacturers have endeavoured to 'raise the bar' with regards to engineering detail and excellence. There are few awkward details in furniture today. The 'Best of the British manufacturers are now delivering products with engineering detail that would have only been expected only from the larger European manufacturers and North American manufacturers alike. The most obvious detail has been the level of elegance of how joint details between variety of materials have been resolved.

There has been notable increase in the use of aluminium and surprisingly chrome to a lot of furniture products.

Best Product

There was, as ever, interesting pieces that I would describe as side show products. The most innovative product went to the Herman Miller, Embody Chair, a product that embraced boundary breaking technology with regards to the posture and support mechanism for the seat and back pad. Whilst using a foam fabric seat and back pad, it was the 'pixelated membrane' used to support this material that differentiated the chair. A very

ergonomically sound chair with good ease of operation. Although I doubt that the model offered in a white finish will prove to be practical in the long term. A new chair from Girsberger offered a design refinement to the support of the seat pad not witnessed before without any noticeable under structure, again this chair had a strong use of aluminium in its overall design.

The most innovative beam system on display was Senator Internationals Beyon beam system, together with its associated mobile storage. The mobile 'packman' personal storage unit will become a feature being adopted on many benching products in the future. It provided a small mobile footprint and wider range of functions than a traditional pedestal.

Much of the product was very 'me too'. There were very few products that had shown a quantum leap in design development from the previous exhibition two years ago.

Best Stand

This award goes to the Italian manufacturers Synetica. The simple use of finishes and product displays were user friendly. It was a welcoming stand which acted as an understated backdrop to a very extensive product portfolio. Hospitality facilities were second to none!

Fabric manufacturer Gabriel created an innovative and eye catching stand and displayed their products in a creative way. Sedus and Herman Miller had show stopping stands in terms of the size and presentation of the products.

Support Products

The best support products were enjoyed from Brunner who has an excellent range of support furniture as did the Allermuir range from Senator.

Japanese manufacturer Kokuyo produced an innovative range of mobile training tables, flip top with an integrated cable management. A challenge that is presented to most producers of training tables that require cable management systems.

From a British manufacturer, Senators new Cross over systems range stood out as a market leader in its own right. It's innovative approach in providing both systems and benching applications will no doubt prove to be another world beating product for Senator.

Overall the show seemed to be well attended largely by the trade for who it's largely aimed at. Most manufacturers said that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were the better days and were optimistic that it would lead to reasonable levels of business in the months ahead.