

Project Design: Julia Leehy of Francis Cauffman in collaboration with PMC | Manufacturer: Groupe Lacasse



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INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

Flexibility is Critically Important

IDa Design has helped companies like Allsteel and Gunlocke transform their product offerings.

Rob Kirkbride

Da Design is based in Zeeland, Mich. and run by two designers -- one based in Holland and another in Grand Rapids, yet it is a firm that counts huge clients in Iowa and New York. It is a West Michigan office furniture design firm through and through, yet its bread is buttered elsewhere.

The company (pronounced like "idea") has a few (very Midwestern) mottoes: "Nice is not a four-letter word"; and "Design is the sweet spot between accessible and desirable." IDa Design understands the importance of innovation, as exemplified by NeoCon silver and gold wins that are second to none for a young, decade-old firm. Yet its principal, Mitch Bakker, also understands that it doesn't make sense to design furniture that is so out-there that no one buys it.

That's not to say the design company's work is bland. Just the opposite. IDa Design has helped companies like Allsteel and Gunlocke transform their product offerings. The firm also has designed products for Nucraft, Artco Bell and Source International.

IDa Design understands the office and that translates into products that are beautiful and actually sell. "We believe in creating products that are innovative with market acceptance," he said, noting that work is changing not only at companies like Google and Cisco, but more conservative corporations as well. Banks, insurance companies and other more traditional firms are moving to office layouts that are more open and collaborative.

Regardless of the corporate customer, IDa Design believes flexibility is critically important. And that shows in its latest product: The Create system from Allsteel. During an interview last week with *MMQB*, Bakker took a napkin on the table and folded one edge of the rectangle over, leaving a trapezoid. "Here you go," he said, sliding the napkin across the table. "That's Create right there."

Create, a simple system product that is designed to bring teams together, make the most of a footprint, and offers privacy in an open environment. It can be described as a "simple" product only because it is simple to use and specify. Often, it is the products that seem the most simple that are the most difficult to design and a lot of thought went into Create, Bakker said.

While Allsteel's Stride product (also created by IDa Design) has 982 different options to make a panel (not counting colors or surface materials), Create simplifies the process with 342 options. Still, it does just about everything, adapting for the future of work and technology with a small kit of parts that can be used to create any number of office layouts.

Create includes surfaces, supports, screens and storage that can be configured to form a wide variety of work environments. Create also has the flexibility and scalability to allow customers to efficiently reconfigure their space on the spot, or over time.

Core to every workplace are an organization's employees and Create was developed to support the needs of people, not just space. Create allows users to work in environments that are most productive to their individual or organization's needs. Integral to this notion is the



Allsteel's Create

