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NeoCon: Small Manufacturers Gain Ground in the Industry

► With the integration of modular furniture trends into office spaces, the favorite new conference room may not be found in places where expected and brainstorming ideas will flow more freely.

Perhaps more than any other NeoCon in recent memory, this was a show for the companies that generally fly under the radar to make a real splash. Because of the natural ebb and flow of the product development cycle, few of the big companies in the industry had blockbuster products to show. And that left the door open to the rest of the industry.

NeoCon 2014 proves that it doesn't take a big company to come up with big ideas. Here are a few companies to watch in the year -- and years -- ahead.

JRB Studio

JRB Studio is widening its range of products showcased, branching out from their traditional workplace designs into different settings for the office, and continuing to offer the most space-effective and personalizable designs possible.

This year, JRB Studio is broadened its resume of tables and workstations, moving from workplace-only styles into cafe-style tables. They retain the height-adjustable features that they are known for with the Alteeza cafe table, a play on the Italian word for "altitude." The Alteeza table is suitable for both seated and standing meetings and breaks, available in neutral

colors and small physical footprint, taking up less leg and storage room underneath.

JRB was also showing a new media sharing table, complete with flatscreen monitors and tabletop access, easily usable for any type of collaborative media presentation. With all of this technology built in, JRB again does what they do best in keeping it height-adjustable, and CEO and President Charles Martin maintains that "it is the first height-adjustable media sharing product on the market."



Along with the benefits to the body that come with ergonomic adjustable designs and the possibility for opening up more space in the office, Martin adds with a chuckle, "If you want to move a meeting along, keep everyone standing."

Two unique storage pieces, the two-drawer Mini Ped and one-compartment Straddle Ped, were tucked away neatly beneath several workstation setups in JRB's booth. Both are suitable for storage underneath desks and tables, ranging in width from 9.5 to 12 inches and in depth

from 22 to 30 inches. The Mini Ped's drawer style can be used for files and folders, while the Straddle Ped is made to store personal belongings such as bags, purses, and any technology that the average person may bring to work. Both feature locks and the Straddle Ped has electrical accommodations on the inside to easily charge any cell phone, laptop, or tablet. Martin explains that they designed these two storage pieces because their height adjustable tables can lower to a mere 22 inches off the ground - fit to accommodate smaller people comfortably. Other

storage pieces would be too large to easily fit under a fully-lowered table, so they've made these two storage pieces to be compact but fully functional. The Straddle Ped won the Silver award at NeoCon this year.

The final newcomer to JRB this year is their free-standing privacy screen. Sheer enough to not block the flow of light but opaque enough to provide

the privacy its name touts, these screens are easily moved to create either temporary or permanent office dividers. In fact, they're so light, "you can almost pick them up with two fingers," said Martin.

JRB returns with its award-winning Animate tables that debuted at NeoCon two years ago, this time in new configurations, with added features and with new design options, explained Sandra McQuain, JRB senior vice president. "It all starts with a table."

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