

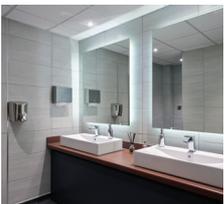


CHARGING AHEAD

Why the facilities sector could play an integral role in the uptake of electric vehicles

INSIDE

Special report on how organisations should prepare for the effects of the Corona virus



28

LIGHTING

Why LEDs are the smart lighting choice



32

CAFM

Essential advice for successful procurement



40

STORAGE

Advantages of modular storage furniture

MIX AND MATCH

Modular storage units are becoming increasingly popular. We look at the workplace trends fuelling this growth, and discuss the benefits of the modular approach

Modular storage furniture is the term used to describe office furniture that can be built up into a configuration adapted to the needs of the business. It's formed by assembling smaller units into a comprehensive storage system that can be reconfigured and extended to suit any requirements and space.

Because of the flexible design, it suits offices of any size and shape, making the best use of every inch of available space. Furthermore, instead of being factory fitted, additional interior fittings and extensions can be added quickly and retroactively to standard units.

Explains Laura Supple, Product Range Manager at AJ Products: "One of the biggest struggles for many businesses is the cost of premises. Square footage comes at a premium, particularly in city centres. It is a problem familiar both to start-ups with a small office and multinational corporations with a street-front office in a prime location. It is necessary then to find office furniture solutions that maximise the use of space.

"Modular office furniture is a popular modern alternative to traditional storage furniture. It is

an effective way to save space and provide greater flexibility in the workplace, while allowing businesses to adapt the furniture to their needs."

Another key reason for the growing popularity of modular storage is the transformation of office interior design over the last few years, which has led to changes in the shape and purpose of modular storage and shelving. New technology has led to a reduction in the need for paper filing, with many organisations aspiring to become paper-free entirely while remote and agile working has also influenced the type of storage required, as well as the office layout.

Explains Jonathan Hindle, KI's Group Managing Director EMEA: "Designing agile, highly space-efficient offices can be greatly improved with furniture that is adaptable and can evolve over time. It gives customers extensive configuration options as they move away from traditional filing and paper storage."

While paper filing has declined in importance, the need for personal storage has increased. The move away from assigned desks means people need an anchor in a dynamic office environment to store their personal belongings and work-related materials, laptops and other equipment. Modular storage can be modified to suit these new requirements through reconfiguration and retrofitting, so reducing costs and environmental impact as compared to built-in storage.

DESIGN AND BUILD

Modular furniture saves companies time and money when rearranging the office layout. Because it is simple to add additional units, it is possible to adapt the existing furniture instead of replacing it with new items as the business grows.

This also reduces the environmental impact by decreasing the frequency with which furniture is thrown away. It also means that any furniture purchased will serve the business over a longer period of time and, as such, allows the company to invest in better quality from the outset.



“Modular storage units work well as room dividers, which is particularly beneficial in open-plan office landscapes to separate different departments or workspaces.”

As modular storage furniture is made up of numerous smaller units, it is easy to rearrange.

The ability to change the interior design quickly enables businesses to keep up with the times and cater for their changing needs. For the same reasons, this type of furniture is ideal for flexible workspaces and agile working.

Modular storage units work well as room dividers, which is particularly beneficial in open-plan office landscapes to separate different departments or workspaces.

Storage units can help wayfinding by defining walkways, team neighbourhoods and different functions. Unlike standard storage furniture, which is designed for placement against a wall, this type of storage is designed to sit in the middle of a room and features a fully-finished back.

Says Supple: "A popular design trend is to fit a sound-absorbency panel to the back to improve acoustics and help reduce the noise that is unavoidable in an open-plan office. As well as having a practical application, acoustic panels are a way for companies to personalise their office furniture to their brand by choosing fabrics in company colours. In a row of modular storage, an effective way to provide accessible storage to more people and create a dynamic look is to place the units facing in opposite directions."



Because modular units fit seamlessly side by side, it is possible to cater for different needs while maintaining a natural flow throughout the office. One of the biggest benefits is how easily parts can be added and combined to create a system that suits the business and employees. Drawer units, magazine shelves, document trays and more, simply slide into place on the shelves. The furniture can be extended upwards to maximise the use of floor space, whether that is adding additional storage or indoor planters to create a more pleasant working environment. The modular design means these elements fit together, allowing you to mix and match different pieces throughout the office.



BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

Because aesthetic considerations are also important, storage systems can be accessorised with colourful tops, shelves, planters and more to achieve a homely feel. This move away from the traditional corporate aesthetic is mirrored in the growth of soft seating and breakout areas more akin to a living room than the old-fashioned image of a typical office. Residential-style open shelving can contain curated ornaments, books and plants and act as space dividers while supporting collaborative workspaces. For many people, personalisation of the working environment is a valuable way to help build a sense of engagement and belonging to the organisation.

Says Hindle: "It is increasingly important for organisations to provide an office landscape that is rich in variety and choice for workers. It provides a more domestic feel to the office environment without compromising on functionality, even incorporating fully integrated work surfaces and soft seating elements."

Modular storage and shelving can also help those companies that have awkwardly shaped empty spaces (such as under the stairs and around the cores), as they can be arranged in a way that makes the best use of the space. They may also be considered to be aesthetically pleasing, as their colours, layouts and decoration can be specified according to taste.

But one of the biggest benefits of modular shelving systems over custom-made fitted units is that they can be moved and rearranged as per your needs or design preferences (or even taken with you should you move office). They are also likely to be less expensive than installing fitted units.



SIMPLY INGENIOUS

Modular furniture is versatile and can be used as wall shelving, end of desk storage, room dividers or even reception desking. A notable example is USM's Haller modular furniture, which has become something of a design icon since its inception in 1965. Its design is simple yet ingenious; from a few basic components, a beautiful, practical piece of furniture is built, designed to grow and change with its environment.

The first sizeable installation of Haller furniture was at the Rothschild bank in Paris, and it has since been commissioned by many design-savvy companies. Property developer Stanhope used USM in the redesign of its London office, from the reception area to the meeting rooms and main office.

In the main office area, home to up to 80 employees, the Haller furniture is used as end of desk storage as well as banks of standing-height storage units. These latter units help to shape and define the office landscape and support stand-up meetings, while providing plenty of storage space. The units can be

accessed from both sides, creating a variety of storage options while also acting as a room divider.

Another example of creative modular design is BOB by Bisley. Officially launched at Salone di Mobile in Milan in 2019, BOB has won widespread acclaim, including the award of a Design Guild Mark and wins at the Mixology South Awards and Iconic Awards.

BOB was developed in collaboration with award-winning British designer Paul Kelley. The design is both simple and playful: cubes and units click together to form different arrangements, allowing the user to change the configuration at will. BOB is crafted using high-quality plywood, its hand-finished modules incorporating an ingenious system that uses technology-friendly magnets to securely lock the modules together. The units can be unlocked with a simple twist.

A range of accessories has recently been added, including colourful steel liners. These slide into the individual units to divide the space and add a dash of colour to the interior.

