

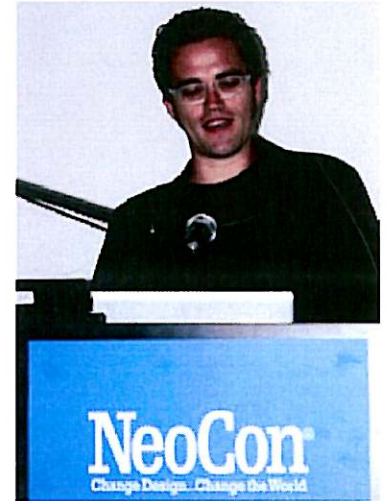
Compliments of Desks Inc., in cooperation with officeinsight

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Social Responsibility as the New Green

A mark of good design, sustainable or otherwise, is that it benefits all people across society. This year at **NeoCon WTF 2011**, a panel moderated by **Jennifer Busch**, VP of A&D Market Development for InterfaceFLOR, addressed how social responsible initiatives benefit design practices and how thinking in a socially responsible manner applies to the A&D community.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...



Allsteel: Becoming Involved

Allsteel's new **Involve** line is a sort of interstitial/connective tissue of the contract furniture world, not quite an "organ" in itself, but more than an accessory. The line is a series of fairly diverse elements designed to enable clients to adapt traditional office layouts into more flexible environments that could facilitate informal or short interactions and add a residential feel.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 9...



3form Studio

If ever a company has been able to quickly capture the hearts, minds and imaginations of the A&D community, it is **3form**. Now there is **3form Studio**, headed by **Azar McMaster** leading the team: **Jill Olson**, Central states; **Regina Stevenson**, the East; and **Dennis Wakaluk**, in the West. What's that all about?

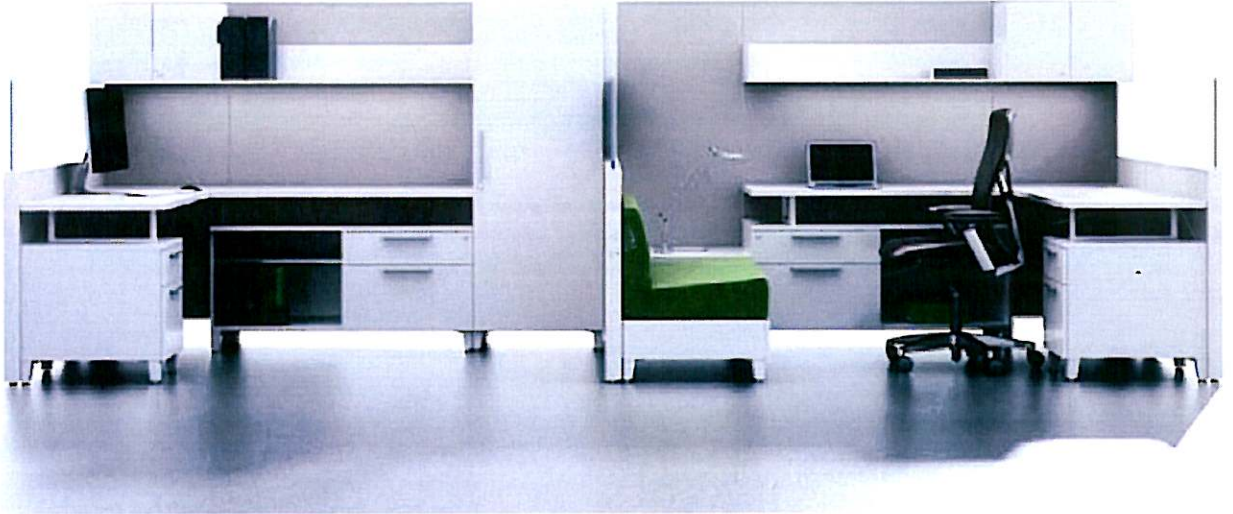
FULL STORY ON PAGE 15...



CITED:
"WHENEVER YOU ARE
IN THE MAJORITY,
IT IS TIME TO PAUSE
AND REFLECT."
—MARK TWAIN

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TRADITIONAL STORAGE ON LEFT, INVOLVE WORKSTATION ON RIGHT

Allsteel: Becoming Involved

by Brad Powell

In our pre-NeoCon story, OI 5.30.11, *Allsteel: Gathering for Collaboration*, we said that **Allsteel** was popping the cork to "let its creative juices bubble over. . . ." And surely it did at **NeoCon WTF 2011** with its **Gather** line, intended to facilitate collaboration in the workplace.

At the same time, Allsteel introduced (sort of) **Involve**, by **Qdesign** (which I erroneously referred to as *Invoke*). This was what is called a *soft* introduction because, while some of the Involve line was displayed, it was hard to get a good grip on exactly what it was (or even its correct name). Now I know!

Involve is a sort of interstitial/connective tissue of the contract furniture world, not quite an "organ" in itself, but more than an accessory. The line is a series of fairly diverse elements including:

- >Freestanding desks
- >Casegoods
- >Soft seating, including banquette-like seating that can be configured to independently create a work area
- >Tables
- >Divider screens



GATHER ELEMENTS



INVOLVE: CASEGOODS AND TABLE

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INVOLVE: WORKSTATION VARIATIONS

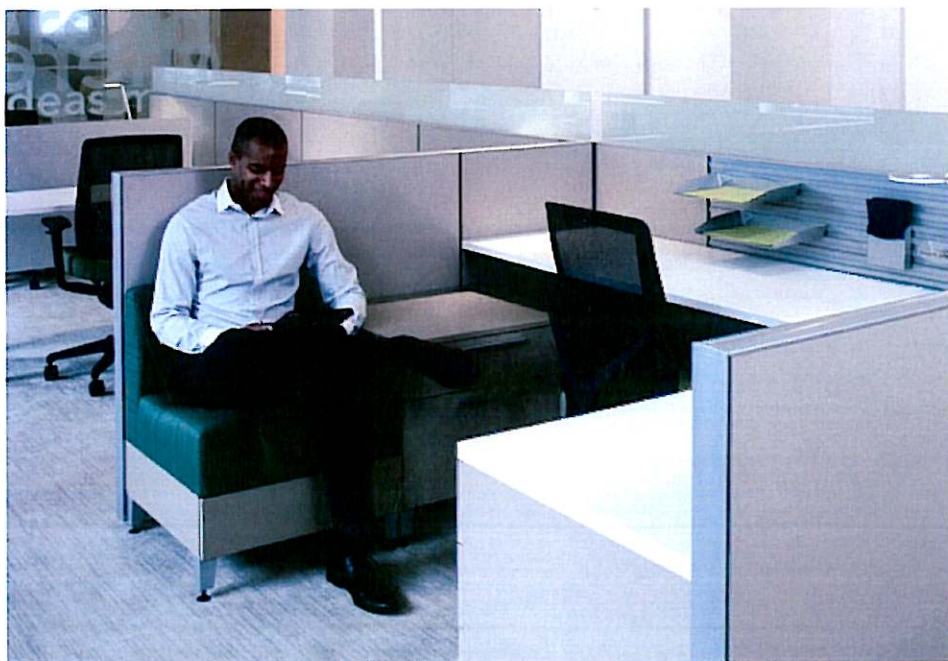
These elements are designed to enable clients to adapt traditional office layouts, such as those created by a panel or similar system (e.g., Allsteel's Terrace DNA or Stride), into more flexible environments that could facilitate informal or short interactions and add a residential feel.

The most interesting part of the story of Involve's development – and a great credit to the folks at Allsteel – is that the original design brief was for a laminate casegoods line. But, when QDesign's **Rick Joutras** brought up some of the prevalent trends in workplace furnishing, particularly the

blending of products (mixing and matching) to achieve desired functionality, the Allsteel team listened and learned. (It's interesting to note that the blended workplace was promoted in the 2001 recession as an effective way to reduce costs.)

The folks at **Inscape** (officeinsight 9.26.11, *The Inscape Solution*) noted that clients are more interested in product application than in the products themselves. Apparently agreeing with this notion, Allsteel developed its own answer. "Most collaboration now happens at the workstation, said **Jim Cahill**, Allsteel's vice president product development and management. "Until recently, the 'We' spaces – such as cafes, teaming and huddle rooms – have been the key focus for furnishings for collaborative needs. But increasingly, with technology driving the change, the 'I' space is now evolving." (Maybe we should call them "wee we spaces" now?)

"For instance," Mr. Cahill continued, "we're finding that a task chair pulled up to a desk surface isn't always the answer; when a worker needs to share information or brainstorm with colleagues within the workstation



INVOLVE: A CHANGE OF PACE/PLACE

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space, alternative seating is a better solution. Therefore, what Allsteel has introduced is a collection of designs to support such worker interaction. Involve also reflects a shift away from the panel system devoted solely to space division and technology support, and it acknowledges a less paper-intensive environment, where filing needs are less archival and where more open and dynamic storage is preferred."

While Inscap drew its products into a single "universal" system to answer the "applications" focus of specifiers, Allsteel used a variant of the more tradition "extensions" approach. But, while Involve may serve as an extension of a pre-existing product, it also has the flavor of universality because it extends not just to a single system, but many. Involve also augments Allsteel's vocabulary of universal (or interchangeable or standardized) parts and practices, such as work-surfaces, cabling capability, dimensioning, brackets, etc.

While Allsteel doesn't suppose that the Involve solution will be the answer for everyone, Involve's modularity and

ability to provide consistent aesthetics do offer attractive choices for some clients interested in reconfiguring or upgrading existing offices, plus the comfort of knowing that Allsteel is sensitive to the need to change workplaces over time. Furthermore, giving workers elements of comfort and a bit of residential feel can often mitigate the damage or bruised egos resulting from the reduction of workspace. We

also note that providing alternate and inviting seating as part of a workstation can be a prophylactic against the harm of static sitting in a single posture, even if it is in a good ergonomic chair.

Another key component of Involve is storage, and like many designs in the series, it perform double duty, acting as a space divider as well as its traditional storage function. Units are



INVOLVE: A RESIDENTIAL FEEL



INVOLVE: SOFT SEATING AND STORAGE

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stackable and include open as well as closed options. ■

Allsteel has also found a small hook into the trend toward an occasional (sometimes pervasive) nod to residential design in the workplace, typically represented by soft seating, attractive fabrics and occasional tables. Allsteel's "distinct residential vibe" can be attributed to the "fused edge lamination process," the first of its kind in North America, according to **Andrea Gauss**, product manager for Involve. Discussing Allsteel's laminate storage, she said, "What we're now able to achieve is a nearly invisible edge seam compared with traditional edge band-

ing, yielding a less industrial, more refined look."

I like Allsteel which, like Teknion, Kimball, KI and Inscape, are adding interesting and important flavors to the best of contract furniture offerings. All of these companies are gaining confidence, promising a more diverse future for workspace furnishings, and providing the additional competition needed to break through to the next plateau in workplace design.

For more information visit www.allsteeloffice.com; or on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Allsteel/249020105156>. ■



INVOLVE: FUSED EDGE DETAIL