



Well Site(d) Furniture

Landscape Forms was founded in 1969 in Comstock, Mich. by a kindhearted landscape architect who did not want to lay off his crews during the harsh Michigan winters. p18





Create

Create, by Allsteel is a simple system product that can
redefine just about any space in the office.

By **ROB KIRKBRIDE**



Call it the furniture version of the seven year itch. Allsteel has spent the past seven years literally redefining what it is as a company, through new products and redefining what it means to work. The time was well spent. The company has a stellar collection of products and an energy that is beginning to pay dividends.

The products and its commitment to innovation is attracting the attention of the design community as well. In short, Allsteel is back to being the fierce HNI brand that seems to be in the right market segment at the right time. And its leaders are all smiles.

"We are in a place where we are finding designers want to visit us," said D.J. Heil, director of product management, while sitting in the company's Chicago Merchandise Mart showroom. "They are looking for fresh thinking and fresh ideas and we have them at Allsteel."

The NeoCon crowds are gone, but the company's showroom in Chicago is still buzzing with activity, the aftereffect of a successful event. There is a mock-up in the back of the showroom for one customer. Several other customers groups filed through the showroom on a recent Thursday. Everyone, it seems, is looking for guidance on how work is changing and Heil said Allsteel is happy to provide some direction.

"About seven years ago, we started looking at our products," he said. "We wanted to find a playfulness to our design that could also be sophisticated. Allsteel has always looked at its portfolio to make sure it is relevant. Then came Stride (system), Acuity (ergonomic seat), Clarity (a BMW Group Design-

worksUSA chair). When you look at our showroom, all the products you see were developed in the last five years or so."

The latest is Create, a simple system product that can redefine just about any space in the office. The ongoing evolution of the workplace requires spaces that allow for the ability to change as businesses grow, an issue Allsteel addresses with Create. It is designed to bring teams together, make the most of a footprint, and offer privacy in an open environment. Create also supports the evolution of all types of work.

It can be described as a "simple" product only because it is simple to use and specify. It is well designed, which makes it seem simple on the surface. The underlying innovation makes it special. While the company's Stride product 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 and that's the point, Heil said. "We have no idea what the future holds," he said. "That's the premise of the product. Using exactly the same kit of parts, you can create any number of (office layouts)."

The new product line includes surfaces, supports, screens and storage that can be configured to form a wide variety of work environments. Create also has the flexibility and scal-





ability to allow customers to efficiently reconfigure their space on the spot, or over time.

“With Create, we readdressed the open plan environment and deconstructed it to its essential elements to support an organization’s individual spatial needs. We designed a system with the greatest level of flexibility for work in an individual or collaborative setting,” said Heil. “We want to put emphasis back on ‘work’ being what you do, not where you go.”

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 innovative Power Hub, the structural support for the system that can also double as a stand-alone power and data terminal. The Power Hub increases flexibility by providing a range of options -- from individual, focused workstations to collaborative areas, each connecting people to power and data. Previously, connection to power could limit space configuration options, but with Create, power becomes the catalyst that allows users to work in a wide variety of settings.

Create was designed with many configuration possibilities that can be employed either tethered or untethered, linear or organic. Key to this is Create’s unique trapezoidal-shaped work surfaces that offer an alternative approach to 120-degree planning. The trapezoid surface achieves 120-degree design without aligning users in face-to-face configurations and pro-

vides options so users do not fully face away from high-traffic areas such as hallways.

“It is truly a unique system. The premise of Create is ‘Humans Being,’” said Lynda Whittle, vice president of marketing. “The product is all about minimizing the effort to create a space and to give designers the flexibility to adapt the office to things like changing technology. The simplicity of the specification process makes it easy to design with.”

It is the paint to the designer’s canvas. “It is about instilling confidence with our customers,” Whittle added.

Allsteel also took into consideration the details. Depending on the configuration, the storage can overhang the end of the desk, creating a space for impromptu meetings. It is just the right height. There is a piece at the back of the desk for cord management that has notches of differing widths to keep cords organized.

A modesty screen can be popped off and flipped over, creating a space divider on the work surface. The storage unit is 10 inches wide and pulls out to create a spot for shoes. There is a lip to keep high heels in place. Depending on how it is specified, the work surfaces can be on wheels to move and create collaborative work spaces.

Although Create was launched at NeoCon as more of a concept of what is possible, it gives the industry a good idea of where the company is headed. And it looks as if it is headed in the right direction. 

