

Looking back on Orgatec

It's become common knowledge that the way we live and work is rampantly changing thanks to advancements in technology, which has encouraged these two very categories, life and work, to be less homogenous and more integrated



Technology's role in this growing phenomenon, namely that you are able to work anywhere there is a Wi-Fi signal - be it at home, at a coffee shop, at the airport, for example - has spawned a whole new way of thinking about the environments we work in. This informed the discourse and showcase of international office and object trade fair, Orgatec, held at the end of 2014 in Cologne, Germany, which attracted 624 exhibitors from 61 countries and more than 50,000 visitors over the five-day period.

One of the major players in office- and solutions-driven furniture design, the Dauphin HumanDesign Group, which originated in Germany but has a global reach including a presence in South Africa, had a stand of over 1000m², which was curated in a way that portrayed the overarching theme of Orgatec 2014, 'Modern Working Worlds'.

What was evident to Debbie Arnoldi-Radford, MD of Dauphin HumanDesign Group South Africa throughout the five-day showcase were three emerging trends in contemporary office furniture design, which were exemplarily showcased by Dauphin HumanDesign Group's stand, namely: 1) Bright, vibrant colour, 2) Bringing nature into the workplace, 3) Dynamic workspaces.

Bright, vibrant colour

Gone are the days of drab, grey and harshly lit offices as business owners are realising that their employees spend most of their time at work and that these spaces need to incite inspiration and harbour comfort in order to maximise productivity. "Splashes of colour and vibrant, bright statements in pink, blue, yellow and purple were used not only to invigorate the Dauphin product range, but also to illustrate how various work spaces in this new modern way of working require different solutions. Colour was used to demarcate various work spaces," said Arnoldi-Radford.

Bringing nature in

Just as with home décor and interiors, organic and natural materials provide a sense of warmth, comfort and understated luxury. Added to this an eco-sensibility of recycling and reusing natural materials, thereby bringing a bit of the outdoors in, is another trend that blurs the lines between living and working spaces. "Encouraging nature in the workspace through finishes and honouring green design principles were incorporated throughout the exhibition, and Dauphin is very proud of our sustainability policies around recycling and the use of recycled materials evident in the design of some of our products, such as the Dat-O chair," Arnoldi-Radford said.

Dynamic workspaces

The adaptability of work spaces to suit the needs of employers and their tasks was the starting point for Dauphin's Dynamic Spaces range of office furniture, which is a trend that is taking root in local office design according to Arnoldi-Radford.

"The new modern workplace, specifically with the advent of technology, requires workspaces that dynamically adapt to the worker, and on the function that the employee may be fulfilling at the time. The Dauphin 'solutions' showed all of the dynamic workspaces that can be easily and flexibly constructed with the use of our seating solutions, and also specifically our Atelier booth seating solution and room-in-room structures," she said.

Upon reflection on Orgatec 2014 Arnoldi-Radford believes that South African designers continue to be leaders in the field of office space design, who recognise that technology, as well as generational influences must be catered for in our workspaces. "What we're seeing locally is that South African office spaces are being designed around vibrant, dynamic spaces that are flexible and can easily adapt to the new ways of working. The days of cellular offices demarcated according to organisational hierarchy are well and truly in our past. Vibrant, energetic and flexible workspaces are the now and the future, and will continue to play a key role in employee satisfaction and productivity," she said.

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