

Tech talk

STEELCASE OFFERS INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON HOW TECHNOLOGY INFLUENCES OFFICE DESIGN

UAE: Steelcase's Dubai showroom at Design House was the venue of 'Technology Tuesday', an interactive dialogue on technology and design among architecture and interior design representatives in the local community.

A Steelcase initiative supported by Office Inspirations, the event on March 12, 2013, addressed the topic of how technology is the single greatest force driving the changes in the way we work, live and behave, and how it influences the way offices are designed.

Technology Tuesday's forum focused on two germane workplace issues: real estate optimisation and enhancing collaboration. It noted the bygone ways of stationary, dedicated cubicles and immobile data supports.

Back then, technology "embedded in that environment rather than bringing it to the environment", noted Christopher Buck, Steelcase managing director Middle East.

Changes in technology have given rise to smaller work spaces with wireless internet and flat monitors, or even no computers as many employees work with a laptop. With an increased mobile workforce, many companies have adopted hot desking — work space parking spots that can accommodate multiple mobile employees at phased intervals. Hot desking minimises work spaces as well as area requirements.

Space gained by condensing workspaces is being integrated back into the office area in the form of new shared spaces, or in-between spaces. Creating a setting ripe for team collaboration invites creativity and innovation. These areas are also where employees prefer to work.

Steelcase attested: "Choice



and control is the new status symbol — workers want freedom to choose where and how they work." However, this new office landscape hasn't developed without hiccups. Transient workers and virtual teams need the right tools and space to effectively connect.

An integrated furniture range by Steelcase, media:scape is designed with media solutions to foster collaboration and connection. media:scape is comprised of tables with co-ordinated media housings, and a distinctive interactive 'puck' to connect a laptop. Whiteboards can be part of the system too.

Compared with the old axial conference table model where the VGA cable holder held power over the media and the meeting, media:scape table shapes are organic to promote equality instead of hierarchy. The puck allows all team members to share. One puck serves one laptop, so multiple pucks can be accommodated.



Available with an HD videoconferencing option, external team members can view and interact with content and each other simultaneously, as if they were in the same room at the same time.

In fact, a videoconferencing session was held during the event with German-based Christian Neubauer, Steelcase's product manager MEMEA category leader

for integrated technologies. The experience was comfortable and seamless. media:scape's design took into consideration more inclusive and natural sightlines in comparison to older videoconferencing models.

media:scape is available in additional configurations — a lounge formation, a wheeled mobile cart, and a table-top version. Designed



to fit in an open plan space, it works double duty as a casual meeting area or chill-out space when not activated.

Securing a seat at a hot desk space or a booking meeting area is problematic for most mobile employees, especially when traveling. A Steelcase Workplace survey conducted over ten years indicated

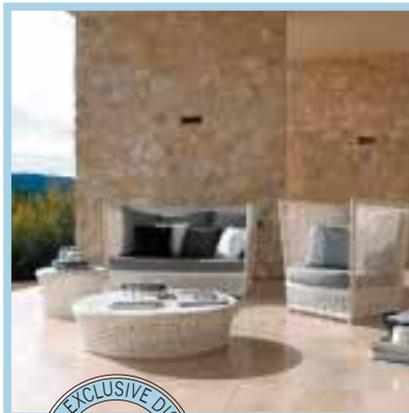
that 40% of workers are said to waste up to 30 minutes a day searching for collaboration space. RoomWizard II is a Steelcase solution that allows users to find and reserve a room or an open collaborative space from a smartphone, a network PC, or the touchscreen itself. The small display physically mounts to the space, so on-site

employees can visually see the scheduling status in real-time. It displays green or red depending on availability.

Gestures is a new office chair specifically designed to accommodate users interacting with mobile devices, such as tablets and phone texting. Addressing nine different postures specific to these active

functions, the Gesture chair is set to debut in late 2013.

Participating in Tuesday Technology provided an exciting insight into some of Steelcase's proactive solutions to integrating technology into today's workplace. As technology is ever evolving, it is evident the time has come for office design to change.



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