Best Practices and Common Pitfalls of Buying Office Furniture

vari®

Industry Overview

Seventy-six percent of adults ages 18-34 say their overall impression of a company is influenced by its office's design and aesthetics. And, 55% ages 35-54 agree.

— Ipsos workplace study, 2017

Nothing impacts the productivity of a company and its ability to grow like its workforce. And few things affect employees more than the office setup, which can be unnecessarily restrictive in both creative and physical ways.

Science is consistently finding new proof that sedentary cubicle-style environments hamper health and happiness and that talented people simply won't settle for dingy, dull workspaces that sap their spirits. Today's workers don't play by yesterday's rules, and the companies that embrace this reality will be better positioned for future success. Dynamic teams deserve—and demand—dynamic digs.

The key factors in developing an office setup that attracts great talent and inspires great work are flexibility, simplicity, and design. This guide will help you achieve all three.

Whether the paint on the walls of your new office has yet to dry or it's simply time to inject some new energy into an established space, we understand the trepidation that comes with purchasing furniture for an entire office.

How much money should be allocated to each employee? Or is it a square-footage equation? What are the best ways to future-proof a space? A few initial questions spawn countless follow-ups, to the point that the room starts spinning.

Relax. We have the answers. But first, let's review the furniture industry from a traditional standpoint.

The Furniture Industry, Unmasked

The dealer-manufacturer relationship relies on unnecessary middlemen in the purchasing process. It's complicated for a reason: The more people involved, the more money gets distributed.

You are right to be wary. It can be a maddening experience.

Once you decide to pull the trigger on a big purchase, the wait can be frustrating. Dealers represent several manufacturers, and waiting for bids from each brand is time consuming. Traditional bids can be hundreds of pages with thousands of line items. The more complicated it is, the more it costs you. It's a tough spot to be in, as your hands are often tied.

This is especially true if you're working in a brand-new space and timelines have shifted. Project delays mean that a dealer has to store

your product until it's time to install. This comes with warehousing fees that drive up your total cost.

Luckily, the traditional ways of buying office furniture are quickly becoming outdated and being replaced by more honest and transparent methods, including ours. At Vari, we've made it our mission to elevate the way people work. That means taking a better approach to streamline the furniture-buying process so that creating a flexible, active workspace is an achievable goal for all businesses, especially those ready for growth.

Whether you're curious to explore working with us or another provider, this guide will help you successfully navigate the furniture-buying process and make the best selection for your needs.

How to Evaluate Furniture Needs
for Your Desired Workspace Dynamics

You have the will to outfit your office with new furniture, but how do you find the way? The formula varies, but a good place to start is by soliciting feedback from those who spend 40 hours (or more) per week in the workspace. Ask questions and encourage ideas. The more information you have at your disposal, the better.

Observation is also a smart way to gauge how workers behave on a daily basis. Sure, technologies exist that can help facility managers evaluate heavy traffic areas and workflow patterns, but the eye test can fill in the gaps. How people move and use the space should educate your decisions.

Departments, teams, and individuals will have different preferences when it comes to their particular layouts. Some feel invigorated by open-floor plans and communal tables, while others require the privacy of an individualized space. That's why flexibility is the keystone to your approach.

The static office furniture of the (not-so-distant) past has a way of hampering energy and, as a result, productivity. Cubicle farms are easy targets when discussing outdated approaches to office design and employee engagement, but millions of workers who aren't confined to a cubicle are still stuck working in confined rooms that are equipped with heavy desks and insufficient light.

Opening up the space is a crucial element of designing a dynamic office. Flexible furniture helps achieve that. Yesterday's typical conference room is inefficient by design: Open a heavy wooden door to find a windowless room with a huge table in the middle, surrounded by as many chairs as can fit in the space. The door opens and shuts repeatedly while workers excuse themselves to get up and down in their seats. Time slows to a standstill. We've all been in countless meetings like that.

Today, we can create a completely new experience that's predicated on fluid movement and ease of use. Permanent walls give way to a wide-open space that can be reconfigured innumerable times with flexible varieties. That heavy conference table is replaced with a "standing" variety (42 inches tall) with a handful of stools or adjustable-height chairs in case someone wants to sit. Participants simply walk up, grab a spot at the table, and immediately get down to business. These conference tables have castors on the legs, which allow teams to flex their space in a moment's notice.

Obviously, every office situation will be unique—a building with 50 employees won't need the same elements as one with 5,000—but there's an equation to help identify what pieces are compatible. It's based on density, or how many employees per 1,000 square feet. That headcount ratio might be 5:1 or 8:1, but it gives you a base point from which to start designing. For example, if the ratio is high and the area is dense, it's sometimes ideal to have some clusters of seated desks in the blueprint in order to fill the space and account for everybody.

A lot of times, the best question to ask first is: What's more important—having everyone at the same workstation or meeting the headcount?

Calculating the Total Cost of Office Furniture

The base price of office furniture obviously isn't the only cost involved in making a purchase. It's a mathematical equation with several variables. The total cost of ownership includes delivery, installation, future space reconfigurations, cost to business due to installation downtime or disruptions, and more.

When it comes to the initial investment itself, here are a few important factors to consider:

Pricing

Traditional dealers utilize a line pricing and discount model that omits a lot of the costs involved with a purchase. Vari's product pricing is all-inclusive, and while it might come in slightly higher than other bids, we believe our solutions are more cost-effective in the long run due to our end-to-end model, which includes a hassle-free return policy and best-in-class customer service initiatives. Remember: time is money.

Delivery and Installation

Installation costs with other brands can be unpredictable thanks to variables such as availability, project timelines, and other hurdles. Vari products are in stock and ready to ship, so we can install in about 15 days of the initial order. Plus, we offer free delivery and installation on qualifying orders.*

Space Design

With traditional furniture, there's a lot of pressure to nail the initial space plan, and it's usually required to be set in stone months before it'll actually be installed. This can involve hiring the services of a design firm, which drives up both the cost and the time required for the project. While the resulting space may work well for your employees on Day 1, the effectiveness will decline as your business evolves and headcount is increased or decreased—which can obviously change leading right up to the install. You'll want solutions that can easily adapt over time.

Timelines

Most design firms or dealers offer a minimum of 12-16 weeks for project completion. Consider how much can change in four months' time. Every project can experience different developments like inspection complications, permit delays, construction issues, inclement weather, and so much more. A lead time of 12-16 weeks means that furniture is ordered and scheduled for delivery long before any unforeseen delays pop up.

Complexity of Choices and Challenges in Customization

Many of the office furniture vendors you'll discover specialize in custom options, which give you an endless array of design choices. While this is, without a doubt, valuable for many businesses, others—particularly those growing rapidly—need speed and hassle-free processes. That's why we keep our product offering simple. Other dealers have the order manufactured after receipt, which causes long lead times. Instead, we keep all of our product in-stock and ready to ship. Ordering a truckload

of furniture is one thing; finding the time and resources required for proper installation is another beast altogether.

Assembly

An entire Vari workstation (full desk, return table, and accessories) can be assembled in just minutes, whereas it can often take hours to put together a traditional workstation. If a hassle-free installation is important to you, look for easy assembly so you can get back to work faster—helping you avoid disruptions like renting a temporary location or squeezing several employees into a small space.

Installation

Estimating the costs involved with installing conventional furniture can become quite complex when multiple product lines or brands are involved. This is why dealer bids can vary so greatly. Plus, traditional furniture installations are often expensive because they're based on needs for highly skilled labor, after-hours delivery fees, site evaluations, and more—none of which applies to Vari.

Extra Fees

It's not uncommon for installation costs to equal 20% of the total project with dealers and other suppliers. That means on a $50,000 order, you can expect to pay up to $10,000 in installation fees. Imagine what you could do without those extra charges.

Most manufacturers bank on the permanence of your workspace and expect to gain an additional 50% of your total project cost over 10 years of changes and space reconfiguration fees. You won't have that problem with flexible furniture solutions from Vari. Because our products are so easy to assemble and disassemble, you save time and money anytime you need to reconfigure your space.

Future-Proofing an Office
with Flexible Solutions

Despite the best-laid plans and detailed growth forecasts, no one can predict the future of a company. What your business needs today will change—and likely change often—in the months and years to come. Buying new furniture shouldn't be an annual exercise, which is why flexible solutions are perfect for "future-proofing" your office.

Today, companies are expanding and changing faster than ever—reconfiguring furniture to most efficiently use your space could save you the cost of investing in more square footage. Perhaps you reorganize your business structure, which in turn could be benefited by the movement of your departments? Maybe you add a team of contractors and need to maximize your existing floor plan? Whatever the case, make sure your furniture moves and changes seamlessly with your business.

Ultimately, it's crucial to think beyond the initial cost. Consider the total cost of ownership and the benefits included. Most manufacturers bank on the permanence of the furniture in your workspace: If you spend $200,000 on a project with them, for example, they often expect to profit an extra 50% over the next decade thanks to additional needs. That's another $100,000 spent on repairs, reconfigurations, or replacement furniture, which you may not have in your budget. It's hard to foresee such a giant hidden cost.

From minor adjustments to major reconfigurations, make sure the products you invest in don't require construction crews (ours don't even involve tools), so changes can be made instantly without interrupting the flow of the workday. At Vari, we take pride in designing equipment that's easy to assemble, reassemble, move, and modify to accommodate your growth and meet the needs of your employees.

Check out **our website** as a reference point.

Hidden Costs
Furniture Buyers Often Encounter

Hiding between the lines of many office furniture invoices are unseen costs and fees that can significantly drive up your final price. Did you know:

- Many dealers charge fees for warehousing furniture if your timeline shifts. At Vari, we manage our supply chain from end to end so that there are no fees due to your timeline changing. We know that hiccups happen. Hassles don't have to accompany them.

- Traditional office furniture reconfigurations require scheduling a team of professionals for disassembly and reassembly, plus the costs of paying for labor, ordering new parts, re-carpeting or tiling if the floor was impacted, and on and on. Some traditional workstations can take eight hours to move—a full workday!—and installation crews typically charge between $50 and $80 per hour for labor. That means a single traditional workstation could cost between $400 and $640 to move, and that's not even factoring in the lost employee productivity. At Vari, we reconfigured our entire sales floor of 78 workstations within an eight-hour window, with little-to-no impact to our business operations. Typically, larger moves of 50-100 workstations take a week to execute.

- Many manufacturers address product issues by replacing parts. This requires scheduling labor to come out and diagnose the problem, ordering parts, waiting for the parts to come in, scheduling labor again, and hoping that fixes the issue. Instead of wasting your time and disrupting your business, we simply send you a brand-new product. Easy enough, right?

With Vari, installation timelines and expectations are known right off the bat. Because our products are designed to be simple to configure, we complete installations quickly without major interruptions to the project. Better yet, our internal operations team is staffed with project managers who will work with you and manage your timeline at no additional cost.

Putting Our Fans First

The Vari approach to office furniture replaces the complex, inefficient dealer model with a holistic, end-to-end solution that customers can trust. Many new buyers don't realize what a hassle the furniture-buying process is until they've experienced it firsthand, but our goal is to make the process simple and painless for everyone involved. Our solution makes more sense and offers busy, growing companies a simpler way to set up their space.

We don't think furnishing your workspace should be difficult. It should be fun! The office furniture industry has long relied on complex pricing, hidden charges, and long timelines to bloat its bottom line. We've created a better way. Vari's products and processes are different by design: Everything is simple to order, simple to assemble, and simple to reconfigure as your needs change.

We design it. We service it. From concept to installation, you can work directly with us for everything you need. Say goodbye to unnecessary middlemen and third parties.

Purchase our products with the same simplicity as purchasing anything else online— directly through us or through one of our trusted partner retailers. Say hello to the convenience of one-stop shopping.

A core selection of finishes means our products are always in stock. You can easily add more products as your business needs change, and they'll arrive in just a few business days. Endless wait times are officially over.

Many of our products assemble in minutes, making it easier to set up your space or change it when necessary. An included Allen wrench is often the only tool you'll need, and many of our products come fully assembled and ready to use out of the box. The proof is in the patents, most of which are for mechanisms that make assembly much easier than traditional office furniture.

We offer timelines that are nearly unheard of in the office furniture industry, with most projects moving from order to installation in as few as 15 days.

We've made services like space design, delivery, and even installation free* to customers so they don't have to hassle with hidden costs. We take our partnership seriously and strive to make buying office furniture as painless as possible.

Our simplistic product design means you can put your private office together in a couple of hours. A workstation with a full desk, monitor arms, return table, storage, and seating takes about 30 minutes for two people to assemble. With some assistance, you can enclose your new workspace in QuickFlex Walls™ in an hour or two.

Even better, we offer free shipping and installation on qualifying orders*. Depending on project-specific variables, our installation teams strive to complete the full scope of your work in about a day. This helps you get into your space faster and minimizes office disruptions.

Are you ready to make the leap and provide your workers with a Vari Active Workspace™? There's no better time to make such a strong investment in them and your company at large.

Let's do this.

Workspace Planning Checklist

Need to find the right furniture for your growing business? It's easy to overlook potential obstacles when you're quickly trying to plan a new workspace. That's why we put together this simple checklist so you can approach your new space the right way.

- ✓ Talk to your teams to understand how they use the space to get a better understanding of their workspace needs.

- ✓ Request a floorplan or CAD file from your building or real estate partner.

- ✓ Consolidate a list of furniture partners that offer flexible furniture solutions to scale with your changing needs.

- ✓ Request space plans from your top furniture vendors or architecture firm.

- ✓ Review final space plan and vendor quote looking for any extra fees for shipping, installation, storage, etc.

- ✓ Consider requesting free demo products or touring your vendor's showroom to try the furniture for yourself.

- ✓ Ensure vendor timelines are firm and work with your move-in date.

- ✓ Add a few extra days for unforeseen changes.

- ✓ Ask about post-installation service such as a workspace evaluation after 30 days to ensure the space continues to meet your needs.

- ✓ Approve vendor quote and schedule install.

Other Resources

Choosing the Right Standing Desk for You:

https://www.vari.com/height-adjustable-standing-desk-guide

Video: Vari Makes Office Furniture Simple:

https://www.vari.com/active-office-resources/vari-makes-office-furniture-simple