

INSIDER'S GUIDE

The 10 Biggest Mistakes to Avoid When Buying Office Furniture



INSIGHTS FOR A BETTER BUYING EXPERIENCE

Insider's Guide to Buying Office Furniture: The 10 Biggest Mistakes to Avoid

Buying office furniture requires practical considerations that go far beyond aesthetics. The comfort and safety of your employees and your guests must be factored into every decision. By avoiding a few commonly made buying mistakes, you can help ensure that the furniture you select will yield improved employee satisfaction, productivity and profits for your business.



OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #1

Buying Without A Vision Or Plan

All too often, people buy furniture impulsively. Rushing through purchasing decisions, however, could lead to choices that will be regretted for years to come. So before you invest in office furniture, we recommend you:

- ***Accurately Assess Your Needs***

Before beginning the selection process, think about how an item will be used. If it's a chair, for example, will it be used occasionally (as in a guest chair) or all day (such as a desk chair)? Does it have to be height-adjustable or fixed? Should it be light enough to be moved or will it be stationary? The more thought you give to a purchase, the greater likelihood you'll get what you need.

- ***Analyze What's Good And Bad About What You Already Have***

It can also be helpful to solicit input from any staff members who use the furniture on a daily basis. Otherwise, you may never know that chairs are difficult to adjust or that your receptionist really needs a desk with a keyboard tray.

- ***Choose Timeless Style Over What's Trendy***

You usually get the best long-term value by choosing furniture that has a simple, yet appealing design. By purchasing furniture with a timeless appearance, it will be easier to add complementary pieces as your company grows and styles change.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #2

Not Considering Employee Comfort

When it comes to office furniture, comfort equals productivity. Ergonomic design is critical to the comfort and productivity of your staff. Features such as contoured seats, lumbar backrest supports, adjustable seats and armrests can help minimize work-related injuries and lost workdays. In turn, those factors can help reduce your costs for worker's compensation and medical insurance.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #3



Selecting The Wrong Fabrics

It's important to evaluate the utility and use a piece of furniture is going to have before choosing a fabric. If cleanliness is paramount, wipe-able vinyl might be the right choice for you. Vinyl is great for areas where stains are more prevalent — from break rooms to examination rooms. And, if you manage a healthcare facility or medical office, asking for vinyl may not be enough. There are specific vinyl fabrics that can withstand cleaning with bleach solutions to eliminate bacteria and other pathogens. If your furniture needs to sustain heavy-use, then durable, engineered fabrics such as Crypton® might be an option. The individually treated fibers resist stains, moisture and bacteria. Leather remains the most desired fabric for executive suites, conference rooms and guest areas – and comes in many different grades. Mesh fabrics also have gained popularity, especially in task chairs. That's because mesh allows airflow to the skin, keeping employees comfortable while they sit for long periods of time.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #4

Getting A Product That's Not Rated For The Task

If everyone had the same build or body type, buying desk chairs and lobby furniture would be a whole lot easier. But that's not the real world. Instead, you need to be able to comfortably accommodate individuals of all shapes and sizes. For example, a desk chair that's only rated for use by individuals weighing up to 250 pounds can lead to problems if you have employees who weigh more than that. Choosing an incorrectly rated item can result in costly damage to the chair, and more importantly, injury to the person sitting in it. Any savings you would realize by purchasing a lower-rated chair would be far exceeded by the cost of your liability to the person who was injured.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #5

Choosing Price Over Value

Everyone loves a bargain, but when you're evaluating price, make sure you give equal weight to value. To make the smartest buying decision possible, consider the cost of ownership over the expected life of the furniture. Here's an example: a chair that's designed for occasional use will generally cost less than one that's designed to withstand heavy wear and tear. While it may be tempting to purchase the lower-priced chair, that would be a mistake if the chair will receive heavy use. Repairs and replacements could easily cancel out any initial savings and could even make the product more costly over time. There are occasions, of course, when you must purchase an inexpensive item to "make do" in an emergency. In that case, consider the item disposable and factor in a more suitable replacement in your budget planning as soon as it is economically feasible.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #6

Not Buying With Future Growth In Mind

Whether you're starting a new business or adding furniture due to expansion, you should take into account how every piece will fit into your current and future environment. Explore the entire line to see what you may be able to do long-term, even if you can only afford a few chairs and desks or aren't ready to buy a big conference table just yet. We suggest you:

- ***Consider How Furniture Will Adapt To Technology***

Think about how much technology has changed in the last 10 years. Today, desks need space and outlets for laptops, monitors, printers, PDAs, mobile phone chargers, printers, task lights and more. So when making your purchase, it's important to think about what space and storage you may need a few years from now, i.e. Does the furniture have the ability to hide cords? Will your conference room accommodate video conferencing?



- ***Keep Your Workspace Flexible***

It's a good idea to select furniture that can be easily moved and reconfigured as new needs arise. This will give you the flexibility to change your floor plan as necessary. With wireless networks and technology becoming more popular, employees may not even need specific workspaces. In some offices, employers are electing to put wheels on desks and outlets on the floor. This encourages employees to pair up on projects and work as a team.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #7

Not Coordinating The Product's Life Expectancy With Your Accounting Department's Depreciation Schedule

If your accounting department depreciates major furniture purchases over a 10-year period, yet you purchase items with a five-year warranty, you may be forced to replace them sooner than your budget will allow. As a result, your purchasing needs will quickly grow out of sync with your company's accounting practices.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #8

Not Evaluating The True Cost Of Ownership

The base price of the furniture is just the starting point. In order to fully evaluate true cost of ownership you must add in items such as freight charges, taxes, any packaging or special handling required and services such as assembly and installation. Even the term "Delivered Price" can mean many things. Will the shipment only be delivered to your dock? Will you require inside delivery? It's important to factor all of these items into the item's total cost while making a purchasing decision. Be sure to review and compare warranties, as well. Hopefully, you'll never need them. But if you do, it's good to know upfront exactly what is covered, and for how long.



OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #9

Not Asking Your Dealer To Keep Your Standards On File

Once you've established specs for items like task chairs, you can simply specify "task chair" the next time you order. It's a lot easier than digging back through your files for the correct fabric description, item number, chair rating, etc. By keeping standards on file, your vendor will automatically know that "task chair" really means an "executive synchro-tilt task chair in #37 Navy fabric with a 12-position height-adjustable back and pneumatic seat adjustment, rated for 350 pounds." Not only will this help ensure that the new item matches your current furniture, but it will save you valuable time as well.

OFFICE FURNITURE BUYING MISTAKE #10

Doing Business With A Vendor That Offers Little Or No Support After The Sale

Most vendors will be attentive to your needs while they're in the process of making the sale, but what happens afterwards? Neglecting to properly assess how the vendor will handle warranty service and other satisfaction-related issues can lead to headaches down the line. It's a good idea to ask your vendor questions such as "how will you handle warranty repairs?" or "what if the desk becomes scratched in shipping?" Ask your vendor for references so you can find out how they handled any problems that arose during the delivery and/or installation process in the past. The last thing you want is a vendor that ships the order to you and then forgets about it. Even something as simple as returning a small side table with a broken leg can become costly and time-consuming if you don't have a local representative who can step in and offer the service and support you require.

THE SMART BUYERS CHECKLIST

12 Key Questions To Ask Your Office Furniture Dealer

Do you offer the breadth and depth of furniture choices I need to meet the unique needs of my office? (i.e. In terms of design, comfort, function, durability, maintenance, and other key criteria my team and I have deemed important.)

Do you offer a wide selection of fabrics in colors and styles that will complement my office's image and decor?

What can you tell me about the different types of fabrics? (i.e. How are they treated, what are their performance ratings, how do I clean the fabric, and why should I choose one fabric over another?)

What is the life expectancy and performance rating of the furniture that I am buying?

What is your "Delivered Price"? Does the price include freight charges, taxes, any packaging or special handling required and services such as assembly and installation?

How long will it take to deliver and install my furniture? What steps do you take to ensure that my furniture will be delivered on time and on budget?

What is your return policy? What would I need to do to initiate the process? Are there any restocking fees or other costs involved?

What is your repair policy? Are replacement parts easy to obtain? What would I need to do to initiate the process?

What is the warranty period and what exactly does it cover?

Do you offer loaner furniture in the event we need to return an item for replacement or warranty repair? _____

What kind of service and support do you offer after the sale?

Can you provide me with any local references?

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