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CITED:
 "WHENEVER YOU
 FIND YOURSELF ON
 THE SIDE OF THE
 MAJORITY, IT IS
 TIME TO PAUSE
 AND REFLECT."
 —MARK TWAIN

Gibson Interior Products: Polishing Its Diamonds

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FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...



Project Focus: Mullen Advertising

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FULL STORY ON PAGE 7...



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Attendees at the **New York Design Center** experienced a rewarding journey last Wednesday at the third installment of NYDC's **Design 4 Healthcare** series. The New York office of **HOK** arrived at a packed **Maxon** (an HNI company) showroom with five senior professionals to talk about their soon-to-be-completed **Patient Pavilion** for the **Harlem Hospital**. HOK's patient-centered care design integrates inpatient, emergency room, and outpatient services under one roof. The new *Patient Pavilion* uses art, light, and color in a therapeutic manner that engages the greater community as well as the patients.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 9...





TAYCO UPSYSTEM

Gibson Interior Products: Polishing Its Diamonds

by Peter Carey

When I first met **Ken Gibson**, he was busy in his showroom at the **New York Design Center** supervising the arrival and installation of a new shipment of furniture. It struck me as a sort of timeless scenario; a furniture industry veteran educating his staff on the optimum placement of a piece of furniture – in this case, a credenza – so that it looks good and is congruent with its surroundings. Reconciling



the form and function of any piece of furniture within the footprint of a showroom is a thankless task, especially if it is done so well as to appear effortless.

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The company, now known as Gibson Interior Products, was launched in Chicago at NeoCon 1993. On the advice of his longtime friend, **Greg Burke** of **Lane Office Furniture**, NYC, Mr. Gibson arrived at the **Merchandise Mart** without a single company on his line card. That soon changed when **Rebecca Boenigk**, president and CEO of the ergonomic seating company, **Neutral Posture**, signed him up. That year an economic downturn was in full swing and, although it may not rival the severity of our current economic climate, the future of contract interiors was just as unsettled as it is now.

Ergonomic seating was gaining momentum, especially in companies sensitive to possible workers compensation claims, and selling **Neutral Posture** was an inviting opportu-

nity. “Ego versus ergo,” has been Mr. Gibson’s argument for choosing his products over the competition. “Is it

about using a chair that just looks cool, or is it about having a chair that is actually healthy for the user to sit in?”



KRUZE AND CHOO, SEATING FROM BOSS DESIGNS, A DIVISION OF TAYCO



INSTALLATION OF JOFCO'S FOCUS LOUNGE SEATING GIBSON'S SHOWROOM

companies

The product may not win any beauty contests but is exceedingly comfortable and absolutely necessary in certain applications, such as 24-hour call centers.

Mr. Gibson cleverly started out by positioning his product, not in front of furniture dealers or interior designers, but in front of end-users and facility managers. Since Neutral Posture is a certified woman-owned business, it was an attractive choice for diversity managers in large corporations. Going on seventeen years now, the relationship between Neutral Posture and Gibson Office Interiors is as strong as ever.

It has always been about relationships for Mr. Gibson. Being in charge of an independent rep group is not the same as running a manufacturer's showroom. “It's a twenty-four-hour business,” said Mr. Gibson. “As an independent company, I run the risk of going out of business every 30 days.”

Since Mr. Gibson is the sole employer and leaseholder of his showroom, he bears the brunt of today's hand-to-mouth economic reality. One gets the impression, however, that he has an innate talent for finding the path of least resistance. If he can't get an appointment with a designer, he will try the dealer; if the dealer is too busy, he will contact the end user. He sees it, not as a food chain, but as an ecosystem with each contact having their own discrete point of reference and avenue of approach. No link in the chain is more important than another in getting one's product on the job.

The relationships with furniture dealers and end users forged by Mr. Gibson in the early days are still the backbone of his business. For the past five years, however, Gibson Office Interiors has been increasing its relationships with the A&D community. “I treat A&D the same as other market sectors,” said Mr. Gibson. “In

the end, if I deliver on budget and on time, I get repeat business.”

Interior designers with expensive tastes and small budgets would be well served to check out what Gibson Office Interiors currently has in its showroom. The firm recently completed a large job with **TPG Architecture** using Tayco’s furniture line, **Up**. “[TPG Partner] **Larry Berger** complimented me on how the project turned out,” said

Mr. Gibson. “He noted that this system is not just tops and legs; it’s a real, functioning, adaptable desking system at an affordable price.”

The most recent addition to Gibson Office Interiors’s stable of manufacturers is **Jofco**. Known for its upscale design, high quality, and beautiful natural wood, Jofco casegoods, seating, and tables are standard fare for Gibson’s A&D clientele. Along with **Si-**

tOnIt (*always ships within 2-10 days*), both manufacturers are also making great headway into the ever-expanding healthcare market.

“I look for diamonds in the rough,” said Mr. Gibson, referring to the types of companies he likes to represent. He has a knack for spotting an under-represented line and, over time, increasing their sales. His long-term commitment to companies such as Tayco and Logiflex is apparent: both have been represented by Gibson Office Interiors for over twelve years.

Mr. Gibson has the respect of the industry that you won’t find with some other independents. “Being a veteran, when I was offered a company like Jofco or SitOnIt, I was honored.” That also may be because Mr. Gibson does not have the reputation for the hard sell. “When it comes to connecting my product lines with end users, I am more interested in enlightening and educating my customers than selling to them.” Those words sound like music to any facility manager.

Never the one to play favorites, Mr. Gibson seems to love equally all of the furniture lines he represents. “These days when we are out there fighting for the crumbs of products that belong in a project but have not yet been specified, I cannot give any of my lines short shrift. Each one fills an important niche, and it is important for us to be as diversified as possible.” One look around his showroom takes in the range of his lines from corporate to hospitality to healthcare, and it is clear the pricing for the products is just as flexible.

The most important piece of business advice was given to him by his father: “Be honest and return all phone calls.” Mr. Gibson stays on top of business activity the old fashioned way. All phone messages and key project information are still delivered to him via hand written notes. “It has to be on



JOFCO'S LINAIR CASEGOOD SYSTEM



JOFCO'S COLLECTIVE LOUNGE SYSTEM

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paper, otherwise things will fall through the cracks." Too true. How often has any one of us accidentally deleted an email or just forgotten something that was on our to-do list because it was buried deep in our email inbox?

When the conversation turned to the future of the contract furniture industry and the upcoming **NeoCon 2010**, Mr. Gibson was unflinchingly honest: "Many of the people in the industry are overwhelmed and understaffed; they can't help but have the mindset of shell-shocked survivors. Right now there are too many manufacturers and too much product. Some of them are not going to survive. With a hundred other companies similar to the ones I represent, each customer needs to have a reason to buy from any of them." Ken Gibson provides ample reason for customers to keep returning. ■

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SITONIT: FOCUS RESONANCE



SITONIT: FOCUS EXECUTIVE



PATRICIAN: PATIENT CHAIR

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TAYCO: UP

project focus | Mullen Advertising TGP Architecture

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For a multidisciplinary firm with a continuing need for creative talent, Mullen was sensitive to the need for an inviting and conducive working environment. The current economic climate made it a good time to get favorable real estate terms. But, of course, the same economy presents other challenges, and most sensible business are budgeting on the tight side.

Fortunately for it, and a good sign for our industry, Mullen was not going to make the move without a top-notch A&D firm. They picked New York's



LARRY BERGER

TPG Architecture with industry veteran **Larry Berger**, Managing Design Director, leading the team.

These days, not many are willing to pay for new furniture. “No capital expenditures,” seems to be the rule of the day. But, “the firm was going from 90% private offices to 80% open planning, and we had to deal with a very difficult floor plate,” said Mr. Berger. “We needed a leg-based system with a 120 degree configuration capability, one that would meet a tight budget. We picked **Tayco’s Up** system.”

Working with **Greg Burke** of **Lane Office Furniture**, NYC, and Tayco independent representative **Ken Gibson**, **Gibson Interior Products** (See story this issue.), Mr. Berger and his team were able to bring in the project on time and on budget, creating a space that both he and the client were very pleased with.

“How was dealing with Tayco?” we asked.

“Fantastic,” in a word, replied Mr. Berger. “Of course, everyone else was asking, “Who is Tayco?”

Tayco is a Canadian firm who, according to Mr. Berger, “is very easy to do business with and very responsive to suggested changes. Mullen was one

of the most seamless projects I have ever done.”

Before they got the project, Tayco installed a 6 station mock-up, without charge. Mullen personnel used the mock-up for 30 days. They were pleased with the product, but not without some modifications, which Tayco easily took in stride. “The product [Up] is simply engineered and easy to install,” said Mr. Berger.

Tayco, traditionally a vendor for the middle market, has set its eye on getting a bigger slice of the mid-market, according to **Roseanna Catenaro**, marketing director, who we met at NeoCon 09. With this in mind, the company announced at NeoCon 09 that it had formed a joint venture with UK high-design seating manufacturer **Boss Design**.

Built upon a small array of components, Tayco’s *Up* was a Best of NeoCon Silver award winner at NeoCon 2006, and a Gold ADEX Award 2008 and is GREENGUARD certified for indoor air quality and complies with low-emitting materials LED credit 4.5. *Up* is a versatile post-and-beam system defined by innovative support components that create workstations, management offices, teaming environments, touch down stations, and con-

project focus

ferencing spaces. The system includes peripherals that enhance flexibility and functionality in the workplace. ■

Photography: TPG Architecture

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www.tayco.com,

www.bosdesign.co.uk



TAYCO: UP