How To Maximize Your Office Furniture Investment

section 1 of 3

The following is a service publication of Haworth, Inc. It’s intended to be a resource guide to help you quantify your next office furniture purchase.

Service Considerations--What services you should look for from the manufacturer to help maximize your office furniture purchase.

Selecting a Manufacturer--What factors to take into consideration when selecting an office furniture manufacturer.

Service Considerations--What services you should look for from the manufacturer to help maximize your office furniture purchase.

But what is “value?” It’s a term that’s often ambiguous because it tends to mean something different to everybody. It’s best thought of as a comfort zone reached when you feel good about both the product’s price tag and the benefits derived from ownership. But again, what benefits are you looking for in an office furniture manufacturer and its products?

How much experience does the manufacturer have in the office furniture industry? Is office furniture a specialty or is it a sideline to the company’s overall business?

Does the manufacturer offer a full and complete range of products and services? Chances are probably only a handful that can provide all of the quality products and services demanded in today’s marketplace. Here are the questions to ask when considering manufacturers.

Does the manufacturer’s record for on-time shipments? Does the company have a mission statement that embraces quality and the concept of total quality management? Does the company have a mission statement that embraces quality and the concept of total quality management? Does the company have a mission statement that embraces quality and the concept of total quality management?

How big is the manufacturer? If your company has more than one location, will the manufacturer be able to visit you at all your office locations?

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How long has the manufacturer been in business? You want to be sure that the company will be around to serve your needs well into the future.

As you undoubtedly are aware, the options, styles and functions available in the world of office furniture are as diverse as the needs of the work itself. That’s a good thing. It means that whatever your needs are there is a manufacturer with the products and services to match your company’s specific needs. But ad infinitum, all these options can add to the complexity of the selection process.

So that’s why we’ve developed this workbook to help ensure that you maximize the value of your office furniture investment.

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How much experience does the manufacturer have in the office furniture industry? Is office furniture a specialty or is it a sideline to the company’s overall business?

For right now, it’s all about knowing the things to look for and asking the right questions.

So let’s take a look at each area separately and in detail. Once we’ve presented the rationale behind each consideration, you can turn to the “Score Sheet” on pages 14 and 15 and rate each area accordingly. But for right now, it’s all about knowing the things to look for and asking the right questions.

Choosing a manufacturer is most likely the first decision you’ll have to make related to your office furniture purchase. And it’s a big one. According to industry statistics, there are over 200 office furniture manufacturers in the U.S. alone. But no two are alike, and there are probably only a handful that can provide all of the quality products and services demanded in today’s marketplace.

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Does the company have a mission statement that embraces quality and the concept of total quality management? Does the company have a mission statement that embraces quality and the concept of total quality management?

How many product lines has it added in the last ten years? How many lines does it have to sell you as a buyer?

Service Considerations--What services you should look for from the manufacturer to help maximize your office furniture purchase.

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II. Selecting a Product

The selection process may be more complex than you think. Obviously, if you are buying furniture for the first time, you will be required to spend a significant amount of time considering your options. However, when purchasing furniture, it is important to consider both the initial purchase cost and the long-term costs associated with the furniture itself. This includes factors such as maintenance and repair costs, as well as the potential resale value of the furniture. To help you make the right decision, we have compiled a list of questions that you should ask yourself when selecting furniture for your office.

A. Manufacturer/Facility Offering

Manufacturers typically offer several lines of office furniture to which you will need to add your own. Depending on what you need, you should consider whether the manufacturer will be able to meet your needs. This includes factors such as the type of furniture you need, as well as the quality and durability of the furniture. It is also important to consider whether the manufacturer has a history of providing quality furniture. This includes factors such as the warranty, as well as the manufacturer's reputation for providing quality furniture.

B. Standard Features vs. Options

When choosing a specific type of furniture, it is important to determine which features are standard and which are options. Do the products you are considering both the features you require, or will you be paying extra for these options?

C. Design/Engineering/Suitability

In the product and the manufacturer's descriptive literature, do you find specific design and engineering information? For example, are there any specifications regarding the weight capacity of the furniture? Does the furniture meet UL, ANSI, or CSA standards?

D. Price

What is the product's price relative to its quality and that of the manufacturer? The manufacturer's price is typically higher than the wholesale price because it includes the cost of the manufacturer's inventory, as well as the cost of shipping, insurance, and labor. This means that the price is likely to be higher than the wholesale price. However, this price may be justified by the quality of the furniture and the level of service you receive from the manufacturer.

E. ADA/Ergonomics

Is the manufacturer willing to provide ergonomic services? Are the technicians certified?

F. Obsolescence/Warranty

Does the manufacturer/dealer have a formal obsolescence policy? If they do, what is the policy? In general, it is important to consider the manufacturer's warranty policy, as this will determine how long the manufacturer will be responsible for any defects or problems with the product. It is also important to consider the manufacturer's warranty policies when purchasing furniture.

G. Quick-Ship Programs

Does the manufacturer/dealer have a service to help you determine, order, install and receive certain products in only a matter of days? If so, how quickly can you receive your order? Would your order be placed and processed? Is there a lot of paperwork involved or is the process electronic? How efficient is the dealer's/manufacturer's ordering system? How quickly can orders be placed and processed? Is there a lot of paperwork involved or is the process electronic? How efficient is the dealer's/manufacturer's ordering system?

H. Fabric/Finish/Color Selection

Can customized panel heights or fabrics be manufactured? In addition, can product's dimensions be altered? Can you receive a special-shaped work surface if

I. Custom Products

Can the product be customized to meet your specialized need? For instance, can the product's dimensions be altered? Can you receive a special-shaped work surface if necessary? Can customized panel heights or fabrics be manufactured? In addition, can product's dimensions be altered? Can you receive a special-shaped work surface if necessary? Can customized panel heights or fabrics be manufactured? In addition, can product's dimensions be altered? Can you receive a special-shaped work surface if necessary?

J. Financial Consultation

Are there any hidden additional expenses? Do they provide tools that can be used to calculate the real costs of selecting furniture and define investment, financing options, depreciation, tax laws and cost/asset analysis?

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QUANTIFYING YOUR DECISIONS...

Once you've finalized your list with the considerations and criteria you'll need to apply to your office furniture purchase, it's time to attempt a quantitative analysis of your decision. We've developed a "score sheet" to help you assign a numerical value to each of the items discussed in this workbook. Evaluate the following criteria to arrive at your final selection.

QUANTIFYING YOUR DECISIONS...

For more information on Haworth, its products or services, please call 1-800-344-2600.

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The Primary Method of Scoring

1. Determine up to four manufacturing candidates and write their names on the score sheet, giving each one a perfect score of 5 (right). Rate each manufacturer according to each factor of the purchase criteria. Reference pages through it as necessary for a detailed explanation of the decision rationale.
2. Go back through the purchase criteria and either highlight or circle the considerations you feel are the most important elements of your upcoming purchase. Tally the totals of the highlighted considerations for each manufacturer and compare the results.
3. Discovering who might best address your unique needs.
4. Rank the purchase criteria in order of importance according to your purchase needs. Determine which manufacturer(s) out perform others in your most important criteria.

Other Methods of Scoring

1. Once you've completed the primary method of scoring, you may wish to tailor the results to fit your needs.
2. Once you've familiarized yourself with the considerations and criteria you'll need to apply to your office furniture purchase, it's time to attempt a quantitative analysis of your decision. We've developed a "score sheet" to help you assign a numerical value to each of the items discussed in this handbook. Evaluate the following criteria to arrive at your final selection.
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About Haworth

Haworth is a leading manufacturer of quality office furniture. The company offers a complete line of furniture for office and institutional environments, including open-plan systems, seating, tables, desks and files.

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III. Service Considerations

A. Complete Product Offering
B. Installation/Reconfiguration
C. Design/Space Planning
D. Employee Orientation
E. Trade-In Programs
F. Ordering System
G. Quick-Ship Programs
H. Service Parts
I. Accommodates Technology
J. Custom Products

II. Selecting a Product

A. Single-Source/Full-Line
B. Size
C. Quality-Management System
D. On-Time Shipment Record
E. Experience
F. Price
G. Assembly/Installation Ease
H. Fabric/Finish/Veneer Selection
I. Financials/Stability
J. Custom Products

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