

The Business of Furniture | February 14, 2018

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## HIGHLIGHTS

### **10** UPFRONT: Bean Counter or Guru: How will Walker be Remembered at Herman Miller?

It is hard to imagine in the history of the office furniture industry a period — the 14 years of Walker's tenure — that was so turbulent and disruptive.

### **22** CIFF Set for Guangzhou

Show organizers say the countless new products on display reflect “the face of a China that is changing rapidly; a China that is increasingly looking to quality, design and innovation” to attract buyers instead of simply providing low-cost commodity products.

### **42** OM Helps VA in California

The VA in Long Beach has been a long-time customer of OM, with thousands of chairs of all kinds installed over many years.

< Kartell Generic Family







# The Business of Furniture



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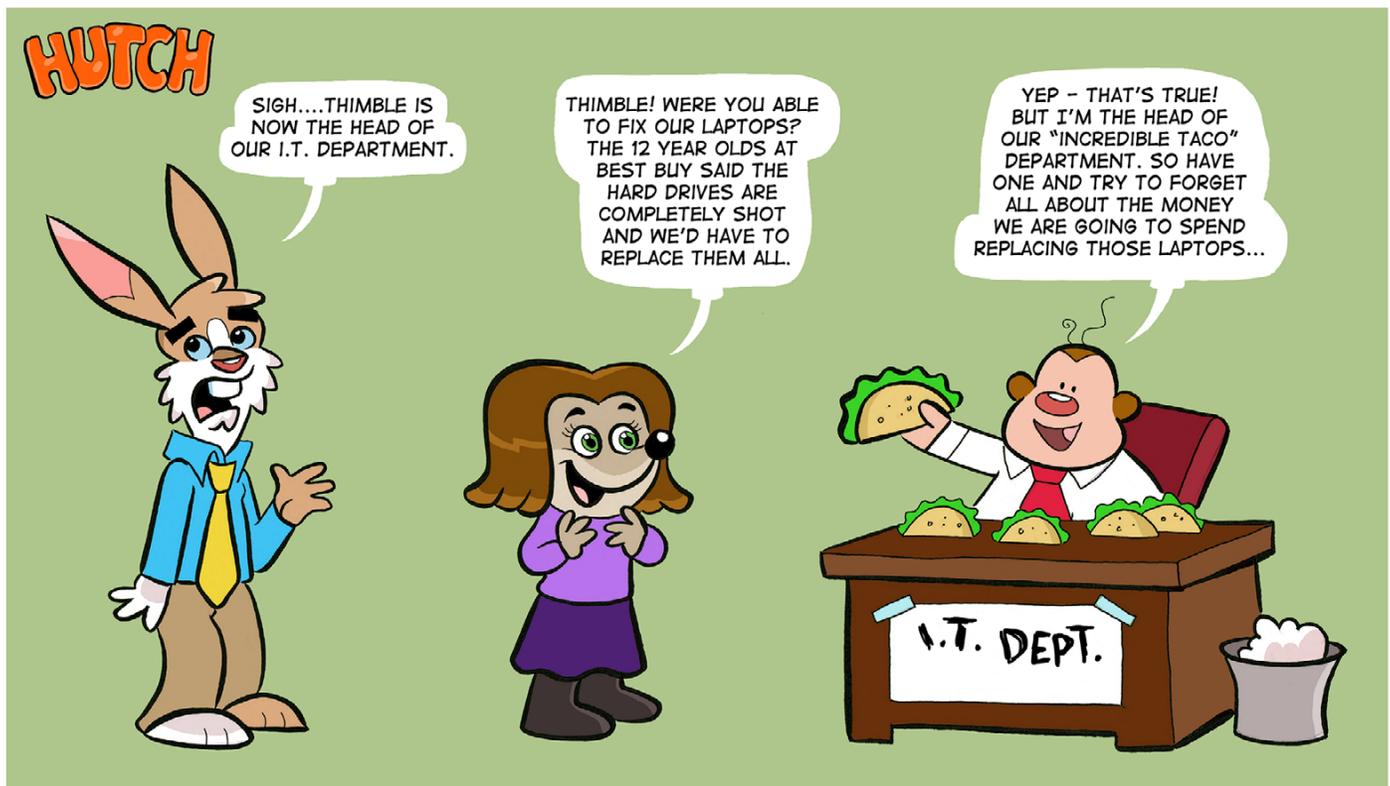
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**ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**





MAKERS

## OM Helps VA in California

THE VA IN LONG BEACH HAS BEEN A LONG-TIME CUSTOMER OF OM, WITH THOUSANDS OF CHAIRS OF ALL KINDS INSTALLED OVER MANY YEARS.

BY ROB KIRKBRIDE

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hen it comes to choosing office chairs for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center Long Beach, Vickie Orloff has a tough job. The interior designer for the Department of Veterans Affairs has to find the best furniture possible that will look great, but stay within a modest government budget.

Proof is in the posterior.

“The way I work with chair purchases is that I’ll bring in several options and let people sit on the samples,” Orloff says. “They are going to be the ones using the products, and they should decide what they like, what is easiest to use and what feels best to them.”

A clear favorite has emerged from these unofficial tests: The OM Truly. chair. “Truly. has become our standard for task chairs,” says Orloff, who does not speak for the VA or endorse any one brand or furniture manufacturer. “We have worked with OM a long time and Truly. is even better than the chairs we have specified from them before.”

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## MID-MARKET SEATING IS NEITHER THE CHEAP STUFF SHOPPERS FIND AT BIG BOX OFFICE SUPPLIER RETAILERS NOR THE HIGH-END, HIGH-PRICED CHAIRS SOLD BY THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE INDUSTRY LIKE HERMAN MILLER AND KNOLL.

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The VA Healthcare System in Los Angeles is massive and stretches far beyond Orloff’s location in Long Beach. The VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) is the largest integrated health care organization in the Department of Veterans Affairs, serving veterans throughout five counties at eight outpatient clinics. VAGLAHS is a part of VA Network 22, which includes facilities in Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Diego, Loma Linda and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Orloff says the VA facilities are so critical and well-used that they go through an “almost constant remodel.”



Not only does Orloff need to keep patients in mind when designing space, she also must design for the staff. Since so many people come through the facilities and work at the system, she needs seating that will work for a rainbow of patients and workers.

The VA in Long Beach has been a long-time customer of OM, with thousands of chairs of all kinds installed over many years, according to the Ontario, California-based company. From stylish to workhorse, ergonomic to specialty, OM's breadth of offerings has enabled VA designers to sensitively address users' needs with well-designed and well-priced seating for both administrative and clinical settings.

"We were at NeoCon, and we talked to OM about its new Ginny chair," Orloff recalls. "We told them, 'It has to have arms, and it has to be bariatric.' They said, 'OK, let us work on that for you.' They were able to meet our needs, and we ordered 100 of them that we are going to get next week. It is good to work with a company that meets your needs. I like their designs and forward-thinking edginess, without making products that are too hard to accept."

Orloff also appreciates the responsiveness of OM's team. The VA needed seating on a very tight time frame, once, and OM made sure it arrived quickly. "It is like having someone working right there for you," she says.

Over the years, the team at OM has worked hard to support VA Long Beach needs by establishing a virtual cycle of on-target recommendations, on-time production and always-on-the-job seating quality that quietly enables the VA to complete its veteran care-giving mission.

And the price is right for the quality. Mid-market seating is neither the cheap stuff shoppers find at big box office supplier retailers nor the high-end, high-priced chairs sold by the biggest names in the industry like Herman Miller and Knoll. The segment of seating sits smack dab in the middle. Companies like OM are thriving because they are providing a high quality office chair for less money, which is important to designers like Orloff, who needs to balance quality and value for the federal government. Increasingly, these companies are raising the bar for the entire mid-market seating segment, creating better designs for the same value. The growing



mid-market is becoming more and more important as frugal shoppers seek greater value in their office seating.

OM, as a seating solutions specialist, supplies the VA Long Beach with guest seating, lab and exam seating, plus various forms of specialty, mesh and cushioned backrest task seating. It is a standard supplier at the VA Long Beach and has proven itself capable of meeting the seating needs of the end users, purchasing staff and designers. The VA Long Beach covers between 200 and 300 acres, has 3,000 employees and serves thousands of veterans.

Orloff says when you are serving so many people and so many staff members, the function of areas and not just the “pretties” becomes critical. How the property is laid out affects the health and wellness of the veterans it serves.

“Seating is crucial, and it doesn’t have to be institutional,” Orloff says. “Style-wise, there is so much that needs to be changing. Collaboration and health care has become just as important to us as it is for corporate settings.”

That means Orloff is constantly trying to balance the function of the space with the creativity that makes it a healthy and inviting area for veterans and workers. She does that through fabrics and other design elements that make it bright and inviting. It also has to be easy to use, which Orloff says is one of the reasons she likes Truly. “You can just adjust it quickly and you are done,” she says. **BoF**