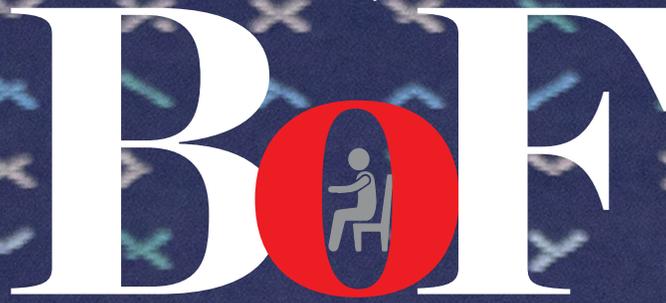


The Business of Furniture | November 28, 2018

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**Designtex Has
Launched Several
New Products**



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November 28, 2018

HIGHLIGHTS

8 UPFRONT: **Arconas Wins 2018 Mississauga Board of Trade International Trade Award**

The award honors a business in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, for its dedication in pursuing and exporting to global markets and providing diversification, revenues and jobs within the Mississauga economy.

10 Wayfair **Professional is Coming to a Bid Near You**

It is a place Wayfair is happy to be and a segment of the business that is exploding with growth.

28 Newly Appointed **Kimball International CEO Kristie Juster Speaks to Process Change in the Industry**

Juster said her path to return from her professional break was a choice she didn't take lightly.

<Some of the Wayfair office chair offering.

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10 | Wayfair Professional is Coming to a Bid Near You

Wayfair has grown from \$380 million in sales in 2010 to \$4.7 billion in 2017. Even though a relatively small portion of that comes from office furniture sales, it is growing.



28 | Newly Appointed Kimball International CEO Kristie Juster Speaks to Process Change in the Industry

Juster served more than 23 years at Newell Brands, working in several business units and under the guidance of seven different CEOs during her tenure.



31 | PlasProtect Makes Sure Your Furniture Arrives in One Piece

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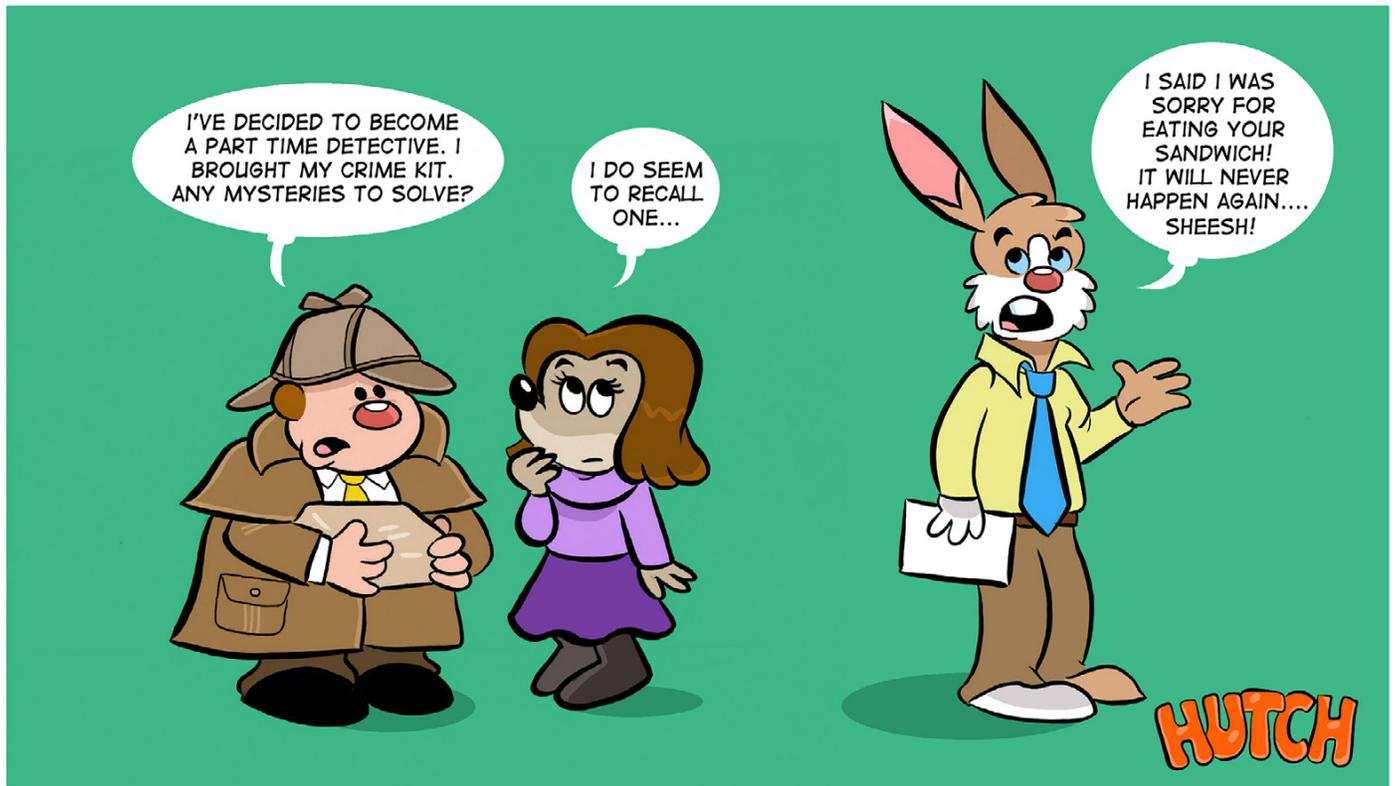
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ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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SHIPPING

PlasProtect Makes Sure Your Furniture Arrives in One Piece

PLASPROTECT, TO KEEP FURNITURE SAFE ON ITS JOURNEY FROM THE PLANT TO THE INSTALLATION SITE.

BY ROB KIRKBRIDE

When Tom Kim started looking at the losses associated with damaged office furniture products — you know, the tabletops that get smashed when moved from the plant to the customer — he discovered the cost to manufacturers are in the millions, not counting the lost business from customers fed up with delayed projects because of damaged furniture.

So the West Michigan entrepreneur came up with a new product, PlasProtect, to keep furniture safe on its journey from the plant to the installation site. It is simple, sturdy, cost effective and PlasProtect does what its name suggests: It protects furniture from damage that costs the industry so much.

“The goal was to come up with something better, but still cost-effective,” Kim said. “Packaging is a commodity product that designers, from private design all the way down to manufacturers, don’t figure out because the customer doesn’t want to pay for packaging, but it’s still the responsibility for the manufacturer to bring a good product to the customer.”

CORNER DAMAGE COSTS THE INDUSTRY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR, DELAYING PROJECTS AND ANGERING CUSTOMERS.

PlasProtect is designed to keep tabletops and other flat items like glassboards protected during shipping. It is a simple product that works exceedingly well. The triangular plastic wedge fits snugly on each corner of a tabletop or other flat item. It is installed during packaging and keeps the product safe on its journey, protecting the most vulnerable part of the top — the corner.

Corner damage costs the industry millions of dollars each year, delaying projects and angering customers. That’s why Silas Distributors, the packaging and engineering firm behind PlasProtect, decided to start there.

“That’s the area with the highest damage rates that you see,” Kim said of corner damage. “(Manufacturers are seeing damage) from logistics firms, FedEx, UPS and also the installers. Installation can cause a lot of damage, which isn’t surprising because you might have a thousand of these desks that are shipped to an office complex in New York City or wherever it may be. The installers have to stage it, so the first thing they do is take the packaging off, put them on the racks, go through the elevators, make their turns. That’s where you’re going to see a lot of the damage come from. They’re hitting walls, elevator doors, guys carrying it all of a sudden, one misstep, and it drops.”

Silas began manufacturing expanded polypropylene packaging in the early 2000s. The company started thinking about a better way of packaging about three years ago. Plastic is a far superior shipping protector in almost every way, but it has never been

cost effective for manufacturers because of the tooling costs needed to invest in it. Most manufacturers use cardboard or blankets during shipping, knowing it doesn't do a great job protecting the products, and eat the cost of damage and returns.

PlasProtect has invested in the tooling for the plastic corner protectors, and since it is the company's focus, it is able to spread the cost over the long term.

"Plastic is a better protector, however, it's historically never been cost-effective just because of tooling cost," Kim said. "Tooling costs, you're talking about anywhere from five to six digit tools, die costs. It's hard to get a payback on that. So, we felt that if we can come up with a product that is volume driven, we can make it very cost-effective for our customers."

When products are damaged in shipping, he said, the customer might have to wait another three to six weeks for a replacement. If it's a custom product, it may be longer. Still, the manufacturer doesn't want increasing costs for packaging, because they can't pass that on. It is possible to build packaging that will protect nearly 100 percent of products, but it comes at a very high cost.

So PlasProtect felt if it could design something that would take all the damages and protect the product at the end, customers would come. And they have. PlasProtect is already used by two of the five largest office furniture makers in the world.

Its success comes from its simplicity. "We wanted to design something saying 'OK installers, you can leave this packaging on, you can go ahead and remove some of the corrugated boxes, the stretch wrap, everything, but the corners are on there. Leave 'em on until the time you want to install.' So, when you pull up 10 of these desks in a rack system and go up 50 floors, then you can go ahead and take the packaging apart, and the corner is protected," Kim said. "One of our manufacturers received feedback from their installers — historically, they never ever get any feedback — but they liked it just because, at the end when they go in and install the desks then they can take it apart, so it eliminates any possibility of damage to the product."

From a cost perspective, PlasProtect compares favorably to other ways manufacturers use to protect products. At the same time, the company is receiving feedback from customers who say damage costs are down more than 70 percent.

"So, you extrapolate that in cost, you're talking about three quarters of a million dollars plus savings that is not coming from the bottom line, at a cost that is not any higher than they previously they had," Kim said. "We came out with something that's cost effective, a rigid packaging that will stay intact and take all the blows of any damages and protects the tabletops."

PlasProtect is looking to add to two areas: casegoods and the sides of tabletops. Beyond the office furniture market, PlasProtect also hopes to work with glassboard companies, television makers and the window industry.

All of the company's products are made in the U.S. at its Grand Rapids manufacturing site. www.plasprotect.com **BoF**