

## The Organic Workspace

White Paper

HAWORTH®

SUSTAINABILITY IS IN OUR BLOOD

Sustainability is undoubtedly one of today's most common corporate buzzwords. If a company claims to be pursuing a strategy of sustainable development, stakeholders will be pleased and the general public somehow reassured. But there's also a lot of "green-washing" going on these days, and if the sustainable development claims are disproved, the damage to a company's reputation may be irreparable. At Haworth, in contrast, we've been committed to the "green agenda" for many years. In fact, sustainability is in our blood – as the story of comforto shows.

Comforto, a company steeped in family tradition, was founded way back in 1863. For over a century, the company produced kitchen equipment and metal parts for the enamel industry. By the 1950s they were also making legs and stands for medical equipment and professional hair dryers. In 1967 Comforto adapted the cross-legged concept used for the legs and stands to build its first office chair. In 1988 Comforto became Haworth's first acquisition in Europe and since then has been an integral part of the Haworth Group.

Wilfried Vorlop (64) started working at Comforto 42 years ago – just after the successful switch to office furniture. Today, the comforto® seating range is renowned for their high degree of recyclability – a feature that is firmly anchored in the company's heritage, as Wilfried explains: "We have always had a high degree of vertical integration with a significant depth of in-house production. That enabled us to control what went into our products and how they were assembled. It was in our own interests to ensure that the different components that made up a chair, for example, could be easily disassembled and separated for reuse. We didn't talk about recycling in those days. It was just a case of the economical re-use of materials. So the fact that our comforto chairs nowadays are up to 95% recyclable is based on our long tradition of re-using materials and minimising waste."

Haworth's sustainability policy – Design for Environment (DfE) – is most definitely true to the Comforto heritage. Wherever possible, recycled materials are used for Haworth

products – either pre-consumer recycled content, i.e. the waste from manufacturing processes (e.g. particleboard), or post-consumer recycled content, i.e. materials that are recovered for re-use (e.g. steel). So far so good, but if a product that includes recycled content is not recyclable, it will still end up on a landfill. To ensure Haworth products are recyclable, they are designed to ensure they can be separated with minimal effort into single material components that are acceptable to established commercial recycling programmes. And that is very much in tune with what Comforto has been doing for decades.

Since the Comforto seating range is constructed from mono-material components, each chair is theoretically 100% recyclable. However, it is not always ecologically or economically sensible to recycle all materi-

als (e.g. foam or fabric covers) and Comforto products therefore average 90-95% recyclability. The following products are good examples of what DfE means in practice:

- Very chair family: up to 71% recycled content and up to 98% recyclable materials
- Planes tables: green core option made of 100% recycled tree fibre
- Zody\_System 89 seating: up to 51% recycled content and up to 98% recyclable
- E-Leather: an upholstery product engineered from recycled leather fibres derived from tannery waste and re-linked without adhesives

Haworth's sustainability strategy is not just good for the environment; it is also beneficial to customers in that many Haworth products contribute to specific LEED points. See the next Talking Point story (*Sustainability – LEED*) for details.