



The Organic Workspace

White Paper

HAWORTH®

INTEGRATION EQUALS INTEGRITY

Integration, or integrated design, or an integrated product programme, are fashionable ‘buzz phrases’ in many an office furniture manufacturer’s promotional literature. Haworth can also lay claim to a number of persuasive and powerful truths about what integration really means – to us and to our clients.

Just as the Organic Workspace is an idea that has been evolving and maturing at Haworth for some time, so its defining characteristics have had a life of their own before all coming together in one overall concept. Haworth was talking about integration before we talked about the Organic Workspace, but now, integration as one of those defining characteristics is more powerful because it is born from truth, not from dressed-up sales talk. Only Haworth could deploy the many aspects of integration that go to make up the Organic Workspace, because only Haworth has the complete picture; everything, as it always is in living organisms, is connected to everything else. And this leads to the meaningful extension of the idea of integration into integrity. Honesty goes together with ‘wholeness’ to make a holistic proposal for workspaces that suit every variety of corporate culture and style of working.

First, the products. Over the second half of the life of the company, Haworth has acquired a significant number of companies making products for the office environment, and it has developed the skills and understanding that go with them. The process has been organic, in other words following a

natural pattern of growth and accumulation, but our design teams have been busy building inherent links between the products and indeed the ‘product platforms’ – the ‘architectural’ range, the systems range, the seating and the surface accessories – so that they move, fit and work together. They also look as if they do, adding aesthetic unity to functional efficiency. Connectivity, dimensions, materials and finishes all bespeak an integrated family.

Other companies may offer an aggregate of products from various manufacturers; we offer, to coin a phrase, an ‘integrate’ of products, an extended collection that shares the same design and operational parameters. The same idea underpins the working relationship between Haworth and its clients. Having left behind the old-fashioned sales-defined way of working, where, not to put too fine a point on it, the unscrupulous supplier could take the money and run, Haworth is firmly committed to the rôle of long-term trusted advisor, always there to help refine, re-define, develop, adapt. No short-term fix for us.

That key element of integration – the human, personal, relationship aspect – marks the distinguishing difference between the Organic Workspace and the other office and facilities packages in the market. Products and environments work successfully alone, but even better together; walls, floors, systems and storage speak the same language, but they also speak the native language of the client company, from its existing interior

architecture to its various work styles, even to its own corporate sense of itself. Without the ‘embedded intelligence’ that we have gained as a company over the years, our claims to integrate environmental and product design with the manifold business concerns of our client companies would be empty ones.

Speaking of insights, it is possible here to get some sense of where the Organic Workspace might lead us. Of course our business is built on the design and manufacture of workspace products, but we believe that we are on to something very important for the future of companies across the world; a way of accommodating and furnishing them that matches the modern realities of corporate business in a way that other workplace companies, however large or distinguished, just don’t.

It’s just possible, as materials and communications technologies race ahead, with work styles hopping along to keep up, that product as such will cease to have dominant importance in the office. The office will never abandon desks, tables, walls, floors and storage completely, of course; but it will increasingly be the understanding, the intelligence about the human condition in the world of work, that sets the best companies in this market apart. And, happily, Haworth has a head start. Integration and integrity become one when we are dealing with the way in which the ‘soft’ and overridingly important elements in a company’s operation – its people – are happily integrated. And that’s what Organic Workspace represents.