

Sit Back & Relax

Playful new furniture company Sparkeology innovates public spaces—one piece at a time

launched

June 2010 (phase one)

partners

Worden (wordencompany.com);
Via Design (viadesign-inc.com);
Square One Design
(squareonedesign.com);
and Viable (soviable.com).

innovations

Modular, eco-friendly furniture pieces that make community spaces stylish, functional, and fun

website

sparkeology.com



Who: Sparkeology is a unique collaboration between furniture manufacturer Worden; architecture, interiors, and furniture-design firm Via Design; product-engineering firm Viable; and graphic-design firm Square One Design. Sparkeology's website speaks for itself: "Say hello to a delightful new company with an innovative approach to making furniture for public spaces."

What: With more than 60 years of experience in the furniture industry and with products traditionally sold by authorized dealers, Worden wanted to expand its creative reach into the architecture and design space. The challenge was to leverage the company's long reputation in the industry without taking away from its leadership position as a high-quality manufacturer for the library and educational market.

When: Sparkeology ignited in October 2009 and made its first-phase furniture debut at NeoCon in June 2010, the annual design-world event that each year is infused with pure energy, bursting with new thinking, new resources, and of course, an introduction of new products. "We were definitely on a fast-track plan," recalls Robin Lane, Worden's vice president of marketing and sales. "Plus, each of Sparkeology's partner companies was busy working on their other individual projects. The response from NeoCon was tremendous, and we're currently planning a phase three release in 2011. [Phase two was complete in 2010.] All of the pieces will work together so instead of introducing completely new lines, we're adding onto a very successful offering. There's been so much positive feedback and enthusiasm for a small company just taking off, and we're looking forward to keeping the momentum going."

Where: Holland, Michigan. "Being headquartered in Western Michigan, there's a strong furniture design and manufacturing tradition in the region, and we've received a lot of support for Sparkeology," Lane says.



LEFT: The Al chair comes in three sizes, is durable, but remains lightweight.
 RIGHT: The slidingsled base of Stu makes it ideal for various spaces, whether the purpose is eating, studying, or working.
 BELOW: An arrangement of Ty, Manny, and Ben, with Flip hiding behind the reader.



“Our goal was to develop simple, uncomplicated, yet playful furniture.”

—Robin Lane, Vice President of Marketing & Sales, Worden



Why: According to Lane, the birth of Sparkeology was simply a matter of understanding what was missing—and desired—in the architecture and design industry and gathering the experienced professionals to meet that need. The result was developing modern, modular, and environmentally friendly furniture that can be used to create stylish public settings.

As a company committed to green practices, Sparkeology builds its furniture to last so it doesn't end up in landfills. It uses materials such as post-industrial and post-consumer particleboard, steel, and fabrics, along with lumber that meets Sustainable Forestry Initiative standards. The translucent resin material used on some of the company's tabletops is non-hazardous, and Sparkeology optimizes the leftover pieces to also create a shelf in one of its units. Additionally, the company's VOC and hazardous air pollutant output is consistently under EPA standards. And all throughout the office and plant, the company recycles as much as possible.

How: “There's an unmet need for great connecting furniture in public spaces,” Lane says. “Our goal was to develop simple, uncomplicated, yet playful furniture.”

Founding Sparkeology was a natural meeting of many talents. Square One is Worden's marketing and design firm. They, in turn, brought in the expertise of Via Design to help with the product designs and Viable to engineer them. “As a result,” Lane adds, “we were able to introduce fantastic, flexible pieces to mix and match that speak to the public use of spaces.” —by Anne Dullaghan