

Corporate Sparkeology

Furniture created by Sparkeology with an eye toward the collaborative, open library spaces suddenly fits perfectly in a corporate setting.

By Rob Kirkbride

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Sparkeology was launched in 2010 to serve the library furniture market along side The Worden Company, from which it was spawned with the help of architecture and design firm Via Design and its sister company Viable and graphic design firm Square One Design, all West Michigan companies.

Then a funny thing happened: Offices turned toward a new collaborative work style. And the furniture created by Sparkeology with an eye toward the collaborative, open library spaces suddenly fit perfectly in a corporate setting as well.

Sparkeology didn't really plan for collaborative corporate environments. Vice President of Marketing and Sales Robin Lane calls it a "story of unintended consequences." Yet the timing of the company's launch and product offerings were perfect. Add to that some unique marketing and the company did more than launch last year at NeoCon — it blasted off.

The new company was not immune from the general malaise when it was formed in 2010, but it is upbeat about the future. "It was a tough time to introduce a new company, but we had successful projects right away in very different markets," Lane said. "We provided a variety of tables for an upscale urban wine bar, Reserve, and all the public spaces for the Col-

lege of the Bahamas. Both projects turned out beautifully, and the flexibility of our products lets us address their needs in a different but equally exciting ways. As the economy moves forward, we are very optimistic about Sparkeology and what we have to offer."

Indeed, the company had a strong showing at its second NeoCon in June. Sparkeology doubled the size of its temporary showroom this year and launched six new products — new tables and seating that give designers a lot more flexibility to create a wide variety of spaces.

The company played off its new upholstered stool with trumpet-shaped base called Cupcake with a free cupcake for every visitor to its booth. Cal and Duane are new resin-top tables. Cal, the company's new conference table, has access to floor power at any location along the center spine and a cover to hide and protect cords. The tech table, Duane, is designed to stand alone or gang together and provides a trough to accommodate bulky bundles of cords and power strips, along with a split tabletop for cord access.

Sofia is the company's new modular sofa with a small footprint. The sofa is scaled to fit with Sparkeology's Ben, Manny, Ty and Ty-Pad products. Extras like wooden shelf-top arms, coat hooks, privacy panels and integrated power make Sofia more adaptable.





Sofia

Sly is a nearly indestructible chair with modern design. The chair comes with a molded wood seat or with optional upholstery. The Manny line of upholstered seating has metal legs and the metal trim along its base protects the upholstered edge from wear. The large square and round Manny configurations offer optional power hubs.

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Sparkeology is working on more than just new products. The company also is expanding its services to designers through instant downloads of 2D and 3D CAD symbols and product configurations on sparkeology.com. An online store is also in the works and more products are scheduled for release this fall. "One of our core values is being responsive and easy to work with," Lane said. "Designers have told us what they want and we're happy to give them the support they need."

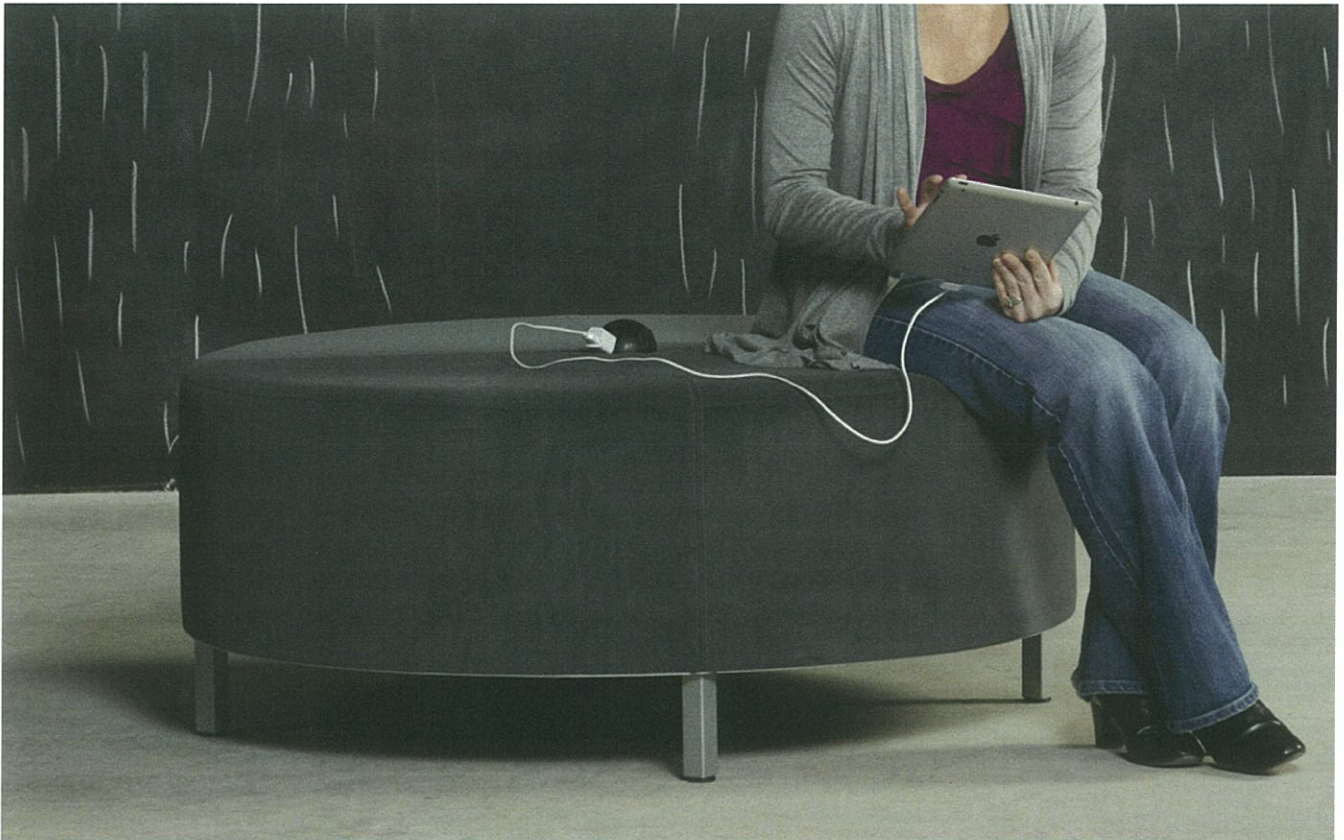
While Sparkeology continues to sell into the library and corporate market, it also is courting higher education — another space where collaboration is common.

To expand, the company has added to its sales reps and is actively seeking more representation in select territories. Attracting independent reps has been more difficult than Lane expected. "Realistically, people have other obligations. In a market now under pressure to perform, (independent reps) are a little more leery to add a new line and pioneer that," she said.

Sparkeology markets much differently than The Worden Company. It was launched using social media to its fullest, attracting followers quickly to its Facebook and Twitter pages. It made a splash at its first NeoCon with its hot pink booth and chalkboard wall.

Lane said the company is working hard to avoid the sophomore slump. "I think we had a much better response after NeoCon this year," she said. "We are just around so many more projects that we were the first time around."

Sparkeology operates independently, but it has the advantage of drawing on Worden's strengths. Branding and marketing is handled by Square One, while Sparkeology's design and engineering is led by Valerie Schneider of Via Design and Scott Sikkema of Viable. Delegating these functions allows Worden to maintain its own focus instead of burdening its designers and engineers with creating a new product lines. The process is made even more efficient by the close relationship between Via and Viable. †



Manny with power



Sofia