



SMARTdesks Launches Exchange™ Collaboration Furniture for Collaborative Learning Classrooms

In answer to universities' demand for furniture to support a new paradigm in education—collaborative learning studios—SMARTdesks® announces the launch of Exchange™ Collaboration Furniture—a conference table system that permits different collaboration shapes to be configured using unique modular table elements.

Progressive universities are creating collaborative learning studios to enable faculty to make the transition from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side.” Instructors are becoming more than a delivery system of knowledge, becoming architects of intellectual experiences involving interaction, understanding of differences, consensus building and the achievement of common goals. Collaborative learning requires an environment for talking. Learning is inherently social. It is in talking that much of the learning occurs (Golub, 1988). The standard arrangement of furniture in rows with students facing forward are giving way to furniture that permits small groups of two to six to work together with a positive flow of exchange.

Baltimore, Maryland (Vocus/PRWEB) March 17, 2011 -- SMARTdesks announces the launch of the Exchange™ [Collaboration Furniture System](#). SMARTdesks collaborated with progressive universities in developing [learning studios](#) for collaborative teaching methods. Various furniture shapes were proposed and refined for different course objectives using teams, text materials and a range of technology from computers and laptops, to smart phones and mobile devices, to [video conferencing](#) for collaboration mixed with distance learning. Each table shape introduces positive body language for collaboration teams. The SMARTdesks product development team designed a unique element that is used for making the most sought-after geometries for interaction.

The [Exchange Element™](#) is a triangular table, produced in mirror image to enable configurations of hexagon, pinwheel, triangle, and linear offset for collaboration in the classroom; and delta reflex for collaborative teleconferencing. Each Element™ is functionally a stand-alone workstation with enough personal work space to spread out materials, use a computer, laptop or mobile device. The Element™ has a wire management system in the leg and fabric mesh modesty panel, plus USB power, AC and options for power and data ports. The Element™ is typically outfitted for use with flipIT® pop-up work stations (US Patent 7,784,412), supporting most 20” wide screen monitors. For use with laptops, the flipIT® Laptop Safe (US Patent 7,757,612) is specified to secure and tether institutional equipment. flipIT® products enable multi-use learning because they can bring technology to the work space, or stow it completely out of the way in an instant.

The Exchange Collaboration Pinwheel™ comprises six Elements™ to create a flow of understanding between people. Each work station is situated with a return, like office furniture, which, with the turn of the shoulders, becomes a common conference area for two or three collaborators. There are no parallel sides to this shape, so confrontational body posturing is avoided. This table helps those who sit at it focus, individually or in groups, using a mix of text and technology. The unique shape inspires creative problem solving and underscores how important each member's contribution is to the group.

The Exchange Collaboration Triangle™ is made up of six Elements™ in mirror image. Students naturally



gather around the corners for meetings, but have enough privacy for independent focus simply by turning the body squarely with the laptop or computer workstation. The workstation locations also make it easy to share on personal laptops placed between computer monitors or at the corners. For multi-use capability, the flipIT® workstations bring 20" LCDs into play as needed, and lets users flip them back into the desktop, completely out of the way when text materials take priority. flipIT® Laptop Safes may also be specified to stow laptops under lock and key, allowing instant access and connections to power and data. This shape is for “joiners,” promoting freedom of flow and arrangement of people around the table for ad hoc discussions.

The Exchange Collaboration Hexagon™ brings six Elements™ together with its internal hexagon shape out of phase with the work station edges. The internal diagonals create a visual flow that makes this distinctive from a simple hexagon with solid center. The hexagon shape divides equally the power of each seat. It does this even more effectively than King Arthur’s round table because the territories are defined. Because each person is seated directly opposite to another, there is potential for confrontational body language; however, the visual cues of the Exchange Collaboration Hexagon counter the confrontational body positioning by introducing diagonals. The result is that people tend to angle their bodies to each other and tend to open themselves to those across the table. This choice is good for equal contributions to the collaboration. Each speaker is empowered as soon as they have the floor.

The Exchange Linear Offset Collaboration Table™ may have parallel sides, but people are not seated in a confrontational way, head-to-head. They are offset, so they are either side-by-side or at a diagonal across the table. The Linear Offset configuration may be continued in Exchange Element™ sets of mirrored pairs to fill the interior space, or may be set up in a U shape with bridge sections. When work groups are teams of two or three, the Linear Offset is a great choice. If the plan is to mix lecture with collaboration activities, set the tables in rows that radiate from the instructor’s position in the room. All turn to the speaker and keep their work areas for taking notes.

The Exchange™ Teleconference Collaboration Table is like the Collaboration Triangle with one leg replaced by a video screen. The effect is to have the tables appear to be mirror imaged across from the panel seated on camera. Just as the Collaboration Triangle permits meetings around the corners, the corners are expanded to include the entire group from both locations. Each group requires only one screen and camera to make video teleconferencing affordable and practical. Data to support meetings appear on flipIT® pop-up monitors and stow out of the way, and out of camera shot, when not needed. The effect of having the data monitor in the shot is good because when direct to look at something on the screen, people can see the other focusing their attention there, rather than looking away from the camera as if in a distracted state. The flipIT® positions the monitor below the horizon line of the camera, so faces are not obscured. The SMARTdesks® Presence Theater b7 is a perfect complement, holding screens up to 60" width at variable height and rack mount equipment bays for AV storage in lockable vented cabinet with rear access doors.

SMARTdesks® innovates, designs and manufactures computer furniture for education, corporate and government clients world-wide. Classroom and conference room design services are available by request online, provided at no additional cost and without obligation. Receive a floor plan and proposal according to the needs of each client’s purchasing protocol, including shipping, delivery and installation. Products are made in the USA using Green Manufacturing Methods. For more information visit www.smartdesks.com.

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