

Go green – save green

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Wieringa



Hasse



GRAND RAPIDS — Headquartered in Grand Rapids, Kentwood Office Furniture is doing its part to keep the environment green.

In addition to new office furniture, the company now offers remanufactured and used furniture product lines, not to be confused with refurbished or reconditioned.

As capital has become tighter across the country, many companies appear to be looking for lower-cost, high-quality solutions for their workspaces. The company believes remanufactured furniture can meet those needs. Remanufactured and used furniture as a percentage of the Kentwood Office Furniture's business has grown steadily over the last several years.

“Our market research shows that organizations and individuals want office furniture that is environmentally sustainable; they just don't want to pay more for it,” Matt Wieringa, VP of sales and marketing, told MiBiz. “We're adopting the motto ‘go green, save green’ because we believe that you can have office furniture that meets your budget and is good for the planet at the same time.”

Although many new office furniture products are made from a percentage of recycled content, remanufactured office furniture is reused – making it the highest form of green, he said.

Remanufacturing conserves energy and natural resources over new manufacturing by up to 95 percent and avoids the solid waste stream and air pollution caused by the new production process.

The EPA estimates that businesses discard approximately three million tons of furniture and furnishings per year into landfills at a cost of over \$100 million. That being said, remanufacturing just one workstation diverts almost 1,000 pounds of waste from a landfill.

As an added incentive for businesses, purchasing remanufactured office furniture can help a company achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification points from the U. S. Green Building Council.

“As a leader in office furniture remanufacturing and recycling, we have been a green business for over 30 years,” said Kentwood Office Furniture President Art Hasse. “Our brand promise has always been simple: best selection, lowest prices and good for the environment.”

Founded in 1976, Kentwood Office Furniture has expanded from its Grand Rapids base to include showrooms in Detroit and Jackson, as well as Addison, Ill. Organizations and design firms alike appear to be contacting Kentwood Office Furniture because they want a green office furniture solution from a company that has a compelling environmental stance.

Remanufactured office furniture by Kentwood Office Furniture is estimated to conserve energy and natural resources by up to 95%

Earlier this year, the company unveiled a new corporate brand and Web site, further signifying the company's commitment to the environment.

A core element of the new brand identity is the Kentwood Office Furniture logo. Designed specifically to convey the company's history and commitment to green, the new logo also signals a pledge to design and value.

According to Wieringa, remanufactured office furniture is high quality name brand office furniture from top manufacturers at about half the cost of new. He said his products differ from what some companies list as reconditioned or refurbished office furniture.

"Many companies offer reconditioned or refurbished office furniture," said Wieringa. "Be wary, as these terms denote only cosmetic touchups and the products may not look or function as new. At Kentwood Office Furniture, remanufacturing means we totally remake the product from the frame up. All products are completely disassembled, inspected, cleaned, repaired or replaced, reassembled and refinished to new condition in our 140,000-square-foot operations center here in Grand Rapids."

As an added incentive, the company stresses that there is a wide selection of colors, fabrics and finishes, rather than a limited, pre-determined slate of options as with new office furniture.

"Our lineup includes hundreds of attractive, environmentally responsible fabrics," Wieringa said. "The majority of these fabrics are Terratex brand fabrics made from 100-percent recycled or renewable material and are completely recyclable or biodegradable."

At the same level of performance and quality, remanufactured office furniture appears to make sense to purchasers. Northpointe Bank, Christ Community Church, Karpata and SKD Automotive Group are just some of the clients Kentwood Office Furniture has outfitted with remanufactured office furniture.

From smaller organizations to Fortune 100 companies, the use of remanufactured workstations appears to be on the rise. The Office Furniture Recyclers Forum reports that sales of remanufactured office furniture represent over 9 percent of the entire commercial furniture industry today.

With the challenging business climate in Michigan, some organizations are putting off growth initiatives like office furniture purchases because of uncertain forecasts for the next six-12 months. However, several regional niche areas of growth in certain industries and startup companies are producing a higher demand for remanufactured and used office furniture.

For this, Kentwood Office Furniture has just launched a new program called Kentwood Fundamentals, which offers a limited number of design options for fabrics, laminates and paint colors at a significantly reduced price.

According to Wieringa, this program has been hugely successful as customers seek good quality, good-looking workstations at affordable prices.

Kentwood has also added a Fundamentals Express program that offers workstations that are available for next-day shipment.

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