

The Business of Furniture | February 19, 2020

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 wayfair

**Wayfair Lays Off 550 as it Enters
Contract Furnishings Arena**



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The Business of Furniture

February 19, 2020

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Founded and headquartered in Denmark, SiS Ergo is a manufacturing pioneer of height-adjustable tables.

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A group of top independent reps gathered in the U.K. last week to learn about Nook.

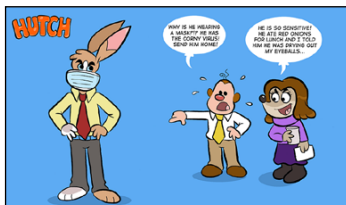
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12 | Reps Learn Nook is More than a Typical Pod at UK Event

Nook was designed by company founder David O'Coimin to create an oasis of calm in the din of the open office, classroom or other space where a bit of privacy is needed, but not the complete isolation found in other products.



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Recently, the eCommerce retailer has entered the contract furnishings arena, offering an assortment of furniture from the likes of Turnstone and Steelcase along with several no-name Chinese sourced products.



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The Business of Furniture



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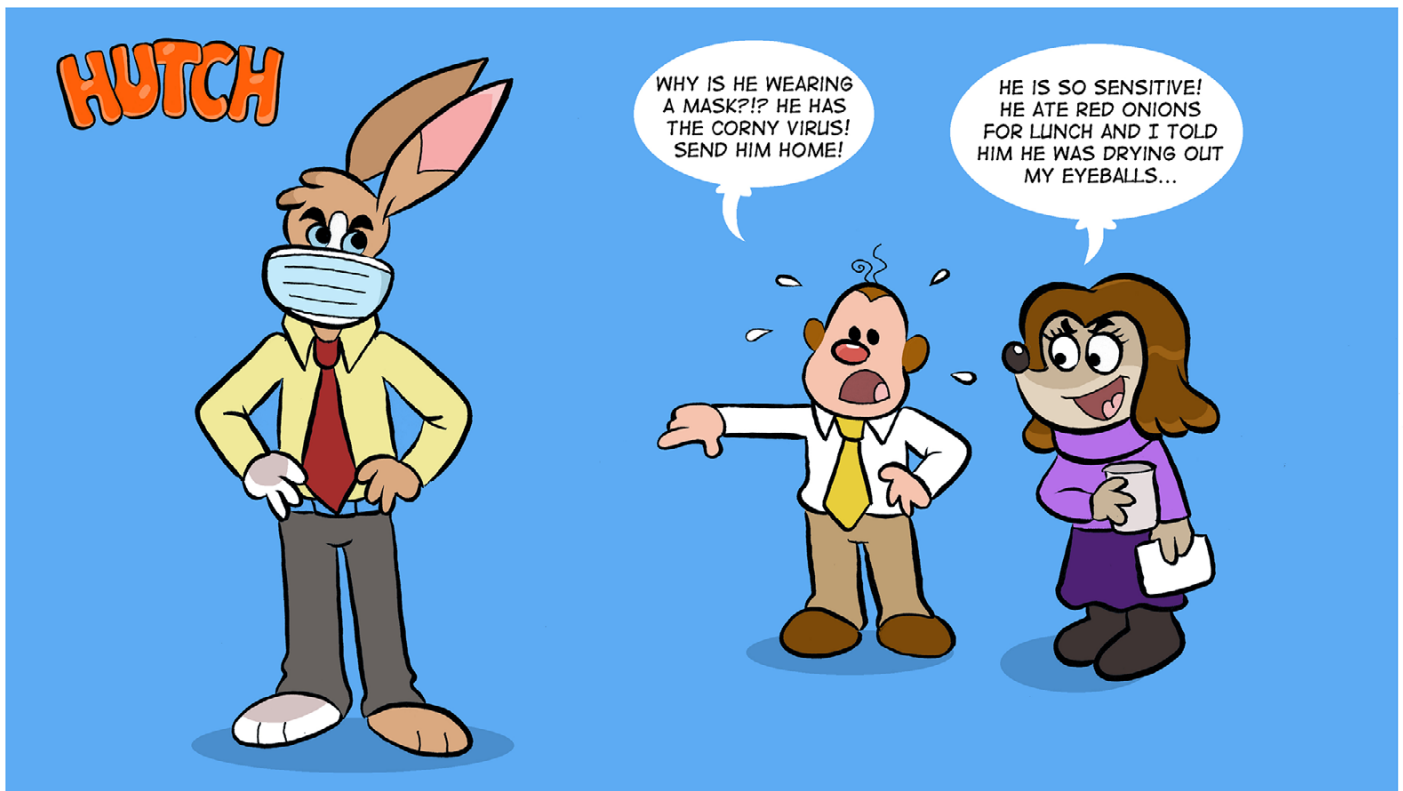
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Business of Furniture and *Workplaces* magazine are the go-to sources for keeping you informed about everything that is happening in the industry. From trends that affect your bottom line, to new products that will help your customers work better, to stories that will help you run a better, more informed company.

ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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Reps Learn Nook is More than a Typical Pod at UK Event

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by Rob Kirkbride

A group of top independent reps gathered in the U.K. last week to learn about Nook, the quirky product that isn't a phone booth and does much more than a typical privacy pod. Crossing the Atlantic to see how the Nook is used and how it is made tells you something

about the potential they see for the product.

It also tells you something about the challenge of being a product so unique it doesn't quite fit into any single category. Nook is a product best experienced, not just seen. It doesn't sell itself when it is sitting on a showroom

floor. But it sells well when it is out in the field and facility managers see how it is in constant use, according to company founder David O'Coimin, who splits time between his home in Amsterdam and the company's factory in Clevedon, U.K., just outside Bristol.

TOP INDUSTRY NEWS

“It has been an extraordinary year,” he said, noting the break-neck speed at which the product has taken off since its launch at NeoCon 2018. “When this idea came to me four or five years ago, I was wandering around the world and saw how frustrating (the noise in the open office) made workers.”

Nook was designed by O’Coimin to create an oasis of calm in the din of the open office, classroom or other space where a bit of privacy is needed, but not the complete isolation found in other products. As the independent reps learned, it is not designed to go head-to-head with products like Framery or other phone booth solutions that have flooded the market in recent years.

The idea is not to isolate; instead it is to create a space for concentration and collaboration without being cut off from the rest of the world. It works best for those quick meetings for workers who don’t want or need a formal conference room.

Nook seems to be everywhere — across the entire seventh floor at NeoCon (and in a shared showroom on the 10th), at trade shows where they are rented out and used as ad hoc meeting spaces and at INDEAL conferences where dealer sales reps seem to fall in love with them.

The driving force behind that is Stewart Brown, the equally ubiquitous principal behind the company’s distribution in North America and the Middle East. He was the organizer of the inde-



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pendent rep trip, which brought the group to London and Bristol for tours of installations, a walk-through of the Nook plant and previews of enhancements to the product

“It is about us learning from you,” he said. “This is designed to be an interactive event. Not only is this a new product, it is a new category of product. We talk about a Nook revolution, and we mean it.”

Brown has spent the last few years extolling the virtues of the Nook, explaining exactly how it is different. He has been joined in promoting the Nook by Shaina Phillips, who Brown dubbed the commander-in-chief because of her high energy sales work and

tireless organization.

Nook is not a phone booth product, but not a meeting room either, though it shares some of the DNA and benefits of both. Instead it is more like a covered, mobile picnic table for work — a place where small teams can meet, an individual can find some privacy or someone can relax and have lunch or read a book. It is a product that works perfectly well to foster that collaboration everyone is after and equally as well as a space for that little bit of privacy an equal number desire.

The modular and flexible Nook is a basic, house-shaped frame commonly filled with two bench seats with storage underneath, a work surface, a hub for power

and data, acoustic cushions, a clip-on task light and a pendant lamp with a 3-D printed shade. The original Nook has been joined by a Nook single, a one-person version that is half the size and includes a door for a bit more privacy.

O’Coimin said Nook is more than just a white box. “Nook is trying to elbow itself a space in the market,” he said. “It creates separation without isolation. It is different from the phone booths out there and that creates some marketing challenges.”

O’Coimin urged the reps to tell the Nook’s story, not just the attributes of the product. It was a message hammered home by Martin Flaherty, president



of Pencilbox and an expert on sustainability, corporate and brand communications who accompanied the reps on the trip and spoke to them about the importance of storytelling.

Nook has an interesting story to tell. Like all great products, it was born out of necessity and need. O’Coimin was frustrated (and inspired) by what was happening as companies shifted to the open office. Yes, these open spaces foster collaboration, but at what cost?

In 2015, he put pen to paper and designed the first Nook, later building the prototype that went into his home. He quit his day job in 2016 and began working on Nook full time, building

the first 10 units for a web summit in Portugal. There, he found that Nook could be used in other applications beyond the office. O’Coimin left that event with 50-60 requests from event organizers who wanted to rent Nooks for events. At a trade show, for example, the organizers wanted to use them as spots where attendees or exhibitors could take a break, answer a phone call or meet with a customer.

So, Nook was split into two divisions. One rents or leases Nooks and the other sells directly to customers where they go into corporate offices, coworking centers, science parks and universities. Customers already include Facebook, BP, Virgin and

ADIDAS. And there is a “fleet” of Nooks available to rent around the world.

Nooks are made at PanelTech, the company’s manufacturing partner in Bristol.

The product’s first home was at a coworking center in Bristol called the Engine Shed. They can still be found there today, all of them in use almost constantly. From that beginning, Nook is making its way into offices, schools and libraries around the world.

“We have made some huge strides in the last year, and we have samples out at interesting places,” said Brown, noting tests of the Nook at Disneyland and SpaceX. **BoF**