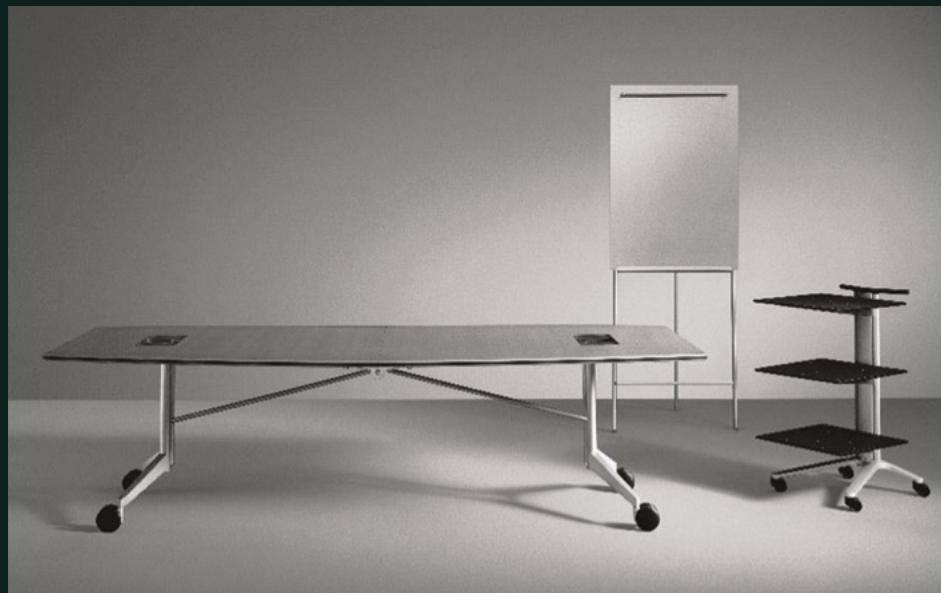


Office on Stage #01

Corporate Hybrid

Agile Collaboration with the Furniture to Match



In 2002, German interior design magazine MD called Confair the most important office furniture range of the past 50 years.

Foreword

For decades, our design philosophy has been that products follow ideas. For instance, back in the early 1990s, we conducted two conference studies on collaboration in offices. Our quest for the missing piece culminated in the Confair range in 1994. This product family was the world's first coherently designed kit for furnishing innovation and workshop spaces. And it was the now legendary Confair folding table that took center stage. On the Association of German Interior Designers' 50th anniversary in 2002, German interior design magazine MD called the range the most significant office innovation of the past 50 years.

Galvanized by the burgeoning internet, the dot.com boom and baby steps of smart technologies, we developed Roomware as part of the research and development Future Office Dynamics consortium for the EXPO 2000 world exhibition. Our Roomware project involved initial prototypes of environments for hybrid collaboration between geographically distributed teams. However, internet speeds were slow, flat monitors extortionately expensive and touch screens still in their infancy. And collaborative software had not yet become part of the common operating systems. Above all, apart from a few visionary and pioneering businesses, companies' corporate cultures weren't ready for new work styles.



On October 29, 1999, Roomware components premiered worldwide in Berlin and then featured at the EXPO 2000 as Wilkhahn's contribution.

But that didn't stop us from developing more agile-collaboration players for the office stage. This vision spawned new generations of furniture like the Timetable table family and, most recently, the multi-talented, "battery-driven" Timetable Lift.

Undaunted, we continued to encourage interior-design concepts that focused on agile collaboration with the furniture to match and integrating analog and digital media. For instance, we published our Planning Guide for Conference and Communication Environments. To tap into people's potential to embrace innovation and change, workspaces need to be stimulating and foster participation and activation. Environments also have to be very versatile and express appreciation for those working there.

What we had anticipated three decades before, became reality. Once working from home had taken root after the pandemic at the latest, offices were transforming into interactive and collaborative spaces.

But the way people work together equally has to change. In the past, virtually only creative professions practiced participative agile collaboration. Today, it's here to stay and required at all levels of the hierarchy.

Let's return to our image of an OFFICE ON STAGE. The audience is ready, the programme set out, actors are well rehearsed for their roles and writers have penned their plays. Now it's show time. And curtain up for more effective, productive and appealing collaboration in offices.

We hope you enjoy reading the first issue of our OFFICE-ON-STAGE series and gain inspiration and valuable background information on the types of agile collaboration and where they take place.

Burkhard Remmers

From a Bread
Factory to an Innovation Factory

Page 26

The Fold-up, Rolling,
Performer, debuted in 1994

Page 50

The Famous Five –
an Energized Family

Page 72

The Office as a Sounding Board –
an Analysis by Birgit Gebhard

Page 94

Our Agile Actors
Introduce Themselves

Page 113



Act 1
Rooms for Workshops, Innovations
and Projects

Page 10



Act 3
Spaces for
Joint Learning

Page 54



Act 4
Work Cafés and Lounges

Page 78



Act 2
Agility in Meeting Rooms, Conference
Rooms and Boardrooms

Page 38



Act 5
In-between Spaces for Empowerment
and Improvisation

Page 98

Wilkhahn



Managing the Unpredictable

The world's complex and impact of change hard to predict. But agile methods help to meet challenges in an unpredictable future. Intervals that are easier to anticipate put planning, implementing, reviewing, and adapting concepts on a firmer footing and the next step easier to take. As long as this next step is based on teamwork.

This culture change means incorporating agile and hybrid collaboration into the corporate environment as if it were the most natural thing in the world. We need settings that cover workshop, conference, meeting and learning spaces all the way to lounge, break-out and recreational areas.

These reflect the modifications required, attract the attention of talented people, mobilize a community spirit, and exploit the advantages of digital office work styles to the full. Enjoy the stage program and our stories in between.

Act 1

Rooms for Workshops, Innovations and Projects



How Innovations Are Born

Workshop, innovation and project spaces nurture active collaboration. This is where interactive event formats take place. Teams work on issues of the future, problems, or projects under a moderator's stewardship. These spaces provide platforms for collaborative learning, developing ideas, solving problems, preparing decisions and joining forces as a team.

More workshop methods have now joined moderated sessions. These methods’ principle is that identifying with change processes is only possible with the active participation of everyone involved. What’s more, product and process innovation based on a wealth of experience provides more realistic results. The more standpoints incorporated in the process, the more likely the solution is to meet the complexity of our time. The setting needs to be an informal space that masks any hierarchies and roles. After all, the goal is to encourage open and goal-driven interaction, experimentation and creative ideas.

Principles and methods

Each workshop needs to be flexible and is governed by six underlying principles. Each event requires interaction, clear objectives, participation by attendees, professional moderation and feedback.

Workshops can also employ fun methods to encourage a change of perspective and self reflection. The Six Thinking Hats method is one such example. The white thinking hat calls for facts and information, the red one for feelings and emotions, the black for criticism, the yellow for optimism, the green for creativity and blue for organizational skills.

Changing methods during workshops equally acts as a stimulus, just as attendees remodeling the stage set is. The event’s kick-off and keynote speech, brainstorming session, a period of deep work or collaboration in small groups, summarizing and presenting outcomes, or a plan of action with a spot of reflection are all valuable.

The issues concerned, the number of participants and room sizes dictate the communication formats chosen. Possible formats are a fishbowl, world café, or open-space method with debriefing document. Or perhaps working with objects, as in design thinking or Lego Serious Play, is an option.

Whatever method is deemed appropriate and promising in each case, the furniture should stimulate people to configure settings themselves. With fixtures and fittings that are mobile and geared to dynamic working methods, so that workshop attendees can create the stage set to suit requirements.



The past few years have seen four developments emerge that have a direct impact on the design of furniture modules for workshop rooms.

1. Interactive visualization tools from workshop environments, such as pinboards, whiteboards and flipcharts have now become integral to nearly all conference and meeting spaces.

2. Workshops increasingly use digital media for presentations or connecting with remote participants. Digital media equally provide inspiration via image research or generation by using artificial intelligence for instance.

3. In contrast to the sterile lab-like or garage-type atmosphere of the past, today's emphasis is on combining professionalism with well being. The goal is to make in-person collaboration attractive and express appreciation for the people involved.

4. For economical and ecological reasons, versatile and more flexible spaces for a range of collaborative methods are replacing one-dimensional rooms.

Which means our furniture actors need the following skills:

5. The capability to move across stories and hierarchies and change costume should the need arise.

6. The ability to incorporate digital and analog media equally, therefore including the virtual information space and nurturing creativity and engagement. Which, as we know, succeeds best when we use our hands.

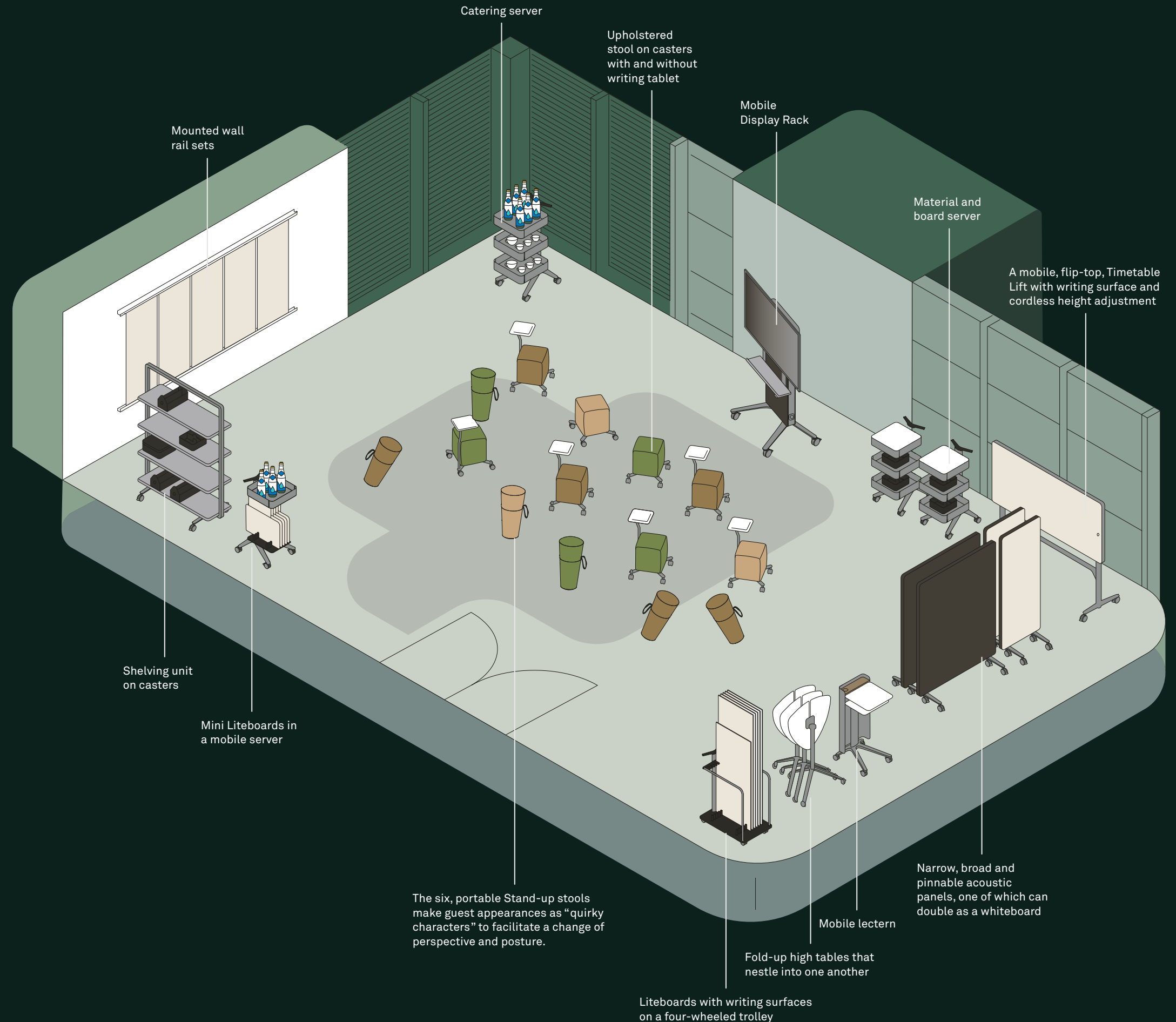
7. A sophisticated functionality coupled with first-class, coordinated design. Design that can be adapted to reflect multiple atmospheres and harmonize with fellow actors, such as sofas, which usually feature in other productions.

8. The ability to repurpose workshop rooms for seminars, meetings and online or analog conferences. The furniture actors themselves need to adopt all sorts of roles by turning into tables that fold up or nest into one another, mobile servers for materials and even stools on casters with writing tables can become mounts for Liteboards.



Workshop Room and Cast

At 12.5 m × 8.5 m in size, our stage set is ideal for a workshop of 12 to 14 people. Fewer people mean that the much-valued diversity of perspectives and roles is missing, more people mean that competing factions quickly form.



Attractive, eye-catching, hard-wearing outfits

- All metal frames in matte silver satin coatings with writing surfaces in a bright, warm sand color
- Shelves made of hard-wearing, soft-matte, light gray laminate
- Writing tablets for the stools on casters as white pops of color
- Textile covers on the vertical acoustic panels, all in a warm, dark gray hue
- Stools on casters and Stand-ups with different, carefully coordinated covers.

The Plot: A Day in The Life of a Workshop Room

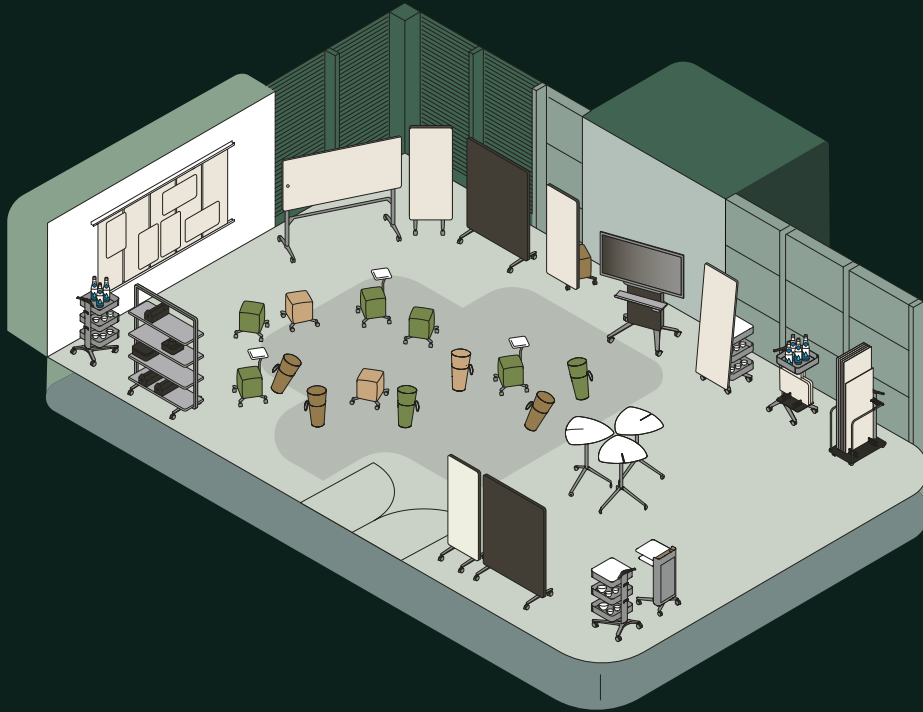
9.00 a.m. – Kickoff for everyone

The workshop starts with words of welcome, introductions and expectations. Seating chosen to suit preferences and the Display Rack, which the moderator uses to present the theme and indicate goals. Initial ideas are written on post-it notes attached to and clustered on the wall-mounted Liteboards. Then the sub-themes and tasks are defined.



3.00 p.m. – Presentation

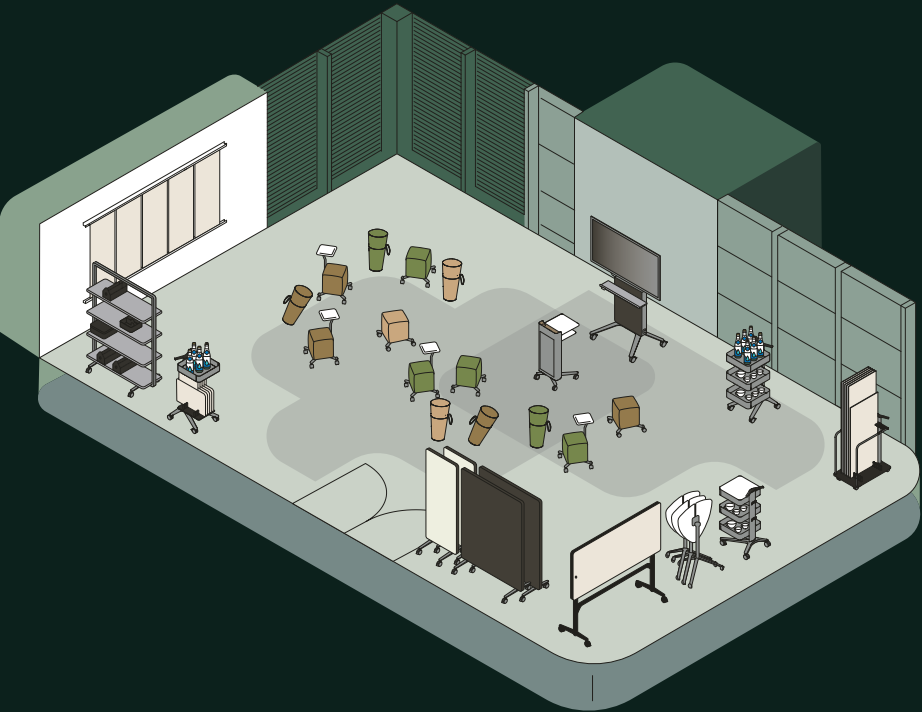
Following an intensive group-work phase, interspersed by a lunch break spent on a different stage if possible, the small groups present their results to one another. The acoustic panels and whiteboards with ideas stuck, pinned and written on them, the table-top positioned in the vertical, the Liteboard wall and Display Rack string the results on walls together to form a 180° panorama. As a result, cross references and links are easier to grasp.



P.S. The only onlooker was the shelving unit on casters. Prepared for the next day, it is full of Lego bricks, materials, objects and tools for a design thinking session.

11.00 a.m. – Group work

Group work needs more actors: While the first group is working with the Liteboards, the Display Rack and the trio of high tables is supporting the second. Acoustic panels and whiteboards are rolled into position as extra visualization options. The third group uses the worktop of the mobile table at standing height, while the Liteboard with themes is positioned on the stools on casters.

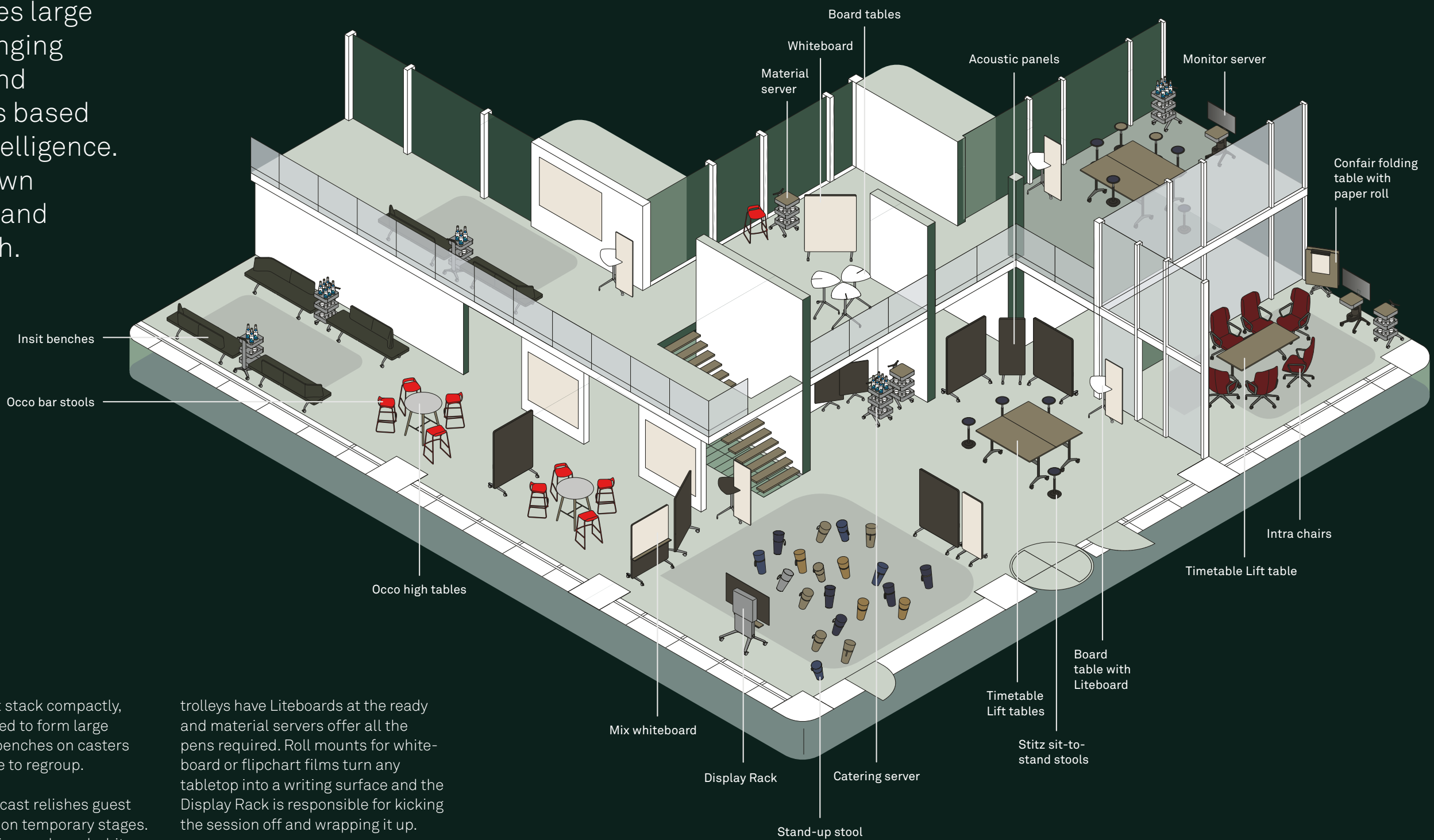


4.30 p.m. – Wrap-up

The wrap-up phase is starting: The Liteboards are tidied onto the four-wheeled trolley, the material and catering server parked and walls and tables have retreated in a space-saving manner to the edge of the stage. The lectern and Display Rack now move from an informal to formal mode. It's time for feedback, a wrap-up and a look ahead at the next steps.

Open Space– Open to Anything

The open space method involves large groups collecting ideas, exchanging experience, taking decisions and determining specific measures based on self-organized collective intelligence. Participants contribute their own themes to the plenary session and create working groups to match.



People can organize various market-like stalls spread around the room based on their own interests and talents, discuss sub-topics and work out solutions.

Ideal venues are open-plan receptions, cafeterias or lobbies that are quick and easy to repurpose. Particularly if the regular cast of furniture is versatile. For instance, four-leg chairs with armrests and

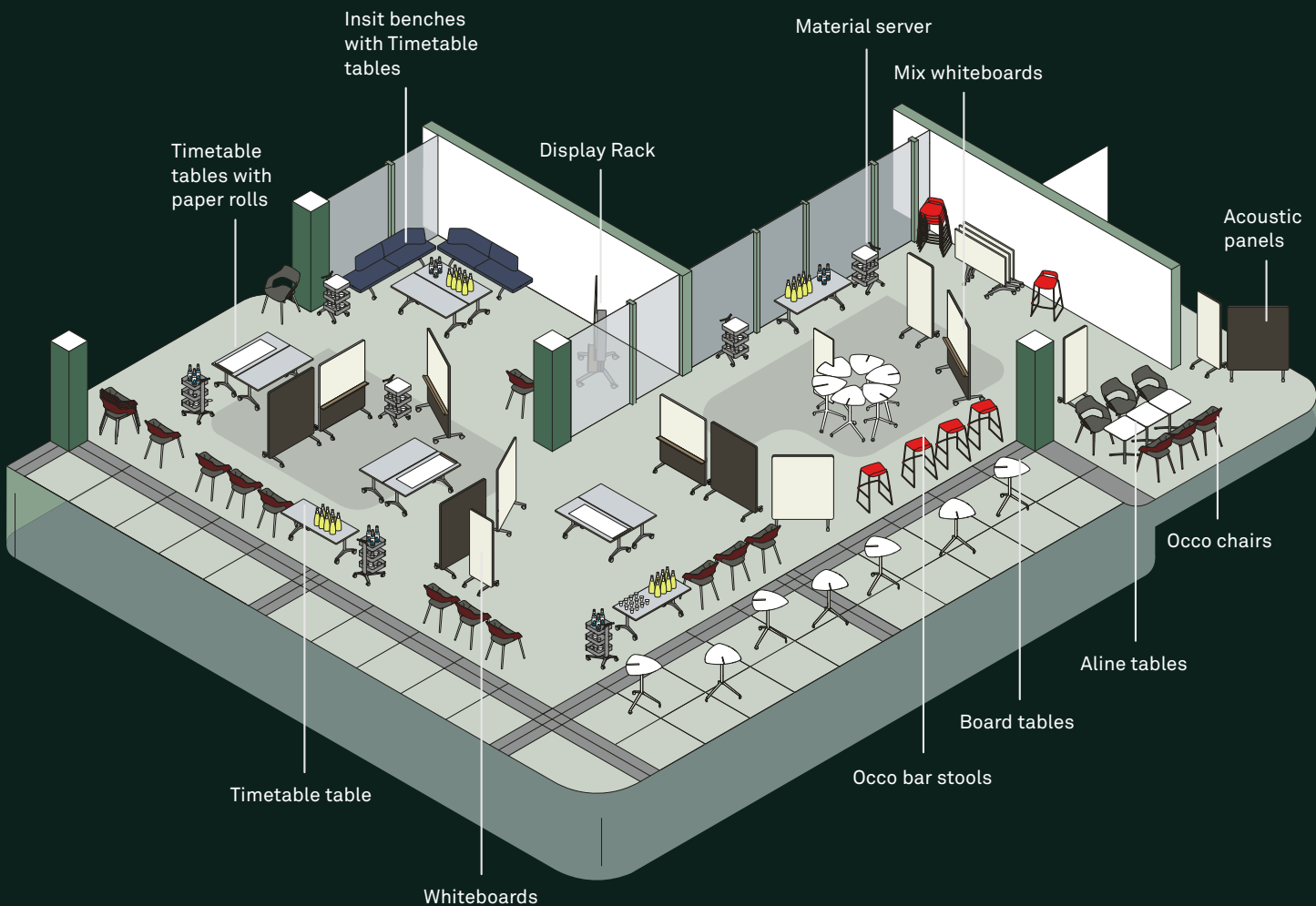
bar stools that stack compactly, tables combined to form large surfaces and benches on casters that are simple to regroup.

Our workshop cast relishes guest performances on temporary stages. Mobile acoustic panels and whiteboards divide up the spaces for the market-like stands. Board tables create a large group to stand at and Liteboard mounts. Four-wheeled

trolleys have Liteboards at the ready and material servers offer all the pens required. Roll mounts for whiteboard or flipchart films turn any tabletop into a writing surface and the Display Rack is responsible for kicking the session off and wrapping it up.

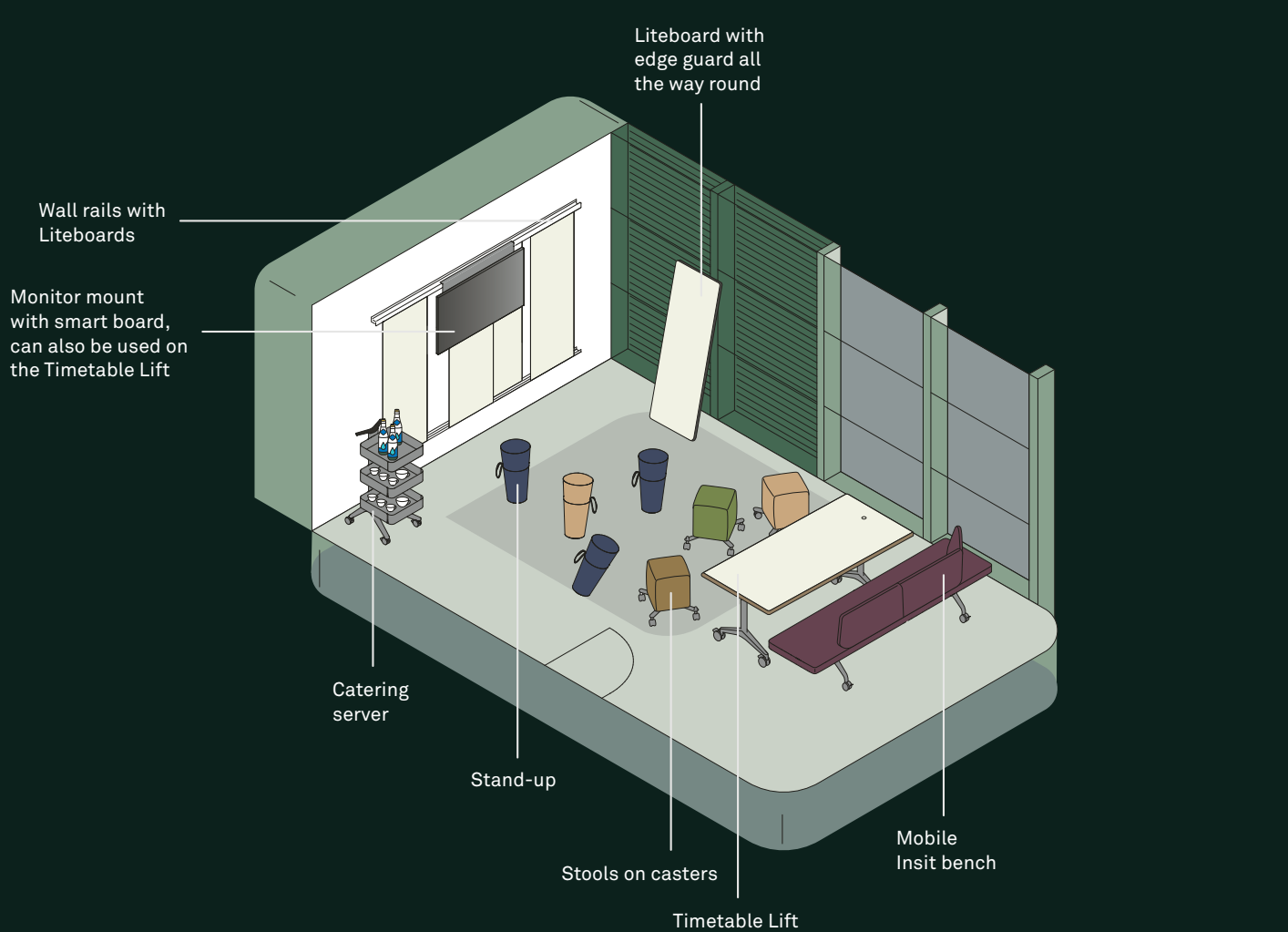
World Café – a Fixed Agenda

In a world café on the other hand, a complex topic is specified. It’s then divided into sub-topics or single aspects, which are then presented and moderated by the host at single tables or market-like stalls. Participants move from stand to stand based on a specified schedule. Ultimately, everyone will have experienced each stand and contributed.



Workshop S – Small Enough for Big Ideas

Agile players like small stages equally as much. The bench on casters promises ergonomic table-height comfort, wall rails act as smart-board mounts, Liteboards are superb for writing on and stools on casters and Stand-ups ideal for versatile groupings. And the multi-talented sit-to-stand table also accommodates the smart board if collaboration on the display or a mobile video conference are required. It can be horizontal, at a tilt or flipped up.



Interval



Remote participation in creative processes is usually particularly unsatisfactory. Either the group turns to the screen to include virtual participants—which means group dynamics and interaction in the room suffer. Or in-person interaction is superb, but virtual participants feel excluded. As a result, meetings are often only digital. And everything falls by the wayside that’s so important for agile, creative collaboration. Which means it was high time to create a brand-new actor that’s ideal for the stages of hybrid collaboration: the Confair Buddy.

As a slender, mobile totem with a section at the top consisting of a display, camera, microphone and loud-speaker, this new “face” brings eyes, ears and a voice as a hybrid avatar to the table. Because the camera is remote controlled, reactions, moods and interactions can be captured almost as authentically as if participants were taking part in person. The in-person group can take over the camera via gestures and AI-based control, if a shift to a formal phase is required.

What’s more, should dynamic group work need to switch to a whiteboard or a shelving unit on casters with material samples, the avatar’s head is altered to standing height and the totem guided by hand. Engagement with content, an emotive appeal and involvement are guaranteed throughout all phases and changes of method. The integrated rechargeable battery provides enough power for one whole day—a cordless solution without the safety risks. It’s written on the wall that our hybrid avatar will quickly play a frequent role in creative agile and hybrid work styles.

More About Confair-Buddy ➤



The mobile Confair Buddy will get the faces, eyes, ears and voices of remote participants to the table, or at whiteboards and co. at standing height. Just like all technology modules in Confair Next, the rear panel is attached magnetically too so that connections are concealed but accessible in seconds.

From a Bread Factory to an Innovation Factory

The transformation of Vienna's Ankerbrot factory site into a thriving services, art and culture hub is one of the most interesting inner-city conversions. The Co-Innovation Factory in the historical entrance building is a spectacular milestone in many respects.





However diverse functionality and atmospheres are, furniture design mirrors interior design by having one distinctive style and appeal throughout.



Existing Building and Context

The transformation into a cultural hub of the disused, historical building belonging to the legendary Anker bread factory from the early 20th century started in 2009. Today’s venue features a diverse new mix of options. A vocational training college, a learning café, a cafeteria, photo galleries, an artists’ association, artists’ studios, a pottery workshop, culture house all the way to furniture exhibitions, eateries and events space are under its roof. The erstwhile shipping facility, some 2,200 square meters in size and built in 1912 as one of the largest column-free halls in Europe, is used for a variety of events, from nighttime flea markets to theatre.

Entrepreneur, founder, lecturer, innovation researcher and bundle of energy Dr. Paul Blazek acquired the third floor plus space to extend the loft at 27 Absberggasse. He wanted to turn the space into a Co-Innovation Factory. The building with the distinctive Ankerbrot sign serves as the entrance point to the new cultural hub with its floorspace of approximately 17,000 square meters. Blazek collaborated with architect, artist and designer Claus Schnetzer to transform the space. It reflects all the aspects required of future-proof working environments in an increasingly knowledge-based economy, it’s inspiring, versatile, stimulating, and sustainable.

Adaptable Spaces

The Co-Innovation Factory covers 1,500 square meters of floorspace, including the loft conversion, and is a venue for meetings and talks, office work, workshops, and movie screenings. A bar and kitchen, breakfast meet-ups and after-work parties all take place here. The innovation lab, or the spaceship studio are just as multifunctional as the light-flooded domed hall. A VIP lounge with glass walls is located in a gallery with a magnificent view of the room below. The vast community space at the heart of the building is primarily somewhere informal to interact with others. Its impressively high ceilings provide lots of space for inspiring art objects. A small kitchen, the entrance space doubling as a lobby with in-built cloakroom (the connection area), a hallway for relaxed meet-ups (the welcome area) and washrooms round out the room offering.

To match the spaces’ multifunctional concept, their furniture is also easy to move about. The underlying idea is for users to configure settings themselves. Blazek believes that involving people in the process is key to persuading them to actively embrace processes of change and innovation. The converted loft with access to a spectacular rooftop patio is used for office spaces, some of which are for personal use, or which companies can rent for innovation projects (corporate innovation office).

Reusing is the Design Motto

Reorganizing the erstwhile bread factory into a knowledge hub and extending it by adding a gallery and converting the loft is key to a materially and culturally sustainable construction approach. But the client and architect went way further. Sustainability and change also underpin the design concept, with the various layers of the building’s over 100-year history carefully exposed and preserved. Wherever possible, the original construction materials, such as old staircases and historical bricks from the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were reused for the remodeling. The fittings are also based on lamps and tables from former offices. Today, wire crates previously used for shipping items and old server cabinets have become a flexibly configurable bar counter. Or the latter double as mobile, sound-proofed cubicles for people to make phone calls in peace.

A Narrative of Constant Change

The rooms reveal their historic roots and the many transformation phases of a production environment shaped by technological progress. Instead of a perfectly designed workplace, spaces for different options are the upshot. Spaces that reflect the building’s past and future. Because it virtually goes without saying that by choosing Confair Next, Blazek’s equipment and collaborative furnishings meet state-of-the-art standards for analog, hybrid and digital collaboration. After all, alongside his lecturing and research roles, his CyLEDGE Media agency does specialize in designing digital experiences. The unfinished nature of the building suggests that it’s a work in progress. The idea is to stimulate a workshop atmosphere and encourage people to work on visions for tomorrow, whether these are incremental or disruptive.

Networking and Collaborating

The diverse cultural disciplines and proximity to movie, music and media academies provide the pulsating backdrop that an innovation factory needs. Therefore, the Co-Innovation Factory operates an open-door policy to prompt planned, but also spontaneous interaction across disciplines. New ideas to encourage collaboration are part of the urban mining concept to reuse and repurpose existing resources. The collaboration with Wilkhahn was based on its concept for future-proof working environments. This approach focuses on people’s well-being, building communities and collaborating, the distinctive identity of a place and lasting sustainability. Wilkhahn provided new furniture for the Co-Innovation Factory. Examples include the diverse Occo range for informal areas, Confair folding tables, Timetable Lifts, and stackable Aline chairs for the multipurpose team- and innovation spaces. And then there are the Graph chairs in the glass-walled VIP space and, of course, lots of Stitz sitting-standing and Stand-up stools and Sitzbocks to foster a change of posture and perspective. Above all, the Co-Innovation Factory became the testing lab for Confair Next before it was even launched.

Innovation Fitness Trail

In a new event format, Paul Blazek, uses a nuanced sequence of rooms with Confair Next modules to represent an innovation fitness trail. This format involves people from companies and organizations experiencing innovation process phases together. They start off in the welcome area, where the aim is to broaden horizons and create a desire for the new. To build trust and create a community, they proceed to the collaboration forum. Then they move on to the inspiration space, which demonstrates the variety of materials to work with and encourages a playful approach to them. The challenge room identifies improvement potential and the innovation gate is somewhere to reflect on the maximum that’s possible. The solution room is where solutions are agreed on and developed before the session ends in the community and collaboration forum. This forum is somewhere to share new knowledge, create enthusiasm and continuity.

“The Confair folding table will look just as good in tomorrow’s world as the Occo chairs and other Wilkhahn furniture. These items are ideal for offices or homes, for meetings or parties, for kitchens or cafés. And these characteristics will mean that the furniture retains its value and is future proof. What’s more, they’re not just practical but also very attractive items”.

Claus Schnetzer,
architect and designer

A Holistic Approach

The Co-Innovation Factory in inner-city Vienna reflects the diverse dimensions of transformation processes. The former industrial neighborhood has become a culture- and knowledge-generation hub. Offices, previously shut off, have been opened up to turn into places for intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration. The result is a mix of the old and new and very much a work in progress. So it’s hardly surprising that the Co-Innovation Factory has now become one of the most talked-about hotspots of the innovation scene and features on radio and TV frequently. Planners or designers, change or sustainability managers, entrepreneurs or NGOs will encounter multiple dimensions of future-proof working environments here. These combine to form a particularly productive whole that repeatedly launches new ideas.



Dr. Paul Blazek,
founder of the Co-Innovation-Factory,
CEO of cyLEDGE media, innovation researcher
and college lecturer

“The superb furniture solutions to encourage communication and innovation ensure that the truly special mix of old and new repeatedly bears fruit.”



Comments about the innovation fitness trail with Confair Next

1

“I believe that this is absolutely the future for realizing new ideas, products and dreams.”

Hermann Gams
Co-founder and CEO, DreamAcademia



2

“From my side, absolutely recommended, you should give it a try.”

Christoph Kristandl
Communications, Zukunftsinstitut



3

“The perfect combination of spaces and people.”

Martin Reisenauer
HR Strategy and Finance, BDO

4

“It stimulates creativity.”

Marion Gergely
Business Strategy Manager, Nestlé Nespresso



5

“It really showed how spaces, people and processes can come together to achieve truly great results.”

Roman Walter
Managing Partner, Digital Ad

Watch The Innovation
Parcours Video ↗

Act 2

From Meeting Rooms to Board Rooms



The Art of Agile Steering

Whether in the shape of regular appointments, management conclaves, discussions or boards convening—traditional meeting formats have always reflected hierarchies and internal structures without which no community can thrive. As a reflection of a company's identity and culture, they have outstandingly high symbolic importance. By the same token, people at the top of organizations need to lead by example and switch toward agile working methods.

Remote working and desk sharing have changed meeting and conference rooms’ occupancy models and design concepts. Previously reserved for a department or hierarchy for frequent meetings, almost anyone can book them now, with a few exceptions for top management. With attractive names based on themes or places and designed accordingly, they are all about identification and atmosphere. The focus is on the table as the common denominator and work surface. Round tables with base frames on the inside are ideal for varying numbers of people. Therefore, task chairs on casters are ideal seating options or perhaps the office chairs at the workspaces – as long as they match and have an appropriately resimercial appeal.

Principles and methods

The rapid rise in demand for meeting spaces indicates that the pressure to make decisions and complexity render a one-size-fits-all approach inadequate. Now more than ever, due to the swift change in market environments, managers need to cover all their bases by taking decisions as teams.

As a result, meeting formats have become much more interactive. Instead of issuing requests, conveying information or announcing decisions, the focus is on people questioning and discussing issues frankly with one another. It’s vital to note down people’s comments for everyone to see. Therefore, visualization options, like whiteboards or pinboards, which should, if possible, coordinate with the interior design and be part of the furniture are a must. This would be a typical use case for our agile workshop furniture that is ideal for this setting.

Digital media, on the other hand, needs to be flexible. Because experience has shown that hybrid meetings often only take place at the workspaces concerned so that nobody is at a disadvantage. You could fit out each meeting space with a large screen for any eventuality. But it might be much more economical, ecological and in tune with work culture to provide a rapid task force of monitor servers and media walls that can move to any room if needed. If battery operated, it’s easy to put these items wherever needed without any annoying cables in the way.

Talking of installing equipment, WiFi and Bluetooth mean that tables mostly just require a power supply and in-built charging options for cell phones, tablets, and laptops. But clear rules should govern how these devices are used. The mere suspicion that someone’s not concentrating can dent the team spirit seriously.



What has altered?
Managing people in an era of change means striking the right balance between continuity, reliability, strategic advancement and future steps. These factors require new settings, even in top management tiers.

1.

The table shapes should encourage interaction and convey that everyone's on an equal footing wherever they are sitting.

2.

Instead of static table systems geared to the maximum number of people, versatile table configurations are more practical. Configurations that are easy to make bigger or smaller and offer a perfect fit to changes in team sizes.

3.

Dynamic seating keeps people on the ball and facilitates changes in position.

4.

Meeting rooms to board rooms require high-quality writing surfaces to note down people's comments for everyone to see and provide a record at the same time.

Consequently, in the right outfits, items from the Confair Next range also cut quite a dash here too.

5.

Agile work modules, such as whiteboards and pinboards, can be positioned into groups. They can also be designed so that they look part of the furniture. This factor helps agile working to become a new corporate standard throughout a company.

6.

The mobile servers can keep plenty of materials like moderator cards, post-it notes, Mini Liteboards, pens and board markers at the ready.

7.

As a window on the digital world, flexible positioning of multimedia technology in the room is possible. It can be directed at people who are sitting or standing but keep cables, small devices and connections out of sight.

8.

Even at top-management level, virtual attendees from home offices and at conferences with customers are the norm (and save travel times, costs and emissions). Consequently, hybrid avatars like our Confair Buddy are ideal ways of bridging the gap between in-person and online participation.

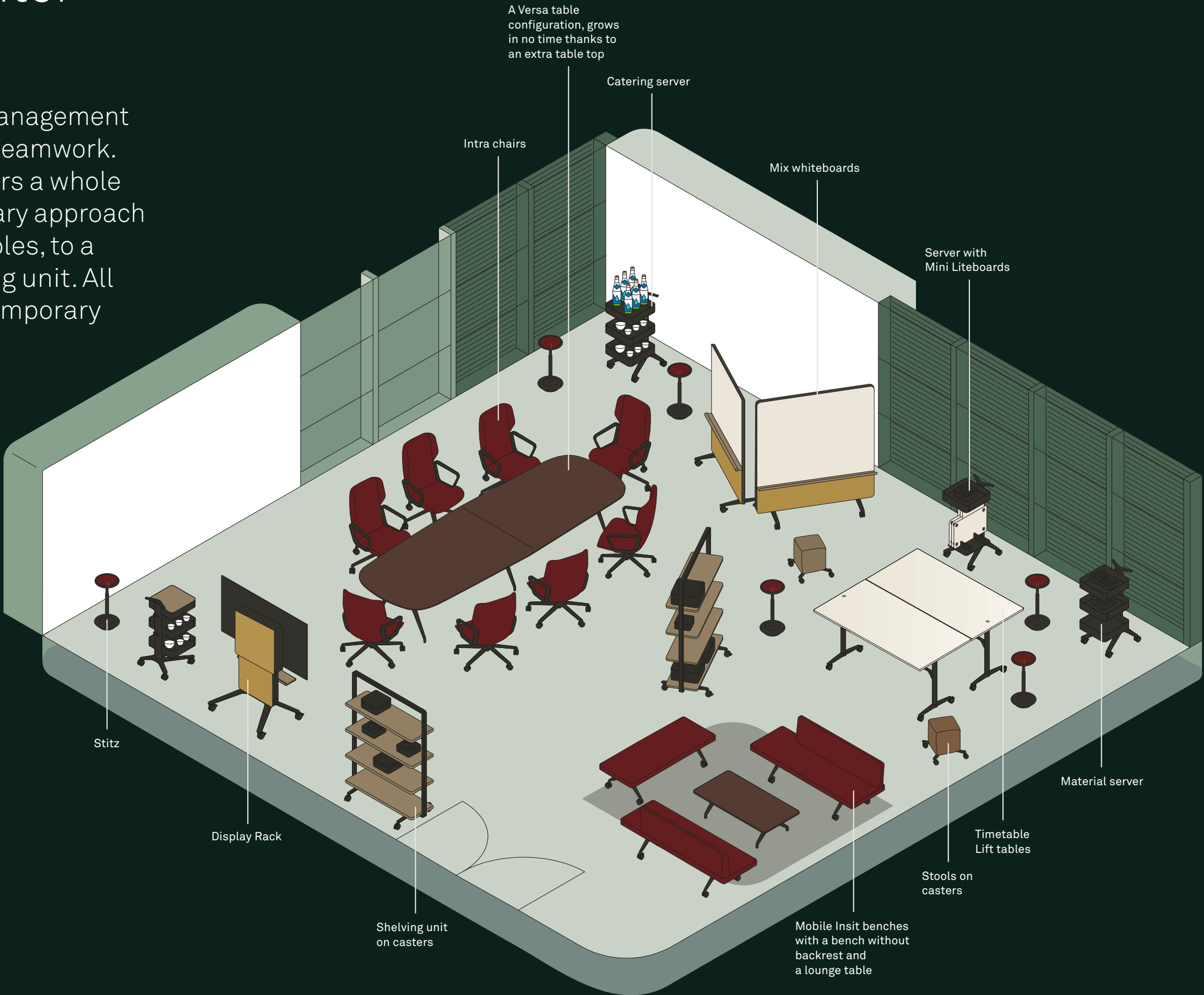


An Agile Command Center and an Executive Cast

To develop strategies or manage crises, top management tiers also need to embrace agile and creative teamwork. As a multipurpose space, the boardroom offers a whole host of options. For instance, a formal sedentary approach at a table, or a very interactive one at high tables, to a relaxed trust-building one at a corner seating unit. All these options are clear indications of a contemporary management and discussion culture.

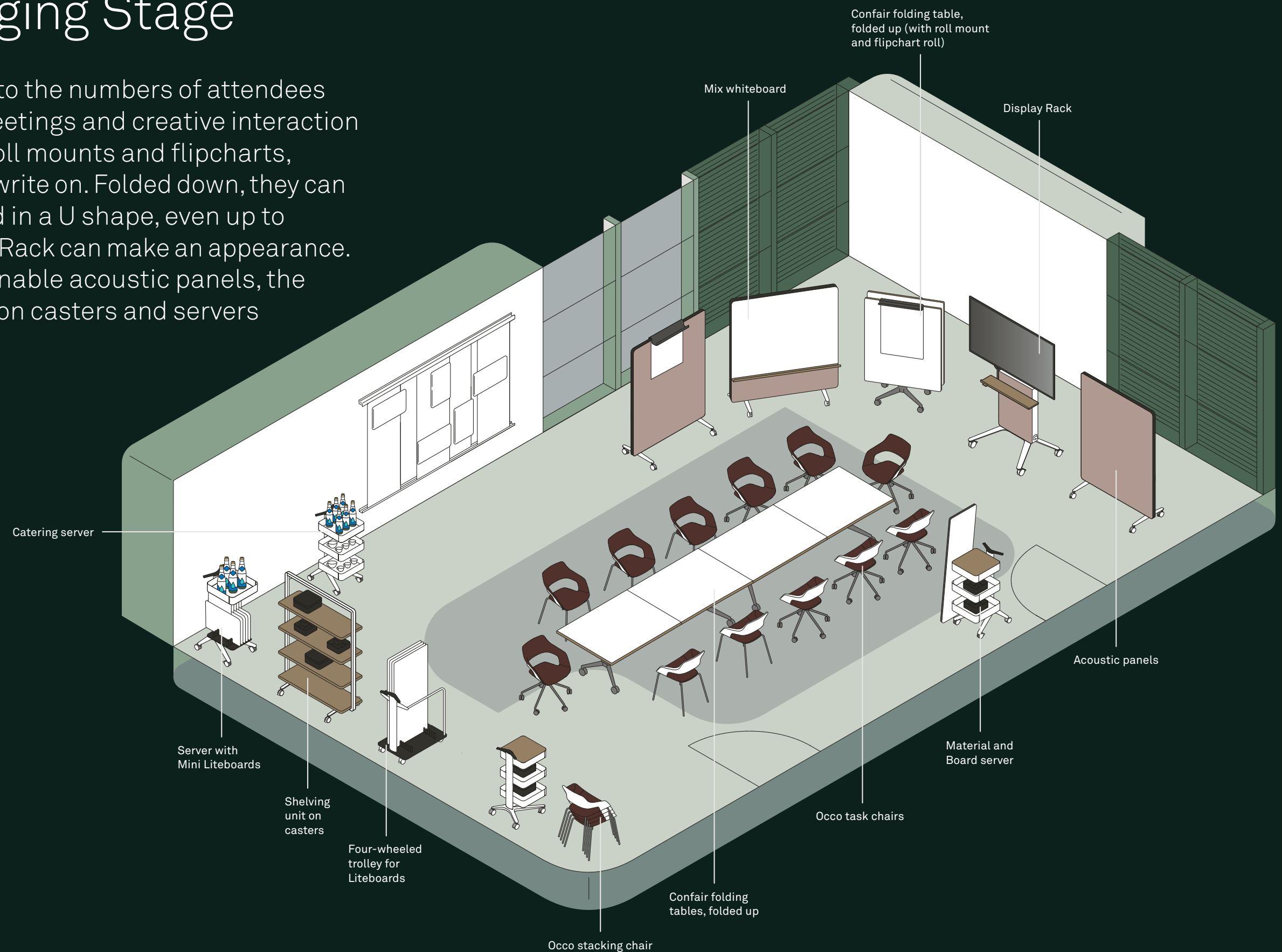
Future-Ready, Prestigious Outfits

- Versa table configuration base frames, Intra chairs, Insit benches, Timetable Lift and Confair Next elements with a black textured matte finish
- Versa table tops in walnut veneer, shelves on units on casters, server shelves natural oak
- Timetable Lift and whiteboard finishes in a matte, sand-colored tone
- Intra chair covers with a pronounced texture in precisely coordinated muted colors
- Insit benches with the same covers as Intra
- Stitz sit-to-stand stools, black base frame, seat covered in embossed leather
- Mix whiteboard and Display Rack covers to match the walnut finishes



The Conference Room as an Ever-Changing Stage

The Confair folding tables adapt to the numbers of attendees and cover the needs of formal meetings and creative interaction with ease. Folded up, with their roll mounts and flipcharts, they become vertical surfaces to write on. Folded down, they can accommodate eight and grouped in a U shape, even up to 16 people. If required, the Display Rack can make an appearance. And just like the Occo chairs, pinnable acoustic panels, the Mix whiteboards, a shelving unit on casters and servers are also part of the core cast.



Appealing, practical and neutral outfits

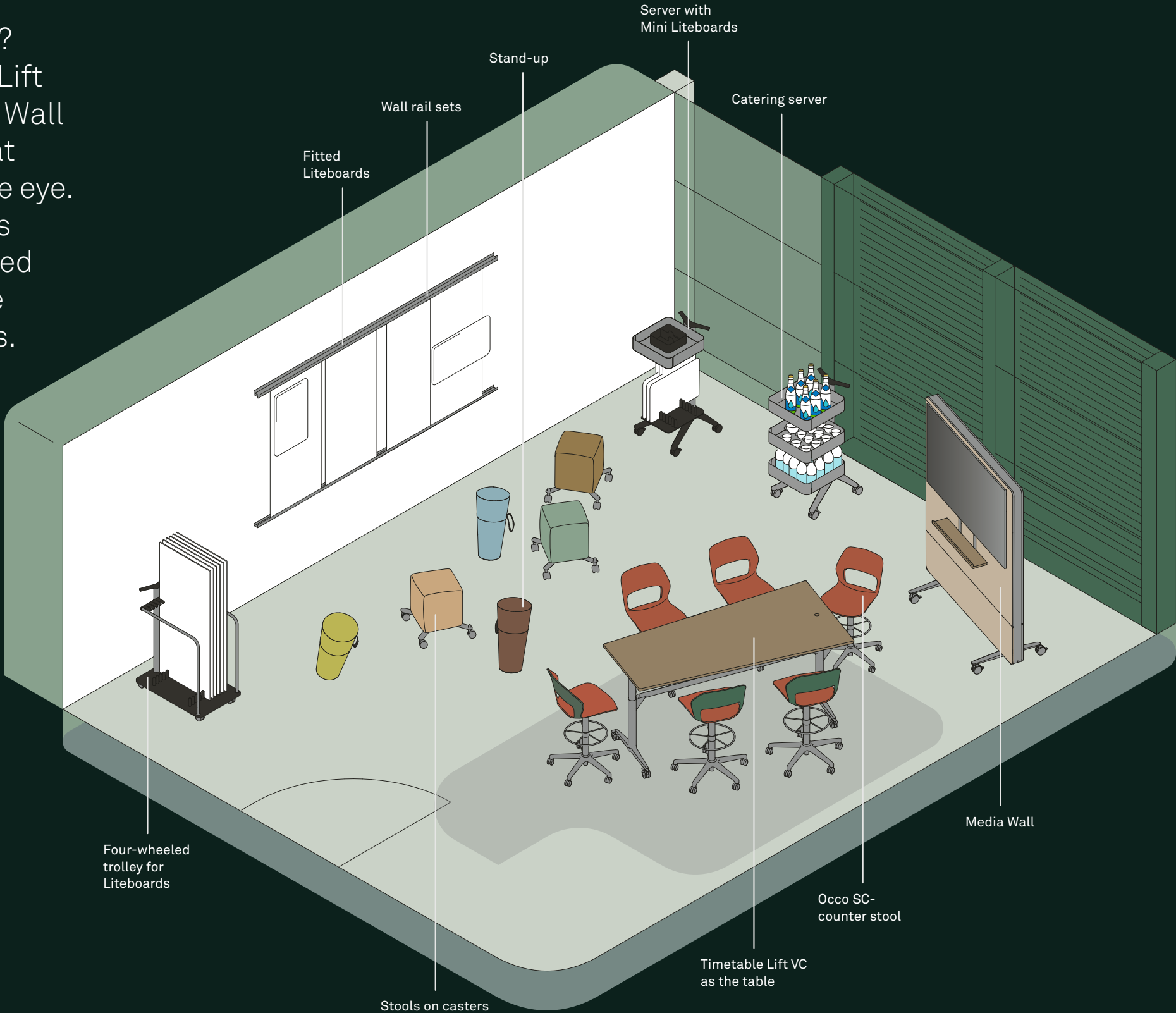
- Confair folding table panels, in matte white with bullnose (double) wood edging and a white impact-resilient profile
- Table and Occo chair frames in robust, bright chrome plating, the white seat shells have hard wearing padding on the inside in attractive colors.
- The base frames of the Display Rack, Media Wall, Mix whiteboard, acoustic walls, servers and shelving unit on casters come in a white textured matte finish, shelves in natural oak, fabrics are in muted, earthy tones.
- Magnetic whiteboard surfaces, Liteboards and roll mount in matte white
- To provide splashes of color, the stools on casters and Stand-ups have different covers

An all-in-one meeting room

Is a meeting, video conference or project work required? This compact setting can do everything. The Timetable Lift VC plays one starring role and the digital-analog Media Wall the other. The extras are the Occo SC counter chairs that allow people sitting or standing to look each other in the eye. Then there are the magnetic Liteboards on the wall rails and servers to accommodate Mini Liteboards etc. Flipped up and rolled to the side, the table frees up space in the middle of the stage for stools on casters and Stand-ups.

Outfits geared to multiple purposes

- Wall rails for Liteboards, base frames of the Media Wall, servers and trays, stools on casters and the Timetable Lift VC in a matte silver satin finish, Timetable Lift with bright chrome-plated feet
- Table top in a natural oak veneer with impact-resilient profile all the way round, solid oak Media Wall shelf, covering in a recycled beige fabric
- Magnetic Liteboards and mini whiteboards in shiny white with writing surfaces
- Occo SC counter chairs, high-luster polished star bases, seat and backrest shells in emerald green, padding on the inside with recycled textile covers
- Stand-ups with bronze, beige and sage covers, fully upholstered stools on casters with a recycled textile cover



Star portrait: A fold-up, rolling performer, debuted in 1994

The Confair folding table was the first agile, table protagonist to triumph on global stages for dynamic conference furniture. A sophisticated mechanism is all that's required for one person to fold it up or down. It comes with slim uprights and molded foot sections and custom-developed twin casters to overcome small thresholds. It has a distinctive table edge, which, thanks to the both practical and stylish impact-resilient profile, give the table a particularly light, floating appearance.

2004

In 2004, the Confair folding table presented its many experiences in ad form as a short story entitled Up and Down.

“Negotiating the straight stretch along the corridor. Than taking a sharp left, over the threshold and into the elevator to join the others. Today, heading straight up to the 28th floor. Out and over the parquet and through the long-pile carpeting of the inner sanctuary. Then unfolded, grouped in rows, connectors to neighboring tables clipped in and ready to take important decisions.



1992

In 1992, the then 27-year-old designer Andreas Störiko started working with Wilkhahn. Störiko was an alumnus of the Academy for Art and Design in Stuttgart, Germany. He was on the verge of taking up a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to follow a program at the famous Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield, Michigan in the US. Prolific designers like Eero Saarinen, Florence Knoll, Harry Bertoia and Charles Eames had once also spent time at the Cranbrook.

Which is why Störiko chiefly devised and developed his design for the mobile Confair conference range while in the US. In an era that predated e-mails and the internet, the designer, Wilkhahn and his Stuttgart-based model builder communicated in writing and drawings sent by fax. The model builder then presented the outcome as a functional one-to-one model to an enthusiastic Wilkhahn product management team. The Confair folding table was born and premiered worldwide in 1994 at Orgatec in Cologne, Germany.



1994

In 1994, Störiko moved to Milan, Italy. After a brief, but productive period as an assistant to Richard Sapper there, he decided to go freelance with his own studio. New York photographer Holger Thoss took the early photos of the Confair folding table in the north Italian design capital.

It quickly became a much-lauded design icon, garnering top international accolades such as the Design Centre of North Rhine-Westphalia's Top Design Quality prize. It also made it to the iF Award's top ten, the Gold Industrial Excellence Award from the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) and was given the Best of Competition title by the International Interior Design Association (IIDA). It also featured in exhibitions for the Compasso d'Oro in the Palazzo del Arte in Milan or the Fond National d'Art Contemporain in Paris, France.



The next day, with the rings from champagne glasses removed, it's time to return to the lower floors. Where small groups carry out what's decided today...

The Confair folding table. At home on all floors every day.”

Today

Today, the Confair folding table comes in depths of 90 cm to 120 cm and widths of 180 cm to 300 cm—in rectangular formats to link with other tables, or as a stand-alone version in a communicative barrel shape. Depending on their destination, connections for power supplies and multi-media equipment are in built or under the table tops.

The table features traditional bullnose (double) wood edging, which overcomes minor differences in height when the table tops are linked. But nowadays, on request, it also comes with straight edging, with and without an impact-resilient profile. And its variety of laminates, sophisticated veneers and diverse frame surfaces place virtually no limits on the looks it can create.

In terms of design, quality and functionality, the table is still unparalleled. And, just as Fritz Hahne, the late son of Wilkhahn's founder and driving force once put it, underlines the “difference between copying and understanding a principle.”

Consequently, the Confair folding table has been a star in its prime for decades. A star that can enter a stage with a new interpretation time and again. It will be exciting to see what roles it will undertake in future...

More About Confair Folding Table ➤



Office on Stage #01 – Corporate Hybrid



Star Portrait – The Fold-up, Rolling Performer, Debuted in 1994

Act 3

Spaces for Joint Learning



From Information to Knowledge, from Willingness to Action

With market and working conditions changing faster, it's important to make on-the-job learning easier. Application-driven learning in the community is essential. Because it takes interaction with others to turn new information into knowledge and applying this expertise to produce new skills.

The pace of development in all sectors requires lifelong learning based on solid foundations in companies and organizations. And what’s more, it’s no longer practical to separate the working from the learning environment.

Putting across and repeating information with self-learning programs can be solely online. But transforming it into new expertise and skills requires as diverse a range of interaction with others as possible. Which is why offices are morphing into marketplaces for shared expertise and joint learning. There’s a good reason why settings in large companies are called campus-es, auditoriums, seminar spaces, labs, workshops, libraries, refectories and co. They all stem from the backdrop of educational facilities. In view of demographic change with people retiring and taking their expertise with them, all big companies and organizations today would be well advised to focus on shoring up their expertise and putting it across. It’s high time that lifelong learning is incorporated into companies’ day-to-day operations.

Principles and methods

Educators are correct when they claim that a more multi-sensory learning approach is better. And brain research shows that human behavior is primarily influenced by sub-conscious stimuli. If more senses and emotions are stimulated, we find it easier to make good use of learnings. Which is why it takes interaction, group work and joint exercises to actually learn what we have heard.

Given the exceptional number of training and upskilling programs in major organizations, it’s practical to offer rooms that people can book. A break from the daily grind, daylight, fresh air, a view of the outdoors and (if possible) an adjoining patio or garden make learning more successful. The furniture needs to adapt quickly and easily to group numbers, methods and the relevant multimedia. Furniture placed in rows is ideal for talks, deep work and exams. Block layouts are practical for learning phases in small groups and U-shaped layouts encourage interaction in big groups.

Mobile tables with flipped-up table tops and turned-in foot sections that are simple to move and nest into one another compactly allow one person to configure the setting with ease in just a few minutes. Table systems with base frames that can be folded in and connecting leaves are another alternative. In versatile geometries and dimensions, they allow even better room usage. They create a neater look and stack onto one another in an even more space-saving way. And the ratio of table tops to base frames is more cost efficient if tables are linked with connecting leaves. However, it takes more people to configure them because two physically strong people are required.

Stackable multipurpose chairs are ideal seating for different configurations and group sizes. This category features vertical four-leg chairs that can be stacked over or in each other, springy cantilever chairs, or sled-base chairs whose slimline base frames make them compact to stack. Seat shells offer support and convey assurance. Covered frames adapt to the body and, as meshes, are transparent and ensure good airflow at the rear. Along-side secure stacking capabilities and space requirements, ease of handling, the ability to adapt to diverse interiors and, of course, comfort are key criteria.

As a rule of thumb, anyone wishing to prioritize learning should invest in high-quality tools that quickly pay a dividend. This approach means people treat the furniture more carefully and conveys a high regard for the people engaged in learning. The outfitting of rooms plays a key role in learning outcomes and motivating people. It makes a difference whether people say they have to or can go to a training course.

What's new?

Demographic change, skills shortages and the pace of digitalization almost make the ability of organizations to learn a question of survival. Lifelong learning requires new methods and integrating the process into people's day-to-day jobs.

1.

To consolidate skills, the focus shifts from conveying information toward changing methods with interactions, group work and exercises.

2.

Interdisciplinary teams and the right mix of experienced people and newbies reinforce the ability to learn from one another and take a broader view.

3.

Adopting different postures and moving about the room make changes in perspective easy and foster the ability to absorb and learn.

4.

Working remotely also changes office-based learning. Instead of people taking one or more days out for training, they can pick single, shorter learning phases in hybrid groups without the need to factor in traveling times and changes of venue.

Contemporary learning at greater momentum, with greater interaction and self-organized settings necessitate furniture whose main sphere of operation was previously in workshop settings.

5.

On the other hand, innovation spaces are also learning spaces. Joint experimentation with objects stowed in shelving units on casters that can be filled as required, focuses on experience and mutual conveying of skills.

6.

To incorporate virtual attendees, seminar furnishing requires very easy and dynamic use of smart technologies and contemporary multimedia equipment. Examples include the Timetable Lift, Display Rack and Media Wall.

7.

If people can write, draw and present outcomes themselves, they become more engaged and (literally) grasp and recall learnings better. Which is why whiteboards and Liteboards for people working in groups or on their own are a must.

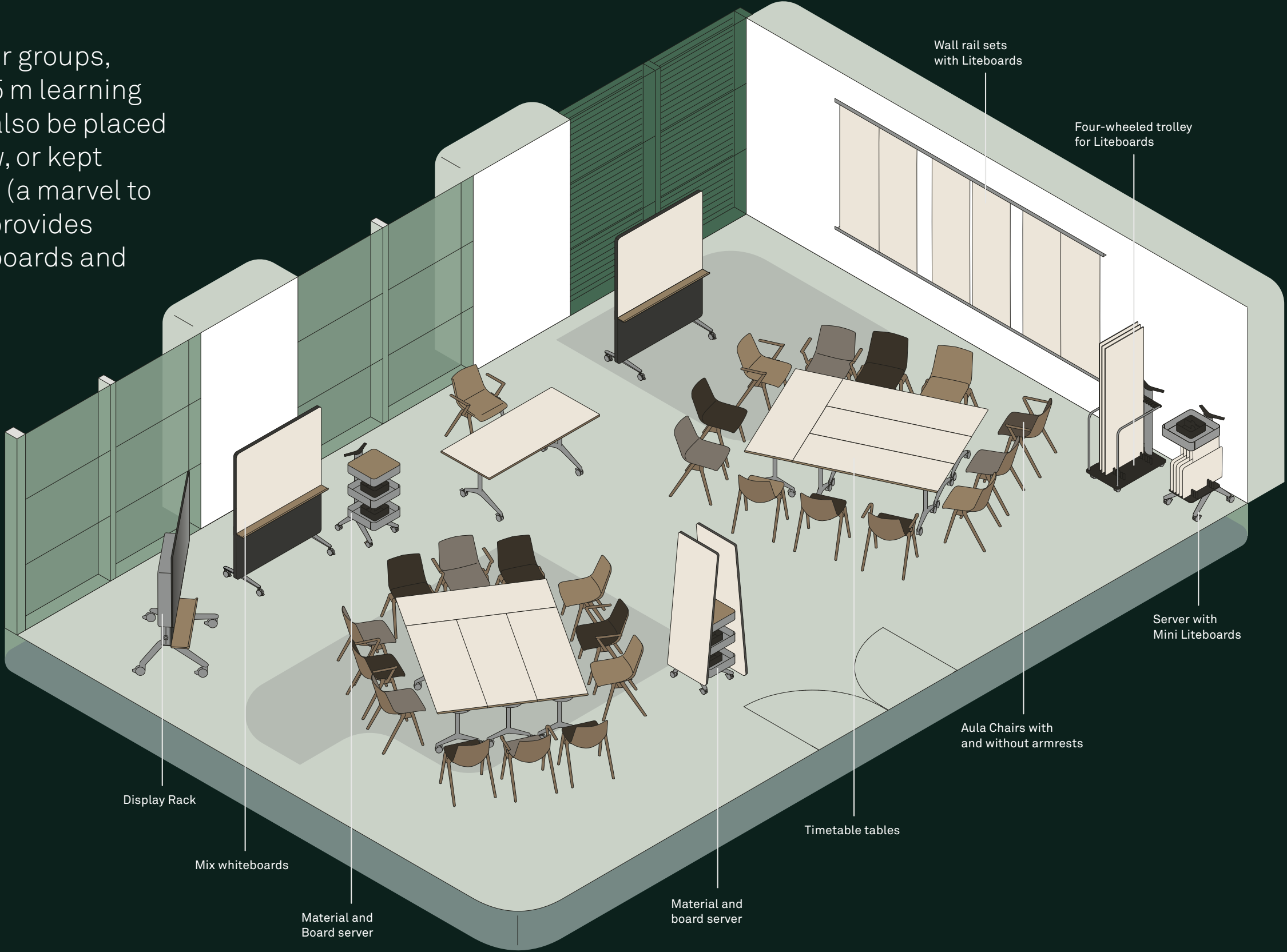
8.

Last but not least, servers are mobile options that provide equipment and materials, as well as hot and cold drinks.



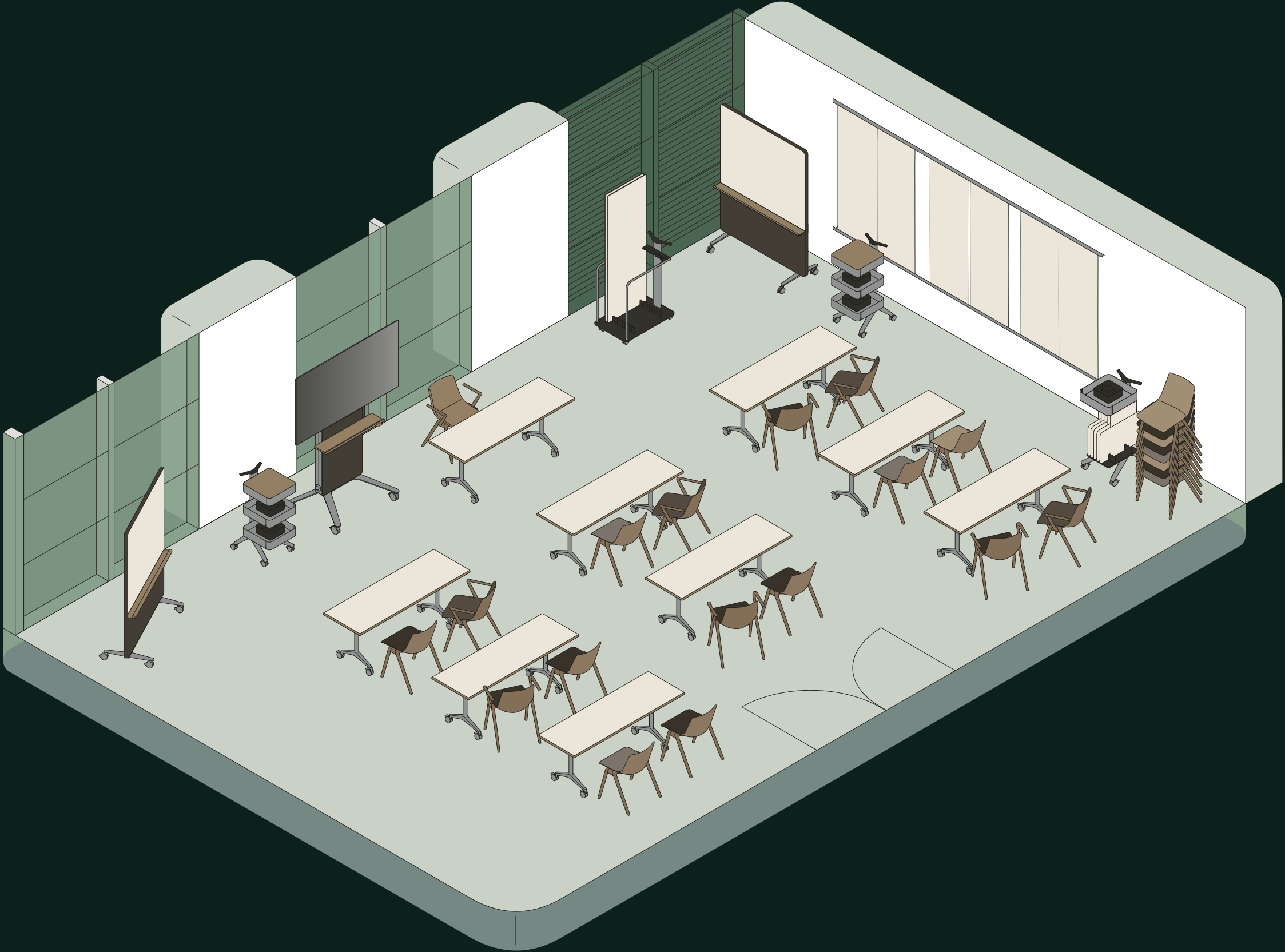
A One-Size-Fits-All Learning Space

For talks, work and exercises in up to four groups, flexibility is paramount on the 12 m × 8.5 m learning stage. The mobile Timetable tables can also be placed in a big group, or grouped closely in a row, or kept at a greater distance for exams with Aula (a marvel to stack) as the seating. The Display Rack provides a window on the online world and whiteboards and Liteboards are there to be written on.



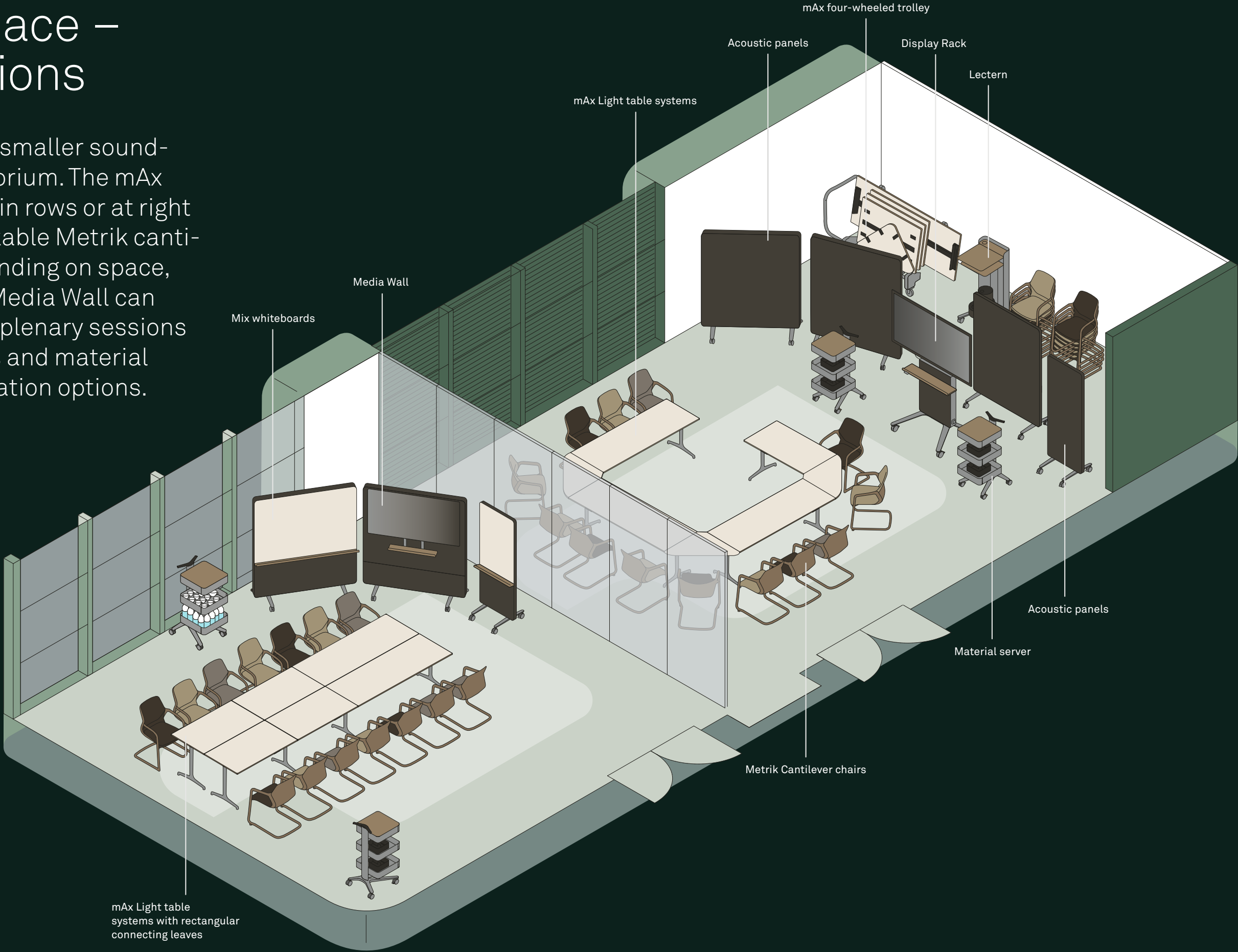
Hard-Wearing Outfits

- Timetable tables with matte white, laminated table tops, natural wood edging with integrated impact-resilient profile, base frames in a matte silver satin and the foot sections are stylish with a hard-wearing bright chrome plating
- Aula chairs with gray-beige seat shells and base frames, as well as padding on the inside in matching, earthy hues
- Wall rail sets and base frames of the Mix whiteboard, Display Rack and servers, plus shelves, trays and drawers in a matte silver satin, writing tablets in natural oak, sound-absorbent fleece in dark gray
- Liteboards, 140 cm high, with a sand-colored, impact-resilient profile, all the way round



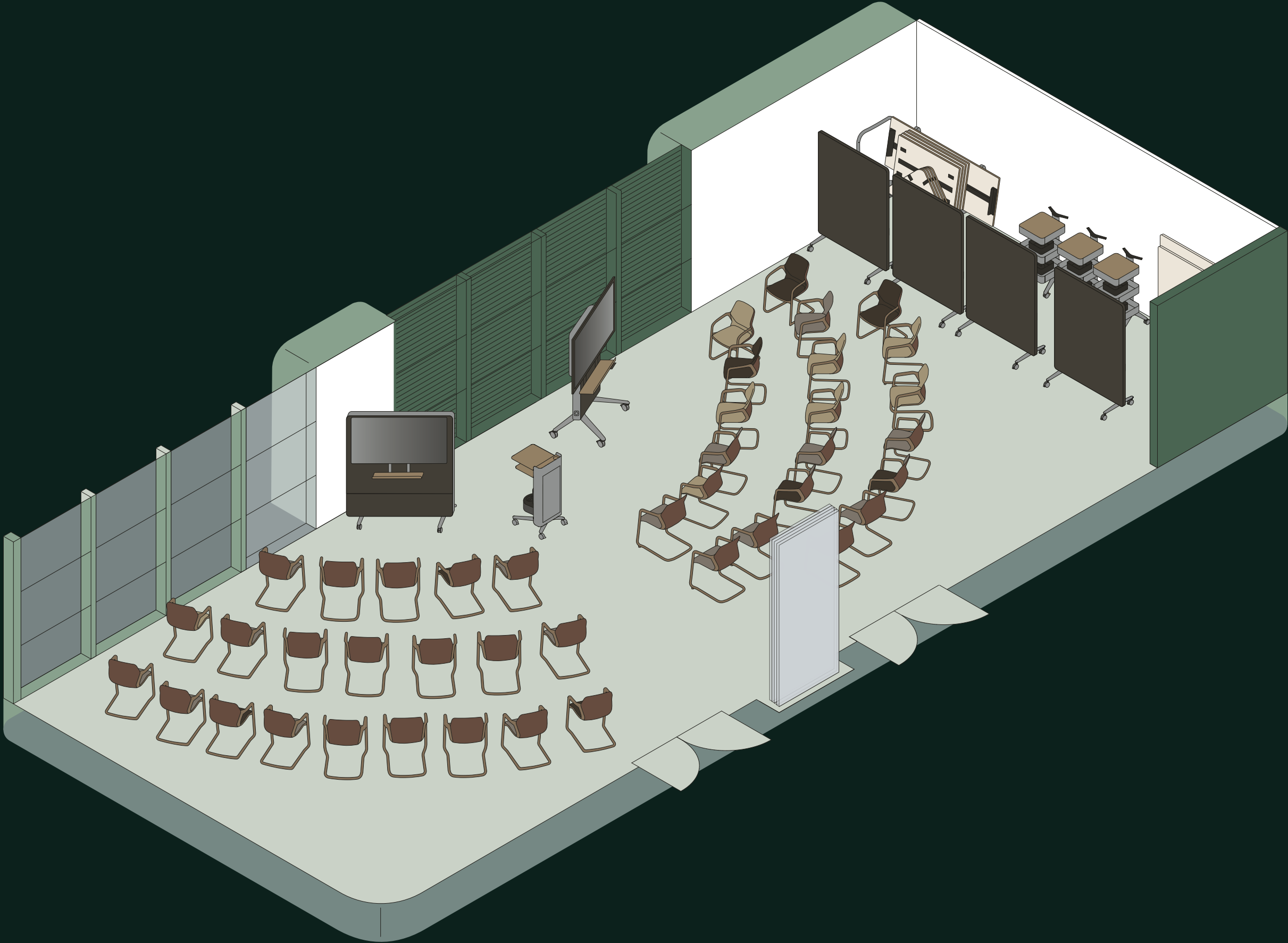
A partitioned space – three usage options

A folding partition enables two smaller sound-proofed rooms or one big auditorium. The mAx folding table range, configured in rows or at right angles, and the spacious, stackable Metrik cantilever chairs are the stars. Depending on space, either the Display Rack or the Media Wall can make guest appearances, or in plenary sessions even both. Diverse whiteboards and material servers provide analog visualization options.



Hard-Wearing Outfits

- mAx table system and connecting leaves with matte-white, laminated table tops, straight, oiled, natural wood edging all the way round, base frames in matte silver satin
- The Metrik cantilever chairs’ shell and base frame in gray-beige like Aula and color-matched with a textured matte finish, as well as padding on the inside in coordinating, earthy hues.
- The base frames of the Media Wall, Mix whiteboard, Display Rack, acoustic panels and servers, as well as shelves, trays and drawers come in a matte silver satin, writing tablets are in natural oak and the sound-absorbent fleece in dark gray

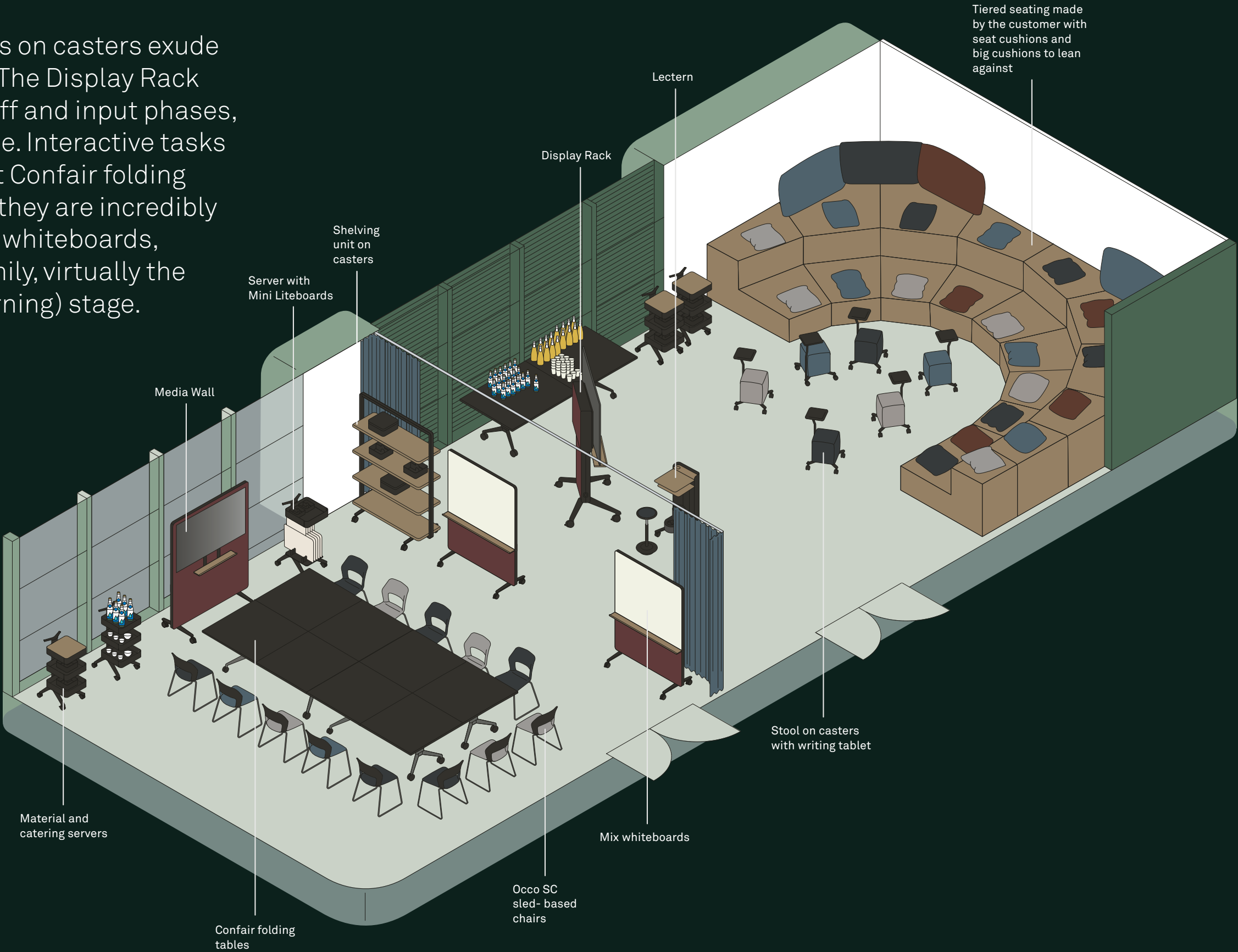


The Learning Arena

The tiered seating and additional stools on casters exude the flair of an informal learning arena. The Display Rack provides everything required for kick-off and input phases, but the space can be freed up in no time. Interactive tasks are tackled to the left of the curtains at Confair folding tables and with stackable Occo chairs they are incredibly versatile. And with the Media Wall, Mix whiteboards, shelving unit on casters and server family, virtually the whole Confair Next cast takes the (learning) stage.

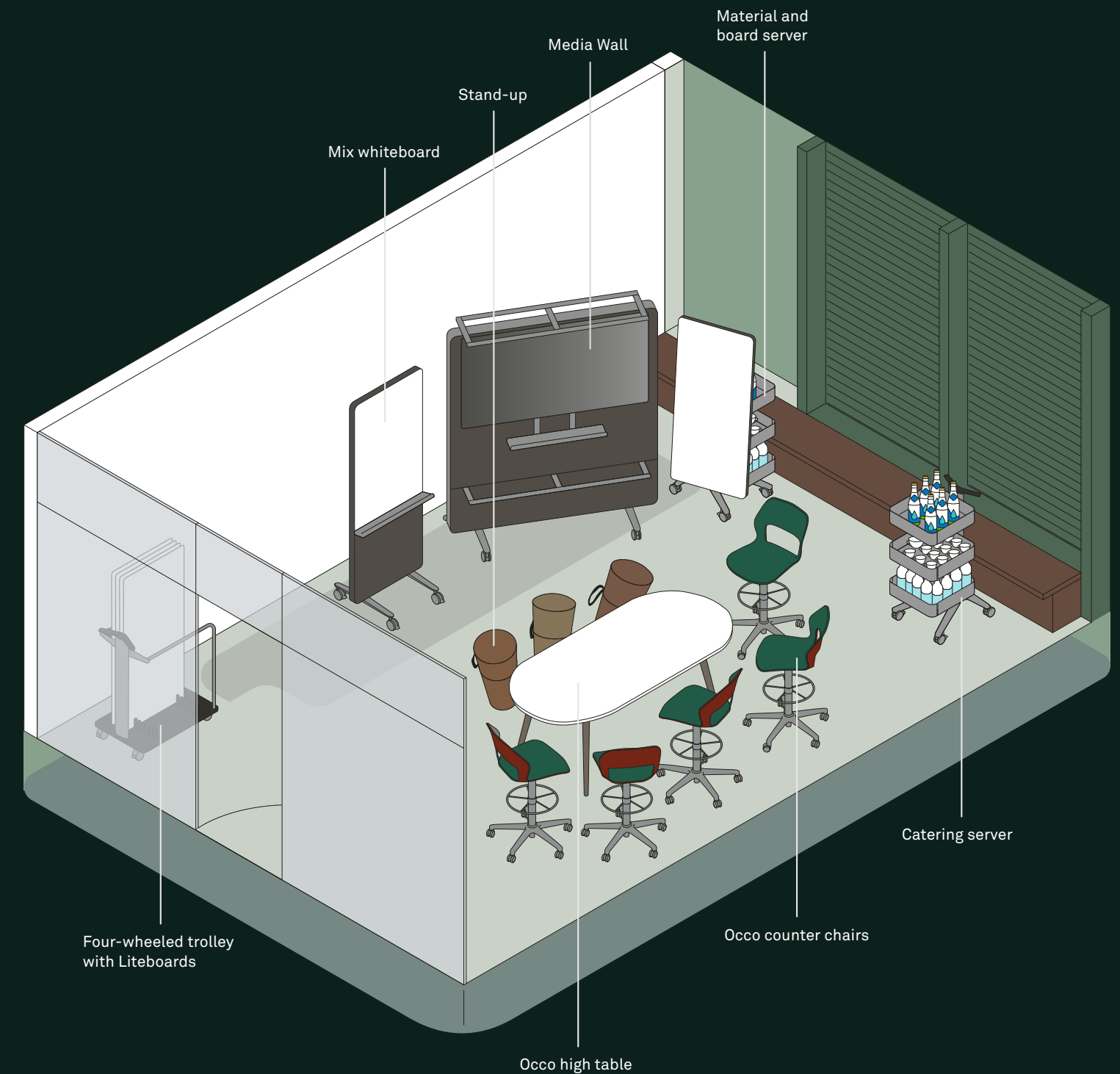
Dressed for a First-Class Training Forum

- The folding tables' base frames are coated in a classy black, the foot sections with bright chrome plating, the table tops in a soft-matte black
- Occo SC seat shells in black, padding on the inside in coordinated colors, sled bases with bright chrome plating.
- Just like the stools on casters with different covers, base frames and writing tablets in black with a soft-matte or textured finish.
- The base frames belonging to the Display Rack, lectern, Media Wall, shelving unit on casters, Mix whiteboards and servers come in a black, textured matte finish, shelves in oak veneer or solid oak (Display Rack, Mix whiteboards).
- Sand-colored Mini Liteboard and whiteboard surfaces with a residential sensibility.



A Tiny Space for Hybrid Learning Groups

In a learning organization, small teams with virtual coaches and participants are a given. The Confair Next performers upgrade any small meeting space to a temporary, hybrid class room. Servers provide sustenance for body and intellect and the Mix whiteboard is a collection point for information. The Media Wall combines analog and digital learning resources and brings remote participants and trainers to the table. As permanent cast members, Occo counter chairs and high tables ensure that people standing and sitting can look each other in the eye, Stand-ups help change posture and perspective.



Hard-wearing, neutral outfits

- Occo table top made of 12-mm-thick through-dyed HPL, base frame in a stained oak gray
- Occo counter chairs with a polished aluminum star base and padding on the inside in gray hues
- Media Wall, whiteboard and server base frames in matte silver satin
- Drawer boxes and trays in a matte silver satin, writing tablets and shelves in white, through-dyed HPL
- White, magnetic Liteboards with writing surfaces

The Famous Five – an Energized Family

Inspired by the Confair folding table’s success, Andreas Störiko came up with more special table options for Wilkhahn. After the Logon conference table system, which is combinable with the folding tables in conference spaces that can be partitioned to form a large group, he worked on a project that was dubbed Voodoo. This item was a smaller brother of the Confair folding table that was to revolutionize seminar, workshop and conference stages worldwide and gave birth to a brand-new type of table.

Timetable

2000

Timetable took the stage in time for the world exhibition in Germany. The modeled aluminum feet and bullnose (double) wood edging with impact-resilient profile clearly indicated its relation, the Confair folding table. But Timetable also had a brand-new feature: Its table top swivels around the center underframe, which both table columns are connected to. The clever part (and reason for the enigmatic temporary name): When you flip up the table top, the table columns and foot sections turn in as if by magic. As a result, it’s easy to move the table through doors without anything protruding at the sides or bumping into corners. The tables also nest into each other in a very space-saving way. With its large casters and flip-top table top, it was a completely new type of table in the office furniture industry.

Today, the industry is full of numerous inferior versions made by other companies, some of which, funnily enough, claim to be innovations. However, as is so often the case, the devil’s in the details. Ultimately, the original is unique with its modeled foot sections, patented flip-top mechanism, space-saving storage option, clearly defined design, high quality and range of dimensions and formats.

More About Timetable ➤

Timetable Smart

2006

With five formats, a robust yet simple flip-top table top and more distance between the table columns, this smart sibling is destined for other venues. It’s ideal in cafeterias, workshops, traditional seminar spaces and as a compact stand-by solution for hot desking. People sit at these table’s long sides but not at the ends and the tables are destined for more practical uses.

More About Timetable Smart ➤

Timetable Shift

2010

“All for one and one for all” from Dumas’ The Three Musketeers could apply to Timetable Shift. Based on the Confair folding tables’ frame design and Timetable Smart’s flip-top mechanism, it’s the distinguished third of the three “Musketeers”. It creates a bridge between a folding table to a Timetable and its formats plug the gap between the two protagonists. A clever feature is that the center underframe is made of a U-shaped extruded profile, which doubles as a spacious cable channel. With a flipped-up table top, it’s easy to thread cables into and the sockets are accessible via a cable portal.

More About Timetable Shift ➤

Timetable Lift

2018

This item is the last (for now) and most versatile addition to the Timetable dynasty. Its ingeniously simple idea is to add a third dimension to mobile agility. Users can move the table up and down by between 73 cm to 139 cm cordlessly via an integrated rechargeable battery about 100 times with one charge. It invites people to alternate between sitting and standing while working or holding conferences depending on the size of the format. Because people engage and interact with each other more intensively while standing, they can visualize and note down ideas immediately. As long as the table top is magnetic and has a writing surface. It goes without saying that a pocket hung over the underframe for pens, sponges, cloths and cleaning agents is also included. And when outcomes are presented or photographed, the table top is flipped up and becomes a demonstration panel.

The table appears to be a natural performer, but ensuring this multi-talented item of furniture was classy, yet stable proved difficult. Timetable Lift’s numerous, but dubious imitators show just how tough this undertaking is. Particularly as Timetable Lift is constantly honing its craft. With a second rechargeable battery, it powers cell phones, tablets and co. And with a monitor mount for smart board displays and precision adjustable tilt, it turns into a horizontal, vertical, digital or analog surface for teamwork or one single person. Or it transforms into a mobile screen for a video conference at sofa or standing height. Combined with a Confair Next server, equipped with a Power base and high-performance battery, it even becomes cordless. At least temporarily anyway...

More About Timetable Lift ➤



- 01 Timetable
- 02 Timetable Lift
- 03 Timetable Shift
- 04 Confair folding table
- 05 Timetable Smart

Where else can you find a cast of good quality furniture that embraces timeless table culture and functional agility in one distinctive style throughout? Whichever of the famous five are deployed, their appearance will always energize users.

mAx

2016

Slightly atypical (because it’s not on casters), the folding table made its debut between two Timetable premieres. It joined the agile table clan—and not just because of its typical, integrated impact-resilient profile edging. Because the desire to maximize its benefits and eliminate the shortcomings of the folding table inspired the intrepid designer Andreas Störiko to scale new heights. He devised a unique, patented mechanism that takes compact-to-stow and versatile-to-link folding tables into previously unknown territory. When the T-shaped base frames are flipped up, a slender brace automatically pulls out to form a stable triangle in the mechanism. And in terms of sturdiness, it surpasses any other folding table. At the same time, it has all the components required to perform its role—from arresting the folded-in base frames to the integrated stacking buffers to the couplings for linkage options with connecting leaves. Because the all-aluminum base frames are also very attractive, it cuts quite a dash on the versatile stages of agile collaboration. As a result, mAx is a very impressive, stylish player. When folded up, it’s as flat as an ironing board and finds a space anywhere. But as part of a system, it can also triumph in a wide range of formats and geometries.

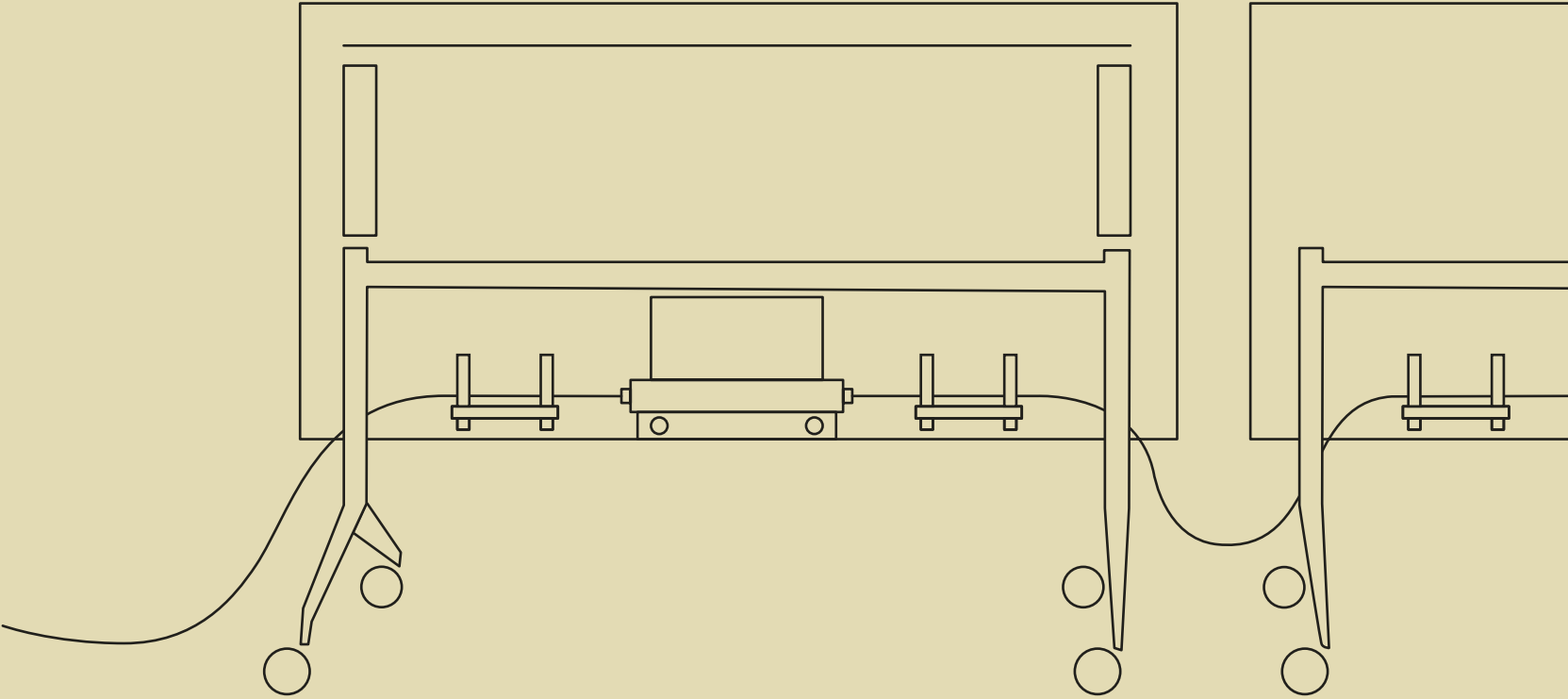
More About mAx ➤



Office on Stage #01 – Corporate Hybrid

Power Bar

The Power Bar can energize our agile Confair folding tables, Timetables and our mAx. This solution is based on stage equipment, providing power to and between the tables. It’s safe and impossible to operate incorrectly. Tables can be added or disconnected while current is running through it. It also has all options for the connections customary of contemporary working environments today.



The Famous Five – an Energized Family

Act 4

Work Cafés and Lounges



“Breaking bread builds bonds and generates fantastic ideas”
Once the initial euphoria about working remotely had died down, people soon realized that something was lacking. Facetiming with co-workers, picking up cues and those typical water-cooler chats are harder. Workplaces are, first and foremost, communities. Which is why the design of cafeterias and lounges is key to building communities and encouraging interaction. And making in-office working an attractive prospect.

Eating and drinking together is also a very beneficial and sociable way of forging a bond with others. There are good reasons why parties in kitchens always go with a swing, or relationships grow when your department goes out for a meal or parties together, or pitches to customers go well over business dinners. Which is why cafeterias, lounges and cafés are communicative places and hubs of a workplace’s informal network. It’s a no-brainer to also use them as places to develop ideas, build teams, hold meetings or just chill in.

Principles and methods

In places where productivity isn’t top of the agenda, employers can prove their interest in employee well-being and the corporate community. It goes without saying that hygiene is paramount in these spaces. But it’s more than that. In a high-quality design, they meet needs for comfort, offer appealing lighting, perhaps fresh air, a range of settings and atmospheres and express gratitude. Kitchens have equally important roles to play. Contemporary design reflects the link between diet and productivity. Which is why many cafeterias’ offerings have changed. Nowadays, vegetarian and vegan choices are just as commonplace as those based on religion, as multicultural workforces would expect.

Room layouts are geared to a variety of usages and well-being needs, which could also change during the day. Just like restaurant concepts in today’s hotels, they offer a traditional range of food and drink at peak break times. People in a hurry, but who like their own company, will find a space to sit. The same goes for groups meeting up for a working lunch and requiring more privacy. And there are dedicated areas for everyone preferring to eat while standing up and interact energetically with others. If tables and seating are ergonomic and at customary working heights, room layouts outside peak times provide working cafés or lounges and diverse meeting, conference and work options. But these options require flexible and versatile furniture and visualization and privacy modules.



What’s the direction of travel? Personal and religious dietary requirements are changing the offering. Desk sharing and multi-usage spaces are transforming the way catering facilities are used.

1. Once upon a time, cafeterias primarily needed to be practical and feed lots of people at once. Nowadays, workplace cafeterias are carefully designed with an attractive range of food and drink.

2. Open all day, they are vital multipurpose areas for a range of communication and work styles and save space elsewhere.

3. Where desk sharing is the norm, lots of departmental kitchenettes have given way to professionally designed working cafés and lounges located at key places where lots of people come and go.

4. The inspiring nature of these break-out areas keeps co-workers on the premises and encourages interaction. They also make employers more attractive and encourage in-person attendance.

When spaces become multipurpose, new furniture types are required too.

5. At the sides, cafeterias feature more residential, static furniture. But tables and chairs in the center are so flexible that they can be stowed away completely if needed.

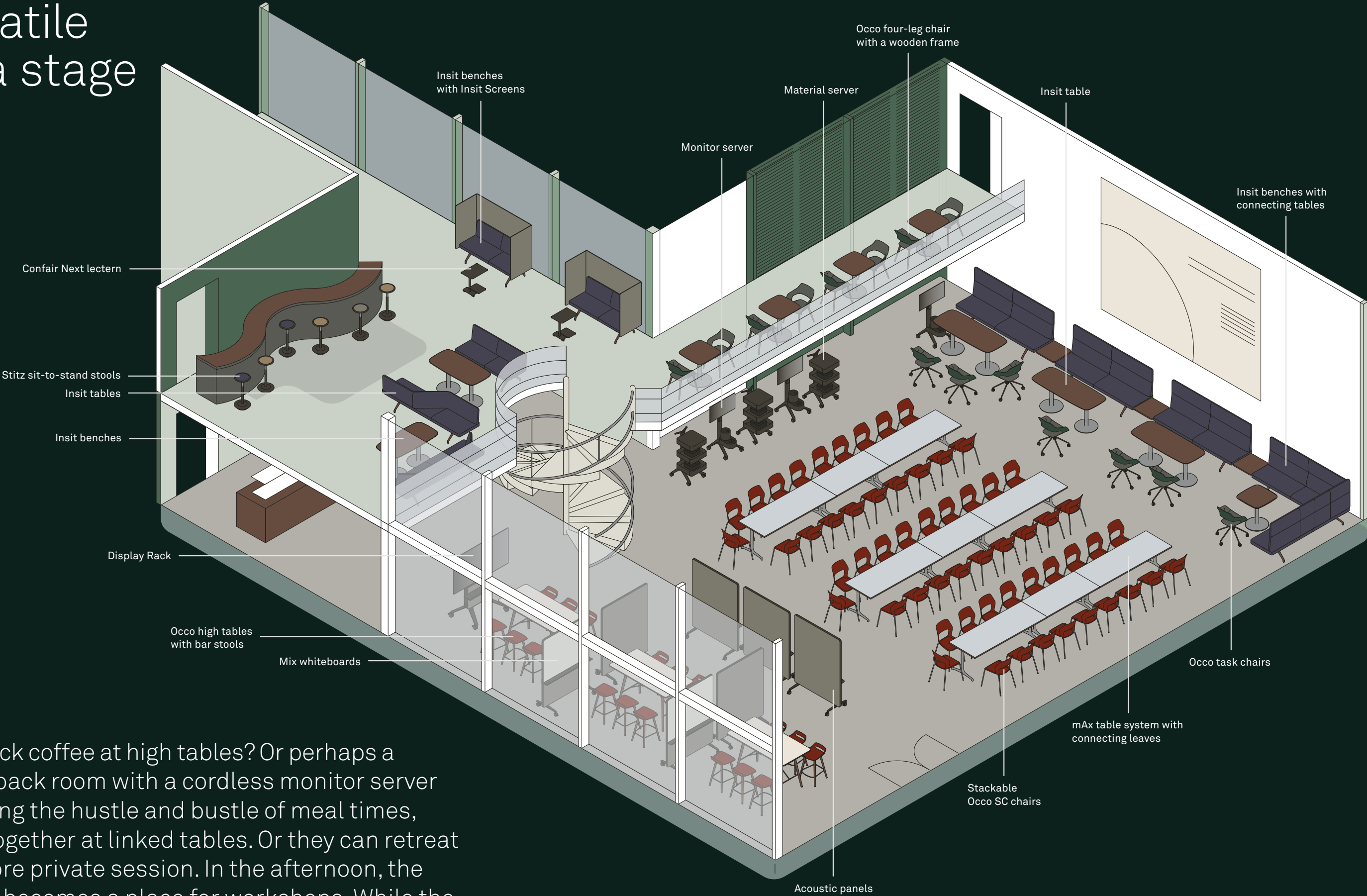
6. Seating solutions with diverse functionality and design options are sought after. A product family that creates nuanced atmospheres but with one distinctive corporate design language throughout.

7. Whether tables and seating are used for meetings, eating and drinking or working at, they should look professional and attractive. Examples are, for instance, upholstered benches with backrests with in-built power and charging options.

8. If required, mobile acoustic and whiteboard panels partition spaces. At the same time, they are visualization and work equipment. Monitor servers, Media Walls and Display Racks are also ideal for displaying menus, holding video conferences, or watching sport.



The versatile cafeteria stage



What about a quick coffee at high tables? Or perhaps a brief chat in the back room with a cordless monitor server as support? During the hustle and bustle of meal times, people can eat together at linked tables. Or they can retreat upstairs for a more private session. In the afternoon, the high table space becomes a place for workshops. While the bar is ideal for an after-work chat.



If plenary sessions or company meetings are on the agenda, the mAx tables are quick to stow away and the Occo chairs set out in rows...

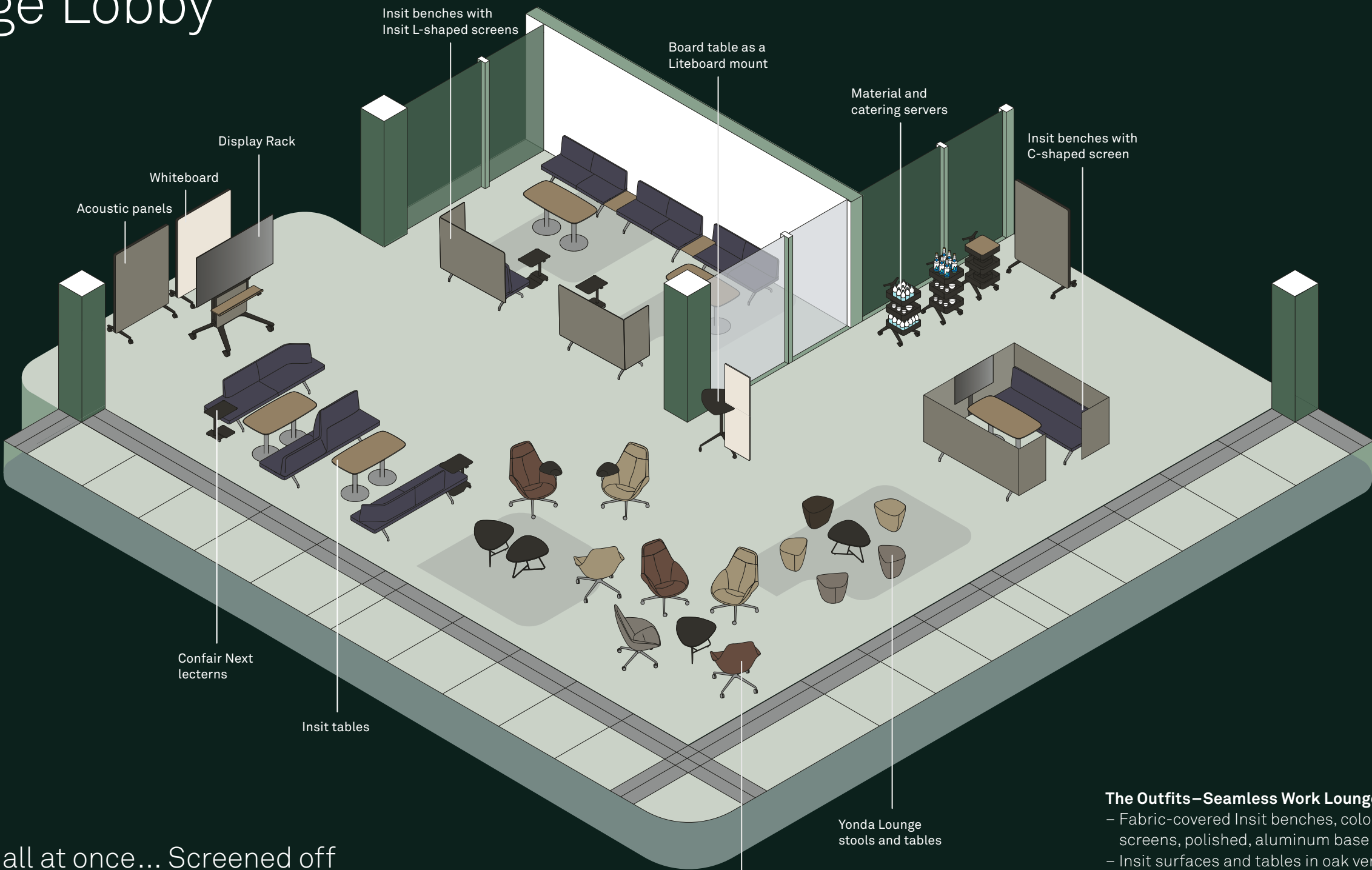
Ideal Outfits for Cafeterias

- Insit benches with walnut feet, hard-wearing yet resimercial covers, color-matched screens with Confair Next covered in recycled fabric
- Insit connecting tables and columns in walnut veneer, brushed, stainless steel base frames
- Occo task chairs with emerald green seat shells, covered just like the benches, black base frames with a textured matte finish, Occo SC chairs, sienna red with bright chrome plating, Occo with a walnut base frame, emerald green, with padding on the inside covered in wool fabric
- Occo high tables with white, HPL table tops, table base frames and bar stools in walnut and seats in sienna red.
- mAx light tables and connecting leaves in gray laminate with walnut, high-luster polished aluminum base frames



...and if a free space is required for team-building exercises, health management events or club beats, they are quick to stow away compactly.

The Triple-Usage Lobby



A place to work, chat and chill all at once... Screened off benches with writing tablets turn the lobby into a working lounge. The backrest changes directions, linking two groups of seating. And combined, with a monitor and table, they even create a meeting space. The lounge chairs are also places to work, chat and chill in one. Acoustic panels, whiteboards, servers and Display Racks go wherever they are needed. They are privacy panels, presentation options or windows to the digital world.

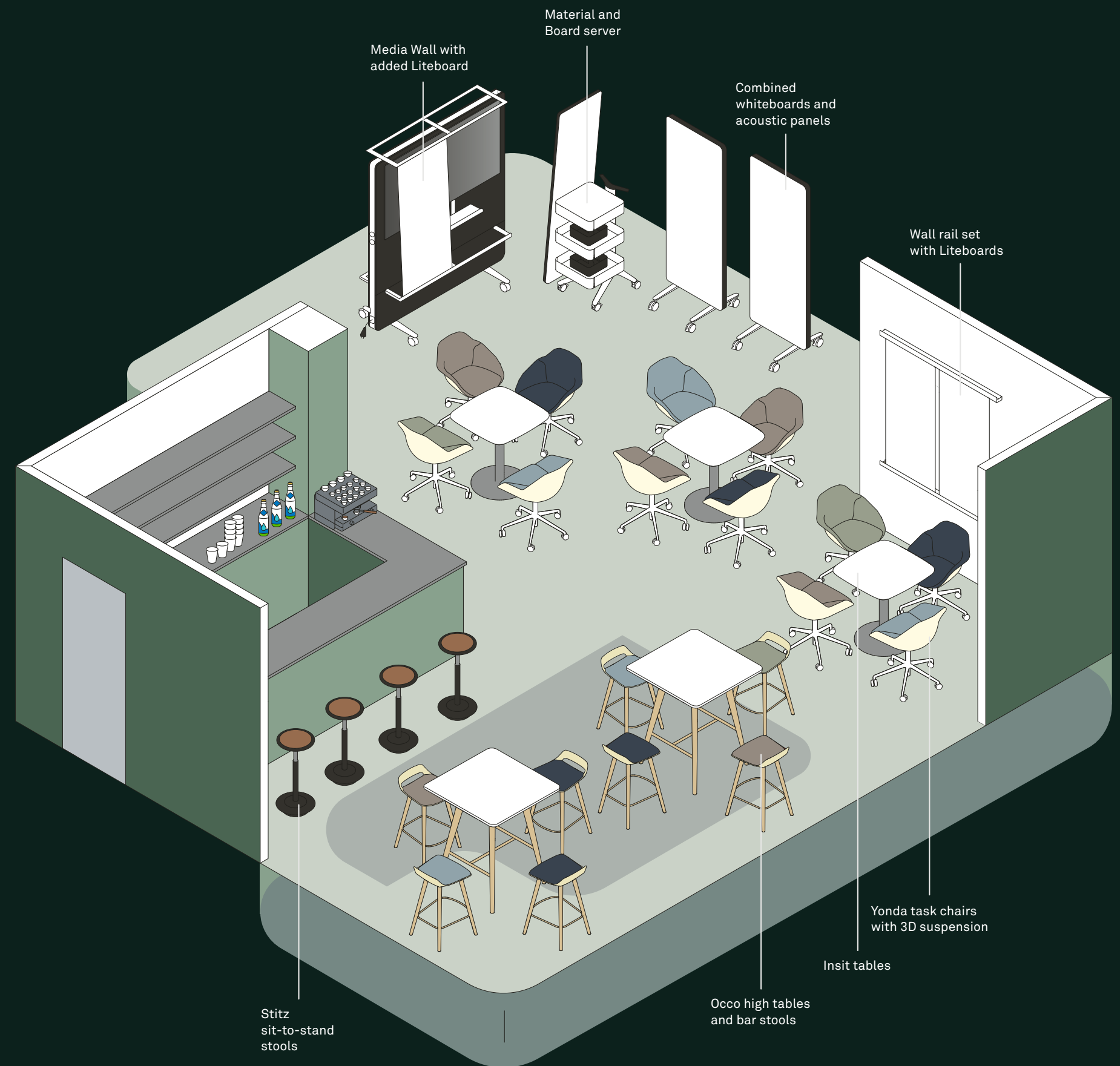
- The Outfits—Seamless Work Lounge Solutions**
- Fabric-covered Insit benches, color-contrasting screens, polished, aluminum base frames
 - Insit surfaces and tables in oak veneer, matte silver satin base frames
 - Fabric-covered Yonda lounge chairs, aluminum base frame, with a high-luster polish, black writing tablet arm with a textured matte finish, HPL, black soft-matte writing tablet
 - Yonda lounge tables with a textured matte black sled base and black soft matte HPL table tops
 - Servers, Display Rack and acoustic panels' bodies and base frames in black with a textured matte finish, oak shelves, black soft matte HPL lectern surfaces, writing surfaces in sand colors and sound-absorbent fleeces covered in fabric.

From Kitchenettes to a Shared Work(shop) Café

As the linchpin of a very flexible office environment, erstwhile kitchenettes have become meeting points for mobile workers. If they are furnished with ergonomic chairs and high tables with matching stools, they are ideal. Wall-mounted Liteboards are places to amalgamate information. Servers, Media Walls and acoustic panels flexibly make the space smaller or larger. And a working café quickly becomes a workshop café...

Practical Outfits

- Oiled, white oak base frames on the Occo high tables and bar stools, white, through-dyed HPL table tops, white seat shells with seat cushioning
- Yonda task chairs' seat shells and base frames are height adjustable with 3D suspension in cream white and covered padding on the inside
- Brushed, stainless steel Insit table base frames, table tops with chamfered edging, made of white, through-dyed HPL
- The wall rails' and the material servers' base frames (including the trays and drawers), acoustic panels and Media Wall (with shelf) in white with a textured matte finish, dark gray sound-absorbent fleece, shelves and covers in white, through-dyed HPL
- Magnetic Liteboards with writing surfaces in a shiny white
- Sitz sit-to-stand stools with a black frame and natural cork seat



The Office as a Sounding Board

In the future, offices will have to compete with workspaces at home and gaming chairs. As places where relationships are formed, people are motivated and context visualized. As places that enable the purpose of working to be experienced. In a game-like set-up, as a stage and sounding board. But how do we create this proximity to people and products?



Burkhard Remmers talking to Birgit Gebhardt in one of Wilkhahn's production pavilions (architect: Frei Otto)

Communication Falters, if Everyone's Talking at Once

Sharing knowledge is all about analog and virtual communication—between people, media and machines. Online communications have long since transcended office boundaries. Working from home virtually any time or anywhere is now possible, while social media offers immersive worlds and new places to interact. And we've realized that we act differently in each environment.

The way we collaborate in offices has also changed and artificial intelligence will make even more of an impact. We work faster, more flexibly and in more agile and heterogeneous groups. Our jobs are becoming more fact based and geared towards customers and products. But how do we interact with others, dive deep into content and learn as a community?

Offices between First and Third Places— and Why They Need to Do More

Home offices and coffee shops are symbols of remote working. These formats are sometimes private, sometimes public, but nearly always mean isolation. Offices were once communities—but cracks are appearing due to hybrid models. Today, it's not just space that's required, but an energetic community, whether people work locally or remotely. In the future, offices must be collaborative platforms and places that offer experiences in one. When people, media and machines are talking, it's the room that decides how well they really understand each other. Because only when we join forces, interact, come up with and even discard ideas as a team, does collaboration and the room become a stage or tool where we can experiment to our hearts' content.

Combining Different Standpoints on an Equal Footing

Agile project management and design thinking enable a cross-disciplinary change of perspective, foster appreciation of expertise and structured processes. But in hybrid settings, virtual participants are often ignored. Their visibility and ability to make an impact remain limited. A situation that offices urgently need to compensate for by providing the right tools and methods. It must be possible for virtual participants to exert influence via easy-to-use displays and bring them into the analog setting. To do so, digital tools are not just technical means to an end, but should be able to control proximity to the subject matter and people working in the company itself.

How We Benefit from Hybrid Interaction

Hybrid collaboration is attractive because it’s accessible, but lacks engagement. Consequently, the barriers to hybrid workspaces should be low, but boost people’s presence and collaboration. Which is only possible if tools, displays, furniture and visualization options are practical and human centered. And can cover analog and digital requirements and adapt flexibly to tasks, roles and requirements.

To offer impressive experiences, offices need a greater multi-sensory atmosphere. The more senses that are spoken to, the greater the perception of the experience. And memories last longer if more emotions are at play. The office could act as a sounding board—as a stage for new roles and feedback at several levels.

Collaboration is all About Connecting with Others

Productive collaboration needs shared spaces and experiences. Cognitive research shows that knowledge creation works best where everyone has the same frame of reference and experience. Which is why platforms like maker spaces for product development, or metaverse environments for digital twins excel. These are two realities, both of which will upgrade the office landscape and its realms of experience. But offices are no longer closed-off spaces because usually only some people are physically and others virtually there. Which is why they need to demonstrate their strengths in the intermedia hybrid space.

How Rooms Impact Our Behavior

Rooms are powerful spaces that can create pressure. For instance, when shared confinement in a space creates friction that’s so important to achieve innovative solutions. People tend to be more friendly when they talk face to face, because they literally are closer to one another. A physical presence and gestures help to put ideas across. Misunderstandings are easier to spot and both criticism and praise much more targeted. A perception of our surroundings prompts the adoption of certain behaviors, while the ability to see others encourages conformity and group dynamics. The room creates a bond between us. In hybrid collaboration, these physical benefits underpin the key design criteria for the furniture and equipment required.

The Influence of the Office Environment

Rooms are more than backdrops—they influence us. In evolutionary terms, engagement with our environment made us creative. For instance, when our habitat with its natural dangers and changing seasons was the environment we worked in. It posed challenges that forced us to be creative and invent tools to deal with it. This influence has inspired our creativity so much that humans are now the only creatures to also dream up “dysfunctional tools”, such as artistic artefacts, or improvise with existing tools in new, unfamiliar contexts. So if experimentation is part of our nature, then a workspace should encourage its users to do just that.

Direct feedback from the immediate environment boosts our expertise and collective assessment of our critical abilities. It’s these skills that keep us one step ahead of AI. And offices can foster these skills, if these environments are considered useful tools per se.



“The office could act as a sounding board – as a stage for new roles and feedback at several levels.”

Birgit Gebhardt
trend researcher

Great Expectations

Our expectations of responsive environments are growing. AI, smart services, personalized applications and expertise with immediate recall require analog rooms with people physically present and online accessibility. Worth particular mention are tools that grab our attention, materialize thoughts, encourage engagement and convey an appreciative community spirit. Tools that are versatile and destined for a range of purposes. Objects that allow us to be inventive and spark creativity and the desire to take the initiative. A hands-on approach literally means we grasp concepts better.

The Verdict: Rooms Are Collaborative Sounding Boards

Collaborating with others needs more than just tools. It needs shared experiences, a community, visibility and variety—with components that stimulate, inspire and create structure. Offices of the future aren’t just spaces—they are sounding boards for thought processes, action and learning as a community with home offices and gaming chairs as part of the mix.

Whether it’s man or machine, communication is the driving force. Collaboration is the goal. And the room is a platform of experiences in-between. Its equipment and tools create a feeling of closeness, enable engagement, make the culture visible and energize. Only if we think of office spaces as malleable tools can they develop their full potential in the new-work age. Offices as communication spaces that transcend time and reality where people feel able to approach each other.

Act 5

In-between Spaces for Empowerment and Improvisation



Curtain Up or Seizing the Moment

Impromptu encounters provide the impetus for new ideas, spotting important links and strengthening relationships. The core questions in planning encounters is who do we want to bump into? Where do we want to meet? How can the location and design of these spaces help trigger these accidental meetings?

Terms like office cities or office villages invoke the social qualities of break-out rooms. In other words, spaces where people come and go, plazas, small niches between workspaces, project, training, conference and recreational rooms. Previously seen as a necessary evil, today they're considered the key to boosting interaction. Whether they actually do so depends on responses to three questions. Firstly, is there a reason to seek out these spaces? Secondly, are they easy to reach? Thirdly, does the space invite people to stop and linger for a while and engage with others?

Principles and methods

Screens strategically placed at intersections with intranet and internet access and snack and coffee vending machines arouse curiosity and attract people who are hungry and thirsty to take a breather and interact with others. And bathrooms are also places where people run into one another. Walking to a centralized printer, scanner and photocopier or the mailroom, or another room for a scheduled event fosters informal chance encounters. And an activity-based workspace, where co-workers seek a suitable environment for the task at hand, spawn impromptu meet-ups by its very nature.

A space's practicality is governed by how far away and accessible it is. It needs to be distant enough to enable people from different departments to meet (and encourage more physical activity). But it must be close enough that the distance is not an obstacle. While we're on the subject of obstacles, barrier-free spaces are crucial to any contemporary office planning.

Finally, the quality of the space is also vital. Good lighting, fresh air but no draughts, a modicum of privacy and somewhere to chill out help maintain the momentum to interact with others, instead of having to arrange an appointment later on. In corridors, bumping into someone is highly likely, but there's no space for corner seating. Which is where innovative, fire-safe wall tile systems are inviting places to stop and perch for a while.

Agile working methods should also accommodate the principle of seizing the moment. Areas in the middle of rooms are unoccupied spaces that are perfect for spontaneous chats, brief brainstorming sessions, a quick spot of research or kick-off for a new project. These spaces reflect projects in progress. The underlying idea is to change office workers' roles from passive office consumers to actors shaping the future. This is where mobile, self-organized furniture modules are ideal. They divide up rooms flexibly and visualize digital and analog content. Stand-by table solutions are places for teamwork and eating and drinking together.



What does that mean today?
Building knowledge and communities primarily requires planning rooms for people to meet and use the opportunity afforded by a chance encounter to interact.

1.
In an era of established rules for digital nomads, encouraging unscheduled interaction in offices has become even more important.

2.
Kitchenettes, cafés, cafeterias or lounges in good locations with attractive, multipurpose fixtures and fittings will be more popular (and therefore save costs) and prompt those accidental encounters.

3.
In transit areas and corridors that are too narrow for furniture or where fire safety regulations prohibit it, wall tiles can help to foster communication.

4.
Organizations need adaptable spaces to maintain the momentum of a spontaneous idea and agreement in agile change and innovation projects without wasting time on bureaucracy or losing motivation.

Areas in the middle of rooms are ideal for turning office consumers into actors who design tomorrow’s world. They can be transformed into a collaborative stage in no time.

5.
It’s vital to define a basic layout to reflect core functions like meetings, places to chill or temporary spells of deep work so that the stage isn’t empty but a lively place at all times.

6.
Mobile acoustic panels divide up spaces flexibly and ensure less distraction. And mobile, fold-up tables stow away compactly, or can be combined or added to for any get-togethers.

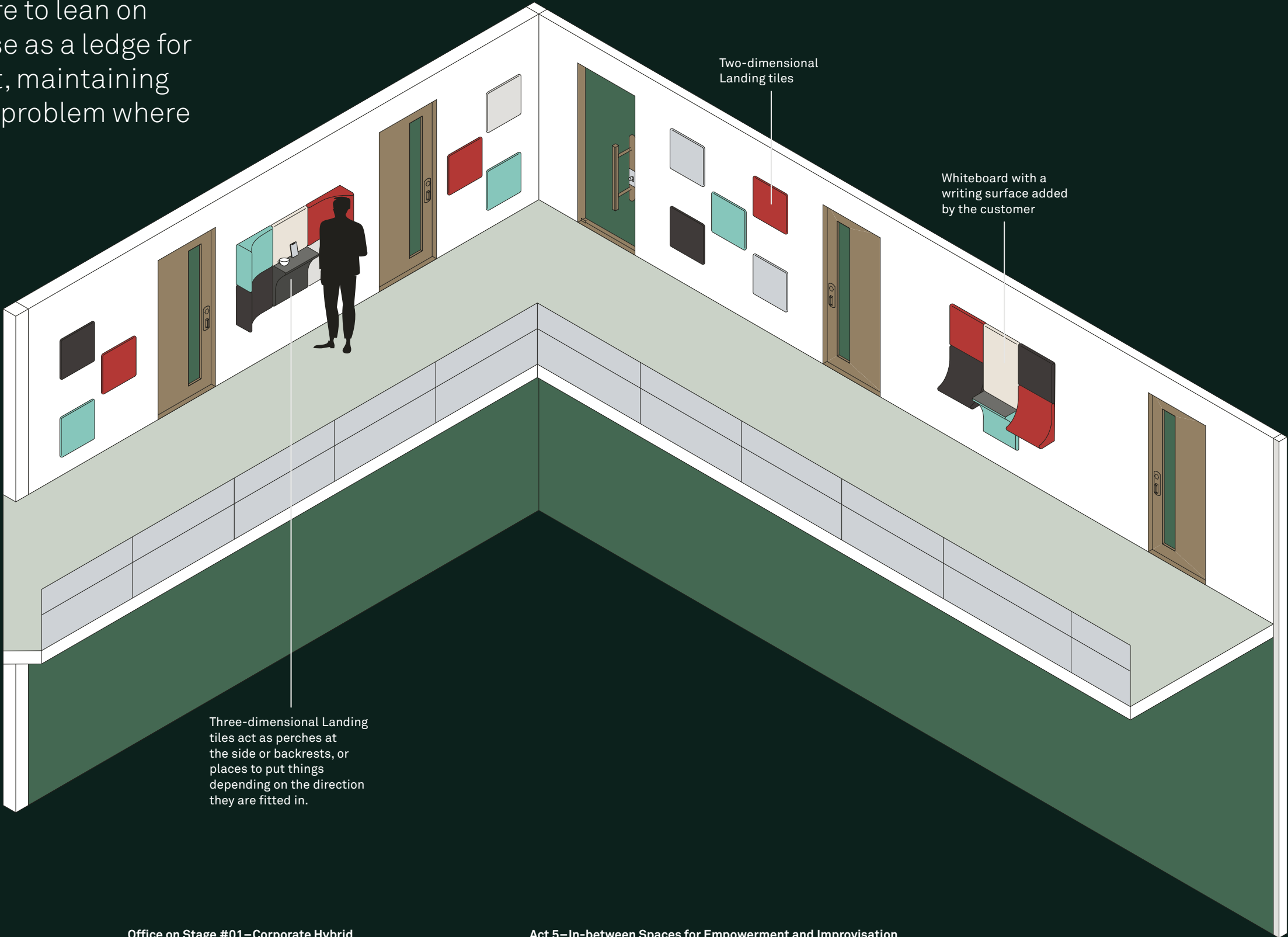
7.
Attractive whiteboards for positioning anywhere are a must for analog documentation and visualization. And Mini Liteboards, pens, cards and magnets in mobile servers can be kept at the ready as accessories.

8.
Mobile catering servers, which are quick to fill from vending machines or in cafeterias, provide snacks and drinks. Practical options for a spontaneous brainstorming session, kick-off meeting, or celebration of a milestone.



Versatile Bays to Stop at

Like to interact with someone right here and now?
Without worrying about the wall getting you dirty?
Need somewhere to put your coffee cup, glass of water
or cell phone? Want to have somewhere to lean on
while talking to the other person, or use as a ledge for
support? With inviting bays to linger at, maintaining
the momentum of an interaction is no problem where
space for tables and chairs is lacking.

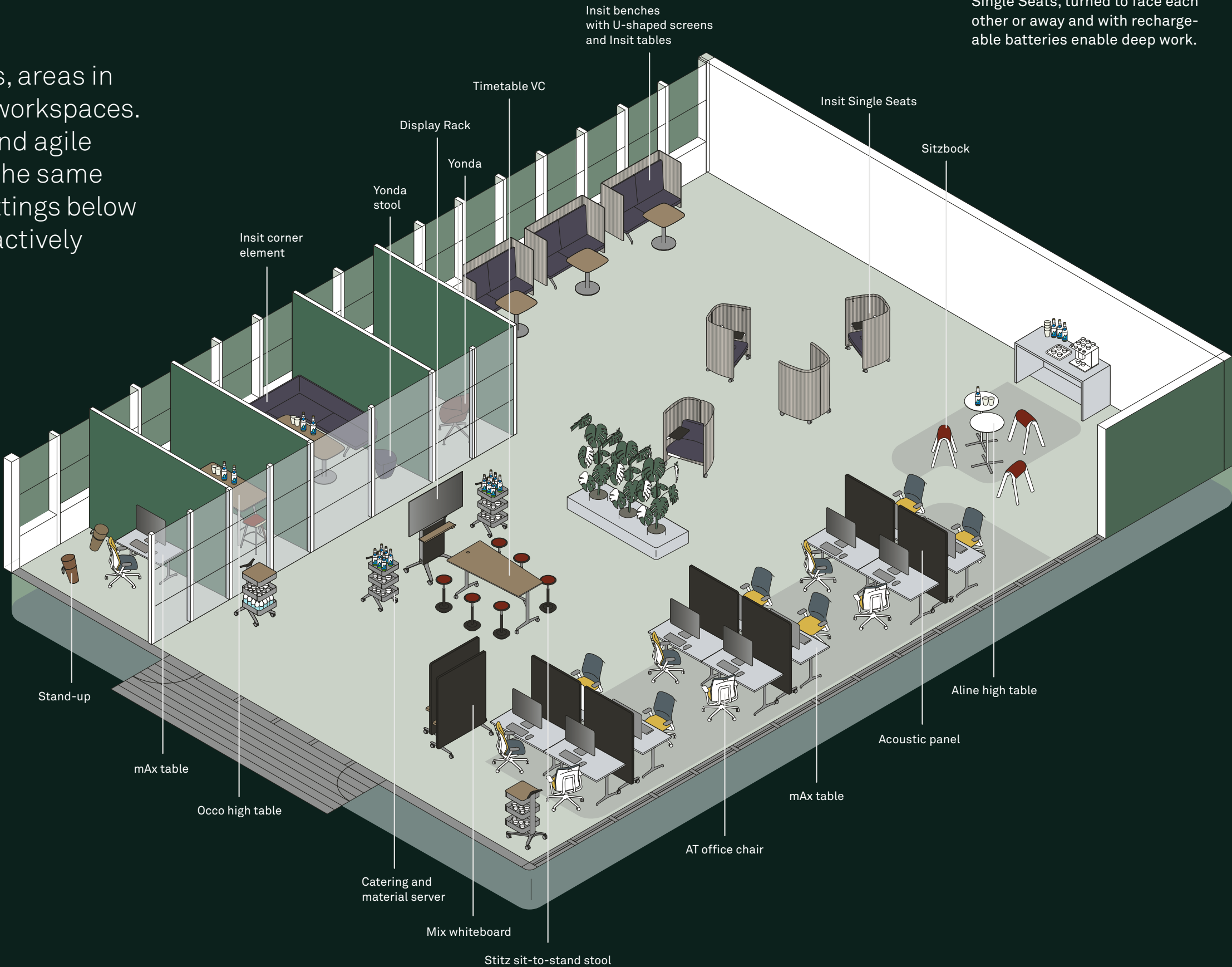


Bay Outfits

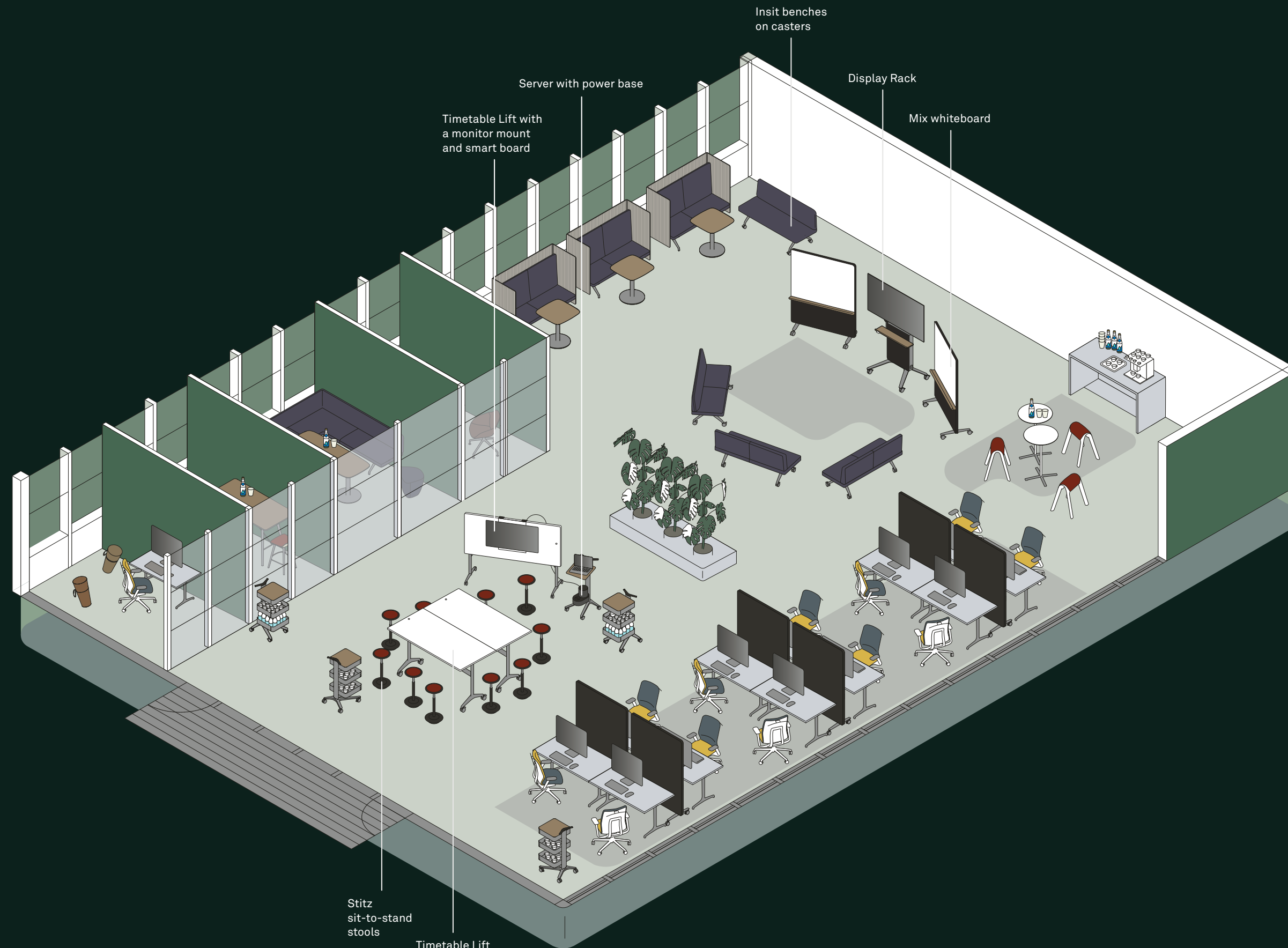
There's a choice of six fabrics made of polyester, Trevira, pure new wool, pure wool blends or virgin wool with textures that range from fine to chunky to felt-like. In plain or mottled colors in over 100 shades, there's a virtually endless spectrum of designs and combinations for walls. Only the optional sheet steel shelf is consistently in an attractive, neutral gray with a textured matte finish.

Arenas of Future Design

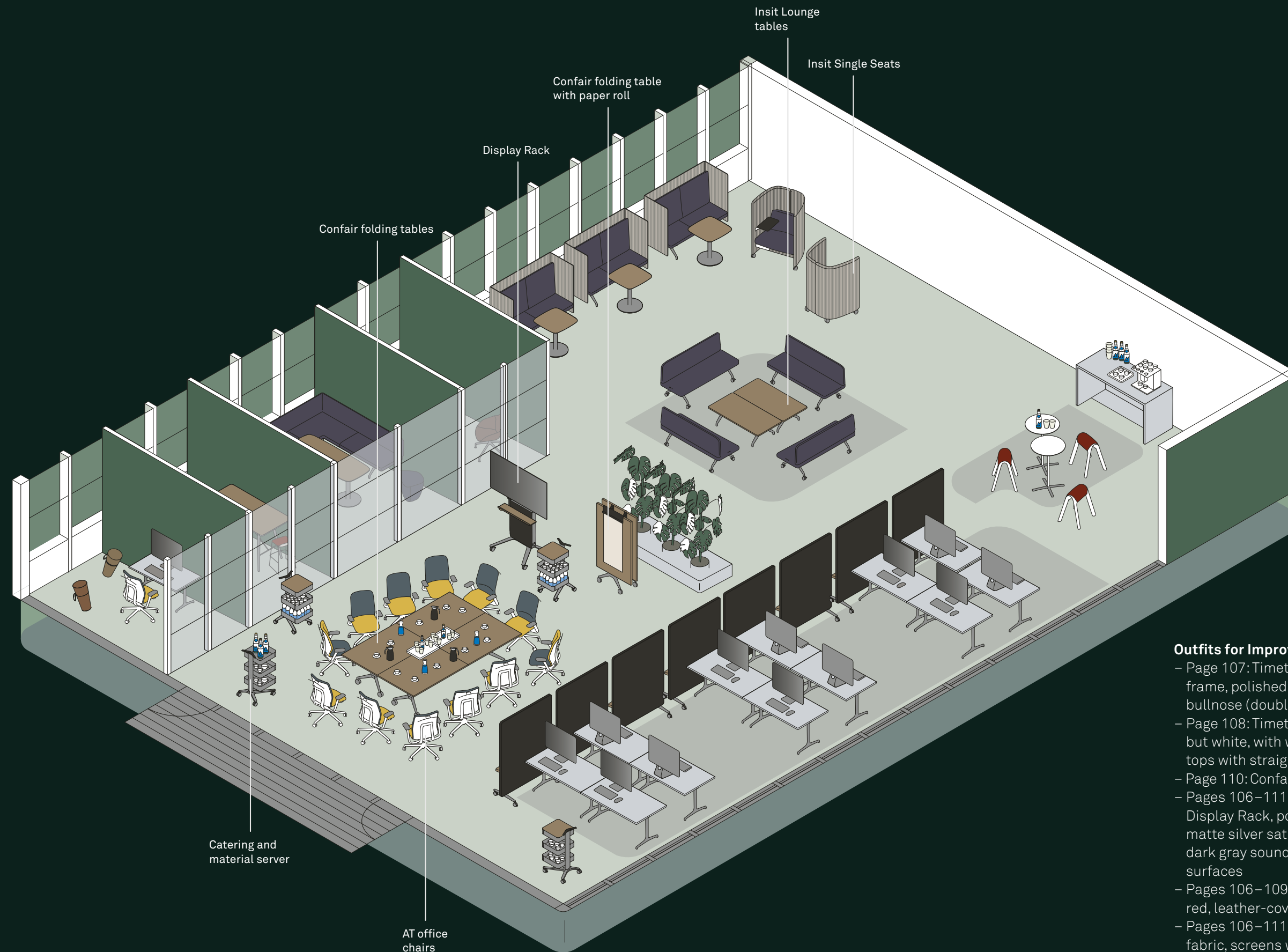
Due to their location away from outside walls, areas in the middle of rooms tend to be unpopular as workspaces. But as stages for spontaneous encounters and agile methods, they are perfect. While keeping to the same spatial framework, we can show you three settings below that maintain the momentum and desire to actively shape the future.



On the left, the Timetable Lift and Display Rack are positioned for a spot of research and a video conference. On the right, Insit Single Seats, turned to face each other or away and with rechargeable batteries enable deep work.



Two Timetable Lift tables invite people to a stand-up meeting, the third with a smart board attached becomes a display—without a cord or tripping hazard in sight. At the back, the Insit benches are positioned in front of the Display Rack, which the Mix whiteboards appear to provide writing surfaces for...



The classic folding tables host everyone working in the collaboration hub and while folded-up, a table assists the Display Rack with a flipchart. And the Insit benches engender that team-building campfire feeling.

Outfits for Improv Artists

- Page 107: Timetable Lift VC, matte silver satin base frame, polished foot section, oak veneer table top mit bullnose (double) edging and impact-resilient profile
- Page 108: Timetable Lift, the same base frame, but white, with writing surface and magnetic table tops with straight edging
- Page 110: Confair folding table, the same type as (p. 107)
- Pages 106–111: Mix whiteboards, acoustic panels, Display Rack, power, material and catering servers with matte silver satin base frames and bodies, oak shelves, dark gray sound-absorbent fleeces, white writing surfaces
- Pages 106–109: Stitz sit-to-stand stool, black frame, red, leather-covered seat frame
- Pages 106–111: Insit Single Seat, cushion covered with fabric, screens with vertical stripes, black soft matte writing tablet, black rechargeable battery shelf
- Pages 108–111: Mobile Insit benches, upholstery covered with fabric, polished aluminum frame



Our agile actors introduce themselves

It's not difficult to spot that the same actors repeatedly feature on stage in our five agile collaboration acts, but in different outfits and roles. Sometimes they are part of the main cast and play leading roles, or, they make a guest appearance to enhance other plays. The last section of this issue will revolve around the key actors from the Confair Next range, with all the others who helped make the performance a success in the credits.

The Confair Next cast

These actors excel as team players and create settings and moods despite their different roles and characters. The similarity of shapes, materials, radii and surfaces ensures seamless performances. Each detail is evidence of over 30 years' experience with agile and hybrid collaboration. Which are solid foundations for the repertoires of today's and tomorrow's world.



Monitor server
Small, maneuverable and agile—as the third digital player, I'm always wherever needed at tables, in meetings or in lounges. And with the genes of the original Confair server and an up to 25 kg and 46-inch monitor, I'm just as easy to move as a shopping cart. And with my Power base and Mov:e Power Units in tow, my energy requirements are covered without the need for a socket.



Media Wall
I'm the media nerd in the cast. I'm the same height as my analog colleagues, but 160 cm wide. I can provide a digital work and presentation space of up to 65 inches, with analog Liteboards placed on top as required. My attractively housed frame is accessible in no time via a magnetic snap and accommodates all connectivity options. I do have a pull-out power cable, but can go cordless in combination with the Power server.



Display Rack
With an up to 85-inch screen, I'm the athletic heavyweight amongst the digital workers. Electrically adjustable to sofa or standing height and on large casters, I fit in (almost) any elevator to act on any levels of the hierarchy. Above all, I cut a dash from all sides thanks to my tailored outfit and can reach any socket in a seven-meter radius.

[More About Confair Next](#)



Server

I'm the quick-change artist in the cast. My frame features plenty of storage options for power bases, drawers and open trays for materials and catering items. It has a shelf for Mini Liteboards and a power base with Mov:e Power Units that can energize everything from laptops to smart boards. As a power frame with monitor mount, I can turn into a monitor server. Oh, wait a minute, I have actually already introduced myself.



Whiteboard

You can write things all over my front or back. Because I'm magnetic, I'm the very definition of a mobile vertical work surface. Let your creativity run wild and photograph and document the results with ease. Just like all the others, I'm mobile and can be locked in place to follow work-flows and group dynamics—whether I'm the full width or, at 70 cm, reduced to half the size.



Board server

Me again, this time with a special purpose. With pull-out rails attached to the bottom of the box or the drawer on the right and left, I act as a movable Liteboard display, if a writing tablet is attached at the top that the boards can lean on.

Mix whiteboard

I'm the analog media carrier's partner. I'm required if people need to write, paint and draw in a stylish setting with a residential appeal. Divided into two via a shelf console at the front, people can draw on me with pens at the top, or stick magnets and post-it notes on me. At the bottom, I can absorb some sound. I come in dark gray, or with different covers. At the rear, I'm versatile—I can act as a full whiteboard or a pinnable acoustic surface. And I'm available in half the size.



Acoustic wall panel

Whether I'm broad or narrow, my forte is the stylish and stable way I can structure spaces into zones, provide visual privacy and dampen noise if the stage is full. At the front and back, my acoustic core is dressed in dark gray fleece, which can also be covered. If necessary, you can use pins to stick cards, fabric samples etc. onto me.



Shelving unit on casters

I'm responsible for bigger props. You can look through me. I can also connect and partition rooms and keep everything that Lego players and design thinkers need within reach. Or just provide decor if guests need impressing. My frame and feet are stylishly curved and in the same colors as my colleagues. But the bottoms of my shelves come in the whole repertoire of coated and veneered surfaces.



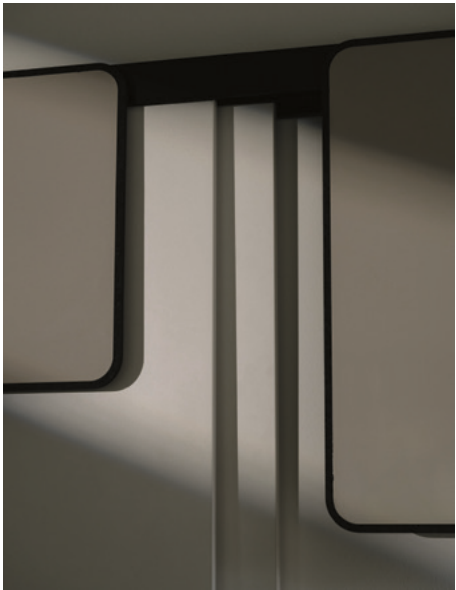
Stool on casters

Initially, I was supposed to be called a rocker, but that seemed a little too bold for the reputable stages of this world. Fully upholstered with a distinctive star base, I roll up happily to workshops, or beat a hasty retreat again. I'm an astonishingly comfortable, clever cookie. Because the writing tablet is a solid support, not just for people holding creative discussions but for a fitted Liteboard too. And with a grip hole, I'm so easy to transport, just like a trolley.



Board table

It's all in the name. Because with a slot in my table top, I can link up with a Liteboard and turn into a presentation panel. Otherwise, I'm quite practical by nature. As a three-leg item, I don't wobble and because two of the legs have casters, I can be moved about when tilted at an angle. I can team up with the likes of me to produce attractive three-leaf-clover-like formations. When not in use, you can flip up the table top and I nestle compactly against the wall.



Liteboards and Mini Liteboards

We don't look that spectacular, but are pretty efficient, ultra lightweight customers with dual-sided writing surfaces. Magnetic if necessary and with optional edge protection, you can position us on Media Walls, Board servers, or Board tables, in stools on casters or a wall rail system. You can attach us as mini versions to whiteboards, frames and anything else made of steel.



Four-wheeled trolley

The others are multitaskers. I, on the other hand, am a one-trick pony, but really good at my job. I can distribute and stow away up to 12 Liteboards. And I can keep them at a distance so that they're available right after an interval—including anything creatives have stuck on them.

Lectern

Not everyone who laps up the limelight is a natural orator. Whether you need to alternate between a script or laptop or look up at the audience, I'm a useful prop. The shelf comes in two heights, depending on how tall the speaker is. If required, there's also a compartment underneath and the Power base and Mov:e Power Units mean that no cabling is needed. As a result, I've turned many a bit-part actor into a keynote speaker...



Now we've reached the end of your Office on Stage – Corporate Hybrid show for agile collaboration in five acts. We hope you've enjoyed our reports, star portraits, look ahead and presentation of the cast. And that we've inspired you to play a part. After all, taking an active role in the future is an exciting prospect. And who knows, perhaps brand-new collaborative scenarios and stories might evolve.

Credits

More cast members

Aline ↗



Aline bar stool,
design: Andreas Störiko

AT ↗



AT office chairs,
design: Wilkhahn

Aula ↗



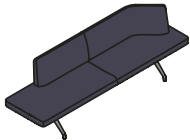
Aula multipurpose chairs
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger

Intra ↗



Intra chairs,
design: Phoenix Design

Insit ↗



Insit benches,
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger



Insit benches,
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger

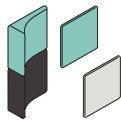


Insit Single Seats,
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger



Insit tables,
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezge

Landing ↗



Landing wall tile system, design:
Rudolph Schelling Webermann

Metrik ↗



Metrik cantilever chair,
design: White ID

Occo ↗



Occo bar stool,
design: Jehs & Laub



Occo task chairs,
design: Jehs & Laub



Occo four-leg stacking chairs,
design: Jehs & Laub



Occo four-leg, wood frame,
Design: Jehs & Laub



Occo SC four-leg stacking chairs
Design: Jehs & Laub



Occo SC sled-base chairs,
design: Jehs & Laub



Occo SC counter chairs,
design: Jehs & Laub



Occo high tables,
design: Jehs & Laub

Sitzbock ↗



Sitzbock, design:
Rudolph, Schelling, Webermann

Stand-Up ↗



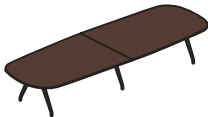
Stand-Up,
Design: Thorsten Franck

Stitz ↗



Stitz sit-to-stand stools, design:
ProduktEntwicklung
Roehricht

Versa ↗



Versa table system,
design: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger

Yonda ↗



Yonda task chairs,
design: neunzig° design



Yonda stools,
design: neunzig° design



Yonda Lounge chairs,
design: neunzig° design



Yonda Lounge tables,
design: neunzig° design

Further information

Wilkhahn Germany

Wilkening + Hahne GmbH+Co. KG, Fritz-Hahne-Strasse 8,
31848 Bad Münden, Germany
wilkhahn.com

Wilkhahn worldwide

Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Spain,
Hong Kong, Japan, Morocco, Netherlands,
Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Singapore, South Africa,
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United States of America

Concept, setting development, editor and text

Burkhard Remmers

Photography

Andreas Störiko, p. 76
Charlotte Störiko, p.52, 76
Erich Aschenbrenner, p.27, 28, 29, 34
Frank Schinski, p. 95 pp
Holger Thoss, p. 50 pp
Jennifer Fetz, p. 34
Thomas Bach, p. 51
Vojislav Nicolic, p. 28, 32, 35

Illustrations

Eva Revolver

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Sally Massmann

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