

## **The Beginner's Guide, Do's and Don'ts of Buying Office Workstations**

Although furniture is considered a commercial product, we cannot accurately describe office furniture as an “off-the-shelf” product, particularly in the case of workstations.

Why? Two Primary Reasons:

1. Architects and interior designers design workstations to fit a space and to suit the functions of employees.
2. Manufacturers create workstations out of hundreds of parts that they offer in multiple variations and price separately within their commercial price lists.

To further complicate things, manufacturers differentiate their products in such a way that components are incompatible with each other and each vendor must quote their own version of a particular design.

Here are a few tips to help buyers save time, promote efficiency, and optimize outcomes.

Do...	Don't...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specify overall workstation footprint (e.g. 6'x8' or 48 square feet). Address height generically as either standing privacy (allowing for 62" to 68") or seated privacy (allowing for 48" to 52"). Specify a uniform height across the workstation, inclusive of all components and ancillary pieces, if desired.</li><li>• Describe storage based on usage (e.g. must hold legal documents or 3 ring binders)</li><li>• Allow for alternatives with respect to fabric, finish, mix of materials and hardware.</li><li>• Address electrical and data requirements in detail.</li><li>• Define project management service requirements in detail (e.g. required meetings, reports, etc.).</li><li>• Describe building/delivery/installation conditions in detail.</li><li>• Recognize that space plans and furniture designs are the vision of an interior professional that vendors will implement differently.</li><li>• Allow vendors 4-6 weeks for quotes.</li><li>• Plan on 12 weeks for manufacturing and at least 4 for installation.</li><li>• For larger projects, design should be for generic product by an <a href="#">MAS interior design firm</a>, architect or in-house planner before and separate from the furniture solicitation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specify workstation component or ancillary item dimensions.</li><li>• Require specific panel heights.</li><li>• Force unwieldy teaming arrangements by combining too many product groupings.</li><li>• Duplicate technical specifications at the delivery order level (when using <a href="#">GSA MAS</a>).</li><li>• Over specify fabric (grade number and durability have an inverse relationship. Higher grade generally offers aesthetic variety.)</li><li>• Don't view space plans, furniture designs and similar documents as minimal technical requirements.</li><li>• Don't use vendor catalogs to create designs and to set end user expectations.</li></ul>

As helpful as these items may be, certainly a successful furniture acquisition requires much more. For more tools and resources, visit the entire **Furniture Hallway** on the Acquisition Gateway. For help contact us at [furniture@gsa.gov](mailto:furniture@gsa.gov).