

The Modern Locker Wears More Hats than Ever Before

How office storage solutions have transformed to support people's diverse needs in the new era of hybrid work

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Offices have transformed significantly in the past few decades with the rise of hybrid work. Work is more dynamic than ever, and people's storage needs have shifted. They're not just looking for a place to store file folders and paper documents; they want a place to keep their belongings safe while they focus on work.

To better understand these changing needs, Steelcase conducted in-depth research, both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, examining the locker's role in the modern hybrid workplace.

With organizations offering more hot desking solutions, paired with increased social and collaborative spaces, the research showed that lockers needed to do more than store. Today's storage solutions need to empower people to work better together knowing their belongings are safely tucked away, while also promoting an organization's culture and contributing to a warm, welcoming, and vibrant office atmosphere. Steelcase looked into how to design modern lockers that could do both: provide storage opportunities and act as gathering spaces that would help people connect with others, enhance team ownership, and help provide visual shields in the open floorplan.

WorkValet™ lockers provides a warm welcome to the office.

OFFICE LOCKERS: THEN AND NOW

Lockers were first designed with compartments tailored to store paper, notebooks, and binders. They were usually lined against the walls of hallways, forcing people to leave their workstations to retrieve their files. They were only intended for team resources, with little to no space for personal items.

As technology advanced, files began to be stored digitally and people started working remotely. The COVID global pandemic then further accelerated the shift to the hybrid work culture that was already on the rise. People began alternating between working from home and in the office, and organizations scaled back on assigned workstations in favor of hot desking.

LOCKERS PLAY A BIGGER ROLE THAN EVER BEFORE

In the hybrid era, people are looking to the office as a space that helps them work better, feel better, and collaborate better. Organizations are making major changes, creating workplaces that look and feel markedly different than offices of the past. One of these major changes: storage.

The rigid, colder aesthetic of traditional lockers has dissolved into a warm, more versatile storage solution that offers options for a variety of colors, materiality, and design features that shape the personality of the office today.

“Today, people crave an office that feels alive and supports social connections, fuelling their creativity. They want opportunities to build relationships in spaces optimized for getting work done. The office should ultimately be a destination that earns the commute by providing experiences people can’t recreate at home. Lockers today play a significant role in not only effectively storing items but also shaping the unique ambiance of a workspace.” said Viola Vallon, Senior Industrial Designer Steelcase.

WHAT MODERN WORKERS EXPECT

Steelcase research identified what people and organizations are looking for in modern storage solutions. The results shed light on people’s habits and what they’re storing, organized into three key types of workers: destination, anchored, and untethered.

Destination workers are travellers who come into the office on occasion, a few days a month, usually for specific meetings. Often traveling from further away, they’re looking for a safe storage solution for larger items like coats, backpacks, or luggage. The ideal office locker for destination workers is often located at the entrance or in easily accessible community spaces.

A destination worker might visit the office weekly or monthly and needs space to store personal belongings like luggage.

On the other hand, **anchored workers** spend most of their working time in the office and tend to store items they need to access quickly like laptops, water bottles, lunchboxes, and gym bags. Lockers for anchored workers should be in close proximity to their workstations as they need to access their belongings multiple times throughout the day.

The **untethered workers** – often thought of as hybrid workers – are somewhere in the middle, spending about half of their time in the office. They switch between remote work and in-office work on a daily or weekly basis and want practical storage for personal items. They need to know their belongings are safely tucked away and will typically use the lockers at the beginning and end of the day.

As people become more dynamic, the importance of having a trusted storage spot within the office has been magnified. They want more flexibility and control over their workspaces, with the freedom to get their work done in the way that’s most effective for them.

MEET UNIVERSAL, VOLUM ART, AND WORKVALET™ LOCKERS

Universal, Volum Art, and WorkValet™ lockers have been tailored to fit these fundamental needs in the office. Each offers its own unique flare while providing the variety of choices that people and organizations are looking for today.

WorkValet™ offers the ultimate versatility in terms of functionality and design. These lockers create a warm welcome to the office by providing varied compartment sizes and shelving options to fit new storage needs as well as inviting aesthetic features.

The increasingly open office floorplan has reduced reliance on built architecture: furniture solutions are expected to fill the role once played by fixed walls and divided rooms. Today, lockers serve as team boundaries, create collaborative areas that encourage people to work together, and empower workers to quickly settle into space. Universal, Volum Art, and WorkValet™ serve as landmarks in the office ecosystem, providing the versatility, sense of belonging, and aesthetic appeal that people are looking for.