

Pattern of Pride

Collaborative employee effort creates new seating fabric to celebrate all members of LGBTQ+ community

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A row of six brightly-colored chairs, each representing a color of the LGBTQ+ community's traditional rainbow flag and prominently displayed in Steelcase facilities globally, is a tradition for the company's annual celebration of Pride month. At once simple and profound, the display is sponsored by the Steelcase Pride Business Inclusion Group – made up of employees from around the world – and is intended to reflect the connection between what the organization makes and one of its key commitments: fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging for everyone. Now, the group is extending that recognition to more members of the community – in a new and innovative way.

The previous Steelcase Pride Chair Display as it appeared in 2023 in Grand Rapids, Mich., USA.

Global Pride core team leader Melina Sinigos approached the Steelcase seating team with a new idea to make the chair display even more impactful. “We wanted to expand the colors. We wanted to show people of color, and people in the transgender and nonbinary communities that they belong, too,” says Sinigos. Members of the Pride team and its allies partnered with Designtex and the Steelcase surface materials and industrial design teams to create a one-of-its-kind fabric called Addition Plus that features colorful addition signs that can be applied to most high-performance chairs. “We were already celebrating Pride through our chairs. So we thought – let's create something that has the full spectrum of colors on it – something that's super playful that I know I would want.”

Designtex's digital printing process allows for small-batch production. Here is Addition Plus being printed at their facility in Portland, Maine.

The pattern features addition signs in all colors of the Progress Pride flag. The icons vary in size, creating the visual appearance of a waving flag.

Designed With Pride

Designed to include all of the colors, identities and orientations represented in the expanded [Progress Pride flag](#), Addition Plus is symbolically significant in a number of ways. Working closely with Pride team members, Steelcase industrial designer Jenna VanFleteren utilized the Designtex Digital Studio to select a pattern and then worked with [Designtex's Custom Digital Printing](#) team to further customize the pattern over the course of dozens of iterations in applying Pantone Progress Pride colors to the design. Aside from the addition sign being intrinsically inclusive, the pattern never appears the same on any two chairs – capturing the individualism of the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, the variation in color and size of the addition icons creates the visual appearance of a waving flag – a playful perk of the design's distinctiveness.

“We’ve definitely taken a lot of care to make it as accurate as possible and really represent the flag – thinking about movement within the pattern and having the variation in scale to make each chair unique,” says VanFleteren. “The pattern becomes dynamic and lively when you see the collection of task chairs together. It’s like when a community of unique individuals comes together – there are some nice parallels there.”

Designtex’s digital printing process also allows for small-batch production, greatly reducing material waste. “Not only is Steelcase standing behind one of our inclusion groups, we’re doing it in a resource-responsible way that minimizes waste both in the technology of the printing and in how it’s designed,” says Ashley Upchurch, a Steelcase senior product manager involved in the effort.

Making Space For All

Initially, the Pride Business Inclusion Group intended Addition Plus to be part of an internal celebration that would be instantly visible when someone walks into several of the Steelcase facilities that will be featuring Pride displays in June. The fabric got such a positive response from employees and leaders, the team decided to make it available on Steelcase Store to offer more people the opportunity to [‘spread the Pride,’](#) and bring the fabric into their own workspace.

“This is something physical and intentional that requires a lot of planning and resources,” says Israel Ramos, a Steelcase Pride team member, who previously helped lead the Pride team in Mexico.

“You can see it and show it; this pattern can open up a conversation.”

ISRAEL RAMOS | Steelcase Pride Team Member

Ramos says the company-wide support and commitment – made from all levels within the company – speaks volumes to the LGBTQ+ community. “Personally, it makes me feel seen by our leadership and those signals help me feel supported and more confident to be myself,” Ramos says.

Sinigos agrees. “The small things matter – seeing this textile means an open door to a safe space, an open door to accepting all people,” she says. “It means a lot to people like myself, to step into an office and see a chair with this textile and immediately know I belong.”

Addition Plus is available on most high performance chairs through Steelcase Store.

Steelcase is working toward a future where all people feel seen, heard and valued, so they can thrive at work and in the world. Steelcase employees and members of the Steelcase Pride team want to share Addition Plus broadly, and it is now available to order in the U.S. and Canada on store.steelcase.com – helping everyone signal support and belonging in their own spaces.

Order your *Addition Plus* chair on the [Steelcase Store](#).