

We are often asked what furniture we recommend - what's best?

The rather vague answer to this is that it depends... but we can certainly advise what it depends on to hopefully make your decision making process easier. The first key question is what is your budget? This is often seen as an unacceptable question for a supplier to ask – if they know what we have to spend they'll just shape their price to suit and we'll get overcharged right? Well, if you've done some research and are speaking to a respected company then no, they really do need this guide to be able to best help select your product solution from literally tens of thousands of options at their disposal. It's what they do and one of the main ways they will add value to your project.

Asking what office furniture is best is a little like asking a car dealer what car is best. A good answer would be a Ferrari but that's not much help if you only have the budget for a Ford Fiesta. Equally, it isn't much help if you're planning to use it to pull a horsebox. Knowing what you have to spend and how your organisation is structured will help a furniture expert to put together the perfect package to suit your needs, so find a company you trust and tell them what they need to know to best help you.

Once they know this however there will still be a huge variety of manufacturers and options that meet the budget and brief, so now how do we decide what's best?

These areas are key to consider:

1. Durability

An excellent indication of a product's durability and build quality is the length of warranty it will be provided with. The main manufacturers will offer up to 15 years on desking, budget desks on 24 hour delivery will often have just one year. Go figure on the difference between the components and materials between the two and how quickly you'll need to be replacing them. Our advice is don't buy any product with less than a 5 year warranty – this is the cut-off for poor versus good quality.

2. Lead-time

When do you need to install this product? Lead-times vary between 24 hours and 12 weeks between manufacturers. If you have a four week programme before you need to move in this will rule out any products from manufacturers that need longer than this. Always try and plan well ahead to give yourself lots of time. This way no option will be closed to you and you are more likely to get a great package at the best price.

3. Aesthetic and finishes

Function is the first consideration with any product – it needs to support the way you work. But with this a given that all products under consideration have been selected to do this, they also need to look good. Your office space plays a major role in terms of staff wellbeing, staff recruitment and retention and how you are seen by your clients so select products that give you the best wow factor for your budget. What's best here is subjective, beauty is in the eye of the beholder after all, but selecting products that are timeless and so won't go quickly out of fashion and that can be specified in a wide choice of fabrics and colours so your space can be truly personalised to your brand image is very important.

4. Maintenance

Well designed and specified office furniture should be basically maintenance free throughout its lifetime. Some companies will look to sell you maintenance packages. Don't take them. Once a quality desk is assembled it will stay rock solid for years and fabrics should be selected to have high rub tests so they stay looking good and also so they can be easily cleaned. Many chair and screen fabrics are made from 100% recycled materials these days and can be scrubbed with bleach to no ill effect. This means accumulated stains can be avoided which keeps your office looking fresh throughout its lifespan.

5. Environmental considerations

For many companies this is high on the list of priorities and if it isn't on yours, then it should be, both for reasons of corporate social responsibility but also your own company marketing. Furniture has many environmental considerations – the materials it uses and where they are sourced, the manufacturing processes used (did you know chrome plating is an environmental nightmare, but prevalent in cheaper products. Look for polished metals if you want that shine...), the materials and volumes of those materials used to package finished products, and the carbon footprint associated with the transport of both the components and the finished products themselves. Ask your supplier for their environmental policies and accreditations.

6. Continuity of supply

Two fold this one. Firstly, how financially stable is the manufacturer of your furniture and therefore how likely are they to still be around in 5 years time when you have expanded and need to add identical product to your building? Secondly, do the manufacturers offer a continuity of supply guarantee – ie will they guarantee they will still make you identical product in 5 years time even if that range has been discontinued for general sale? The best manufacturers offer this, lesser ones don't.

7. Features

Obvious one but important. If two task chairs tick all your must have boxes and are the same price but one automatically adjusts to the users weight and the other has a wheel underneath the seat the user has to manually turn... No brainer, but only if you think to ask.

8. Reliability of manufacturer

Your programme is tight, you have 6 weeks and the manufacturer is on a six week leadtime. Do you trust them to deliver when they have promised or leave you with nowhere to work for a fortnight whilst listening to excuses of late arriving components or machine breakdown? Another area a dealer will add value. They deal with numerous manufacturers all of the time. They know who delivers and who often doesn't. Listen to their advice.

9. Installation

Buying the right furniture is only part of the process. It also needs installing. Good suppliers be they manufacturers direct or dealers will have fully trained, experienced fitting teams who can deliver, efficiently install and level everything perfectly and take away the vast amount of packaging a furniture project generates. You could of course opt to install the furniture yourself but for a project even for as little as 10 staff this becomes quite a task. Many manufacturers also insist on trained installation teams carrying out the work or they invalidate the warranty. A little harsh perhaps but a fact and another thing to check if you do feel like going DIY.

10. Removal of existing furniture and packaging

Can your chosen supplier take care of removing the old furniture you're replacing? And if so what will they do with it? The best companies will look to recycle your furniture by giving it to local or international charities for re-use, or if this isn't possible (often it's a case of timing – if the charity has a requirement when your furniture becomes available it will be taken by them but if not they will refuse it as to store it carries significant costs) then ensure they will take to it to a certified recycling centre and not just to landfill. The same applies to the packaging of your new furniture. Ensure they have a policy of taking this to a certified recycling centre and not landfill. Good installation teams will be seen separating out cardboard, plastic etc into different containers for removal from site.

11. Aftersales

Your new furniture shouldn't need replacing for at least 10 years if purchased correctly. You will however need to replace the occasional broken component or add to the portfolio as your company expands or evolves. You may just simply need some advice on how to clean something or take something apart to relocate it. Ensure the furniture supplier is there for you throughout the lifecycle of the furniture. Your contract is with them (which is an advantage as it means even if you have product from many manufacturers you only have one number you need to call) so make sure they are there for the long term – financially stable, can give references of long term clients, and will have a member of staff who will be your account manager who knows your building, project and the furniture you have installed.

As you can see, "best" is a combination of many things and what's best for one organisation will almost certainly be different for the next, but with the largest furniture contracts running into millions of pounds for a single project doing the right research and making the right choices is vital if very expensive mistakes are to be avoided.

We at Mocha are committed to industry transparency and answering the questions you are looking for the answers to. Browse our [Knowledge Hub](#) for more.