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## Some advice about buying used office furniture

**BY MARLAINE MCCAULEY**

We live in a disposable society. When things get worn or sometimes even just dirty, we throw them out. As the economy improves, companies wrestle with the decision of whether to buy used or new office furniture. If you choose to buy used office furniture, here are a few things to consider before making that important purchase.

**Good for the environment:** When it comes to office furnishings, used can not only save you money, it is an environmentally responsible choice. Unfortunately, a lot of serviceable office furniture ends up in our landfills.

**Design is a consideration:** It is one thing to go out and buy a used file cabinet and quite another to outfit your entire office with used furniture, which may include cubicles, desks, chairs, and accessories. When buying used, do you have someone on your staff who is knowledgeable about office furniture and has the ability to adapt an existing system to your space? Are they savvy on both the mechanics of the equipment as well as what would be a fair or reasonable price to pay? This may determine where you choose to buy.

Some dealers offer design services; others don't. If you don't have in-house expertise, you may want to go with a dealer that can offer design services to assess your needs. A designer can then determine the adaptability of the used office system you are interested in purchasing. Buying a used office system and having it look great in your space,

at substantial savings over new, is a winner.

**Good support reduces headaches:** Does used furniture come with support from the dealer? It should. Why is this a consideration? What if you find that you are missing parts and pieces: Will the dealer you are working with be able to get those needed parts for your project? Some dealers sell used furniture but offer little or no support for the system they are selling you.

**Good support will reduce your headaches.** Ask if they can assure you that you'll have all the hardware and pieces you'll need to install the office system in your space. Can they get parts in the right colors, or at least paint them to match? A good office system with good support will work out well and save you money.

**Prices:** Be aware that sometimes you can pay as much for a used system as if you had purchased something else new. Compare what a comparable new system would cost you before agreeing to pay the used purchase price. Check with more than one reputable office furniture dealer to get an idea of pricing for new.

**Other considerations:** Beware of buying furniture pieces and disassembled cubicles stacked up in warehouses. Ask to see a mockup. Request that it be assembled, at least to a point where you have a good feel for how smoothly the assembly process will go and how it will look in your space. If you are buying furniture directly from another company, the furniture may look good in one office, but may not fit in yours. This is why working with a dealer that

can provide design services will pay off.

Remember, purchasing a specific piece is different from outfitting an entire office. Keep the big picture in mind. Know the value — be an educated buyer. Used is never a good deal if the pieces are in poor condition, broken, or don't fit in your space properly. And remember, the warranty does not pass to the second owner, and if the office furniture or office systems are discontinued by the manufacturer, those important parts and pieces you may need might not be available.

**A couple of red flags:** Don't buy out of a tractor trailer. Don't buy through an online auction. Don't buy just because it sounds like a great deal ... you may be stuck with someone else's junk ... and a sizable disposal cost.

When you finish your purchase and installation, your office should look good and be functional. You should be proud that your efforts saved you money and resulted in an office space that will serve you well for years. Plus, you did the environment a favor. With the rapid growth and frequent moves of businesses, there are sizable amounts of serviceable, used office furnishings to be had. Just be a savvy shopper and check on the support availability for your purchase.

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