

Press release

11/19/2007

Conference furniture for Steinmeier & Co.: Wilkhahn Customized Manufacturing Centre registers increasing demand

Series production or individual adaptation to special wishes. The “Conference.Excellence” business model provides the customer with both options. The company’s very own customized manufacturing centre forms the heart of this combination, which is unusual for an industrial enterprise. It is in this Centre that Wilkhahn develops customized solutions on the basis of its series products. Solutions that are used at conferences at the Auswärtiges Amt (German Ministry of Foreign Affairs), for example. The most recent addition: a virtual project room allows Wilkhahn staff and customers, independently of their momentary location, to access the current planning stage via interactive task tables. On 19 November, the initiative of “Land of Ideas” will be honouring “Conference.Excellence:” as a trailblazing model.

Bad Münden. Since opening in 2003, the Wilkhahn Customized Manufacturing Centre has been experiencing ever increasing demand. The special department is a key module in “Conference.Excellence”, the business model for innovative conference interiors by Wilkhahn, and makes a substantial contribution to the success of the traditional company from Lower Saxony. The turnover of the Wilkhahn Customized Manufacturing Centre reached EUR 24.3 million between January and September 2007 alone. That is an increase of 23 percent over the previous year. With customized table solutions alone, the Customized Manufacturing Centre achieved a turnover of EUR 6.6 million, almost 60 percent higher than the previous year. In times in which the furniture industry focuses continuously on cheap mass production, Wilkhahn quite consciously swims against the tide – and is successful in the process. This is also reflected in the number of employees working in the Customized Manufacturing Centre that has risen from 20 to 30 in five years. “There is a growing market for high-quality and



Conference configuration based on a modular principle: in the year of Germany’s EU Presidency, Wilkhahn designed a system, allowing flexible applications, for the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was, for example, used at the G8 Summit Conference in Heiligendamm. Copyright: Auswärtiges Amt / freely available



Unique conference solutions of the highest degree: at the Wilkhahn Customized Manufacturing Centre, interdisciplinary teams take care of all development stages of a project – ranging from the creation of the concept and planning to manufacture and specifying. Copyright: Wilkhahn

customized furnishing solutions. With the Wilkhahn Customized Manufacturing Centre we have built on this trend” says Holger Jahnke who is responsible for global markets. “Success in this field goes to prove we were right. Today, the Customized Manufacturing Centre is a decisive pillar in international competition that also helps us in the field of standardized products.”

On the political scene: Wilkhahn in action

Furnishing concepts developed by Wilkhahn are, for example, used in the Auswärtiges Amt (German Ministry of Foreign Affairs): for this Ministry, Wilkhahn produced a conference table configuration in 2007 within just four months that is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, that can be reconfigured with great flexibility according to the modular principle and in addition may be easily packed and transported. In the year of Germany’s EU Presidency, the system was used at many different venues, the first time being at the G8 Summit Conference in Heiligendamm. At the round table configuration, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier discussed issues such as aid for Africa and climate policy with their state guests.

Independent of location and interactive: Customer care in the virtual project room

Interior concepts are created in the Customized Manufacturing Centre firstly on the computer: they are rendered virtually by means of a graphic product configurator and adjusted to specific customer requirements before undergoing the production stage. The most recent enhancement is that Wilkhahn employees and customers are now able to access the current planning stage of a project via a web-based project management platform. The tools are: so-called InteracTables that are linked up via the Internet. These are task tables with a touch display developed by Wilkhahn subsidiary foresee™. Ten years ago, Wilkhahn was one of the pioneers of integrating media technology into conference furniture, and today it is undisputedly the international innovation leader. Staff at the Customized Manufacturing Centre participate in continuous training, including regular training with regard to media technology. According to Michael Fehsenfeld, Head of the Wilkhahn Competence Centre “Markets”, into which the Customized Manufacturing Centre is integrated: “Conference furniture with

multimedia technology has now become standard for companies operating internationally that communicate with their branches, partners and customers throughout the world. With its architectural and design concepts, Wilkhahn is just the right partner for architects and customers for whom conventional, series offers do not provide an adequate solution. “

**One project, many different perspectives:
An interdisciplinary team looks after all
development stages**

The staff of the Customized Manufacturing Centre are organized in teams in which interior designers collaborate with engineers, project managers and business people direct. Together with customers, they develop an in-depth interior concept and take care of all development stages – ranging from the creation of the concept and planning to manufacture and specifying of a conference interior. The main task area at the Customized Manufacturing Centre is therefore individual adaptation of Wilkhahn series products to customer needs: for example, should a table have to be shortened or extended for a customer's conference room, the radii, angles and edges of the tables will correspond exactly to the form of the relevant room. If flat monitors are to be integrated or veneered tops have to team with other elements, then the perfect industrial quality of Wilkhahn ranges will harmonize with the customized solutions in terms of function, form and design.

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