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A Blandness Born of Internationality?

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As the world gets smaller and the instant communications revolution continues, one relatively unnoticed casualty is the design individuality of offices around the world.

There was a time when you could walk into an office, and the furniture would tell you whether you were in Paris, Frankfurt, New York, Milan, Moscow, or London. The colors, shapes, materials, construction, and overall image of the furniture and furnishings were all very local, almost parochial.

Who could fail to be struck by the muddy oranges and greens of a French office? Or the inevitable mahogany or teak, real-wood veneers used throughout UK workplaces? The panels, work surfaces, and storage units that made up U.S. cubicles were rarely seen outside North America. And the massive, dark-wood desks and cabinets in Central Europe overwhelmed visitors and staff alike, just as they were intended to.



A desk from Strafor, the French company that Steelcase acquired in two stages; it eventually became the basis of Steelcase in Europe.

What do we see today?

A blandness, born of internationality, which results in manufacturers' products looking like the lowest common denominator.



JOHN SACKS

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A Blandness Born of Internationality?



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