

With New Products and Designs, Versteel Wants You to Head Outside

THE OUTDOOR WORK REVOLUTION BEGAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC AS HIGH-TECH COMPANIES IN SUNNY SILICON VALLEY STARTED USING OUTDOOR SPACE IN COURTYARDS, ON ROOFS AND BETWEEN BUILDINGS AS WORKSPACES.

by Rob Kirkbride

Many temporary trends arose out of the pandemic that likely will disappear along with the dreaded virus (think Zoom meetings and working 100% from home), but one is expected to last well beyond COVID-19. As technology released us from being chained to our desks, outdoor spaces became the new workplace.

Yet almost all the furniture for outdoor spaces is more concerned with casual use than work. It is easy to find a park bench or a pool cabana. It is more difficult to find outdoor furniture suited to the workplace or education.

By adapting some of its existing furniture and adding new pieces, Versteel has come up with a robust collection that fits just as well

in the great outdoors as it does in an office or classroom. The new outdoor products, Pavilion and Pop-Up, provide a safe, physical space for gathering and generating ideas. The two options cater to any collaboration-related scenario, providing outdoor classrooms and work areas that include tents, furniture and power. The Versteel V Power utilizes cordless, battery-powered charging that attaches to the edge of each work surface, giving individuals and teams the freedom to work and learn anywhere.

The idea to move outdoors came from Versteel's customers, said Product Design and Development Director Jacklyn Ady. Like all its products, Versteel began with research.

“We looked into the past,” she said. “There’s a lot of great information from urban planning about how yellow fever shaped the boulevards in Paris, how it gave us public parks, the London sewer systems. A lot of pandemics, as frustrating as they are, offer really good opportunities and design challenges.”

The Versteel team found similar problems today with COVID-19. A demand exists for well-ventilated communal spaces that prioritize human wellness and support health. Versteel’s answer is launching outdoor-compatible furniture solutions for long- and short-term outside sheltered scenarios: Pavilion and Pop-Up.

“For all the challenges and frustrations the pandemic has uncovered, we have been presented with an opportunity to rethink school and work entirely,” said President Scott Schwinghammer. “Building on Versteel’s decades-long experience shaping learning environments that inspire productivity, our design team has pushed past the norm to reimagine collective spaces for this moment and the next — there is no substitute for collaboration.”

Pavilion provides semi-permanent or long-term outdoor design solutions

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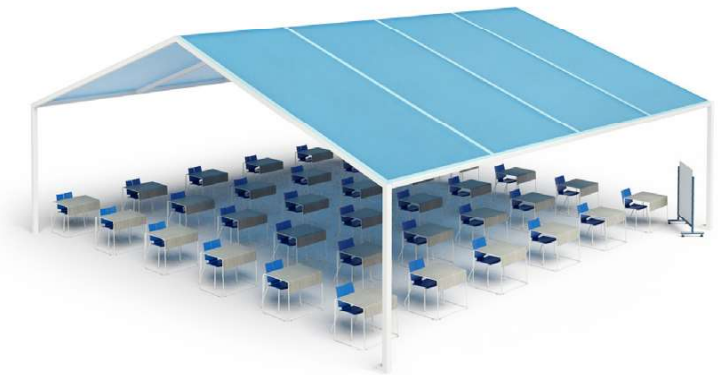


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that can be kept outside under shelter and out of direct sunlight while Pop-Up can be easily established for temporary or day-only setups under covered shelter.

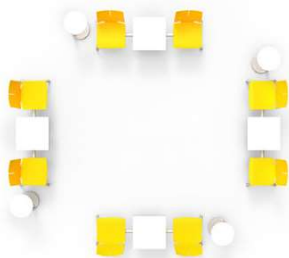
With Pavilion, Versteel’s adaptable tables and chairs are used in pavilion-style patios, ready for spontaneous meetings or heads-down work. Providing products intended for work will help with ergonomics and productivity. Pavilion caters to and supports versatile outdoor work areas, including relaxed, communal or focused styles. Pop-Up can be used for scheduled outdoor work and learning applications. It is designed for when larger spaces are needed, such as classrooms. To further enhance outdoor build-outs, Versteel products can be specified as mobile or stackable to assist in quick setup and tear down.

“Pavilion and Pop-Up allowed us to flex and really play to our strengths,” Ady said. “Combining Versteel’s long tradition of

precision-engineered, durable metal furniture with contemporary applications of resilient materials, such as polypropylene resin and Corian, resulted in design-forward products that are highly functional, hygienic and durable.”

The outdoor work revolution began before the pandemic as high-tech companies in sunny Silicon Valley started using outdoor space in courtyards, on roofs and between buildings as workspaces. The trend spread, even to places in the north where the outdoors is only hospitable for work or school in certain seasons. It simply makes sense, Ady said. Outdoor spaces are available to most companies and schools. Why not use them?

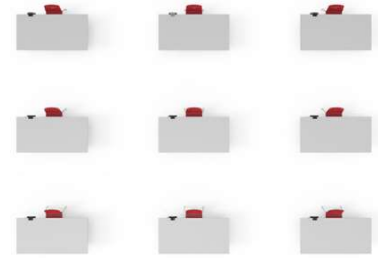
“A lot of real estate properties have a higher value when they utilize a rooftop or if they have some kind of outdoor space, but it’s also that idea of growing awareness of health and wellness and biophilia — all the wellness



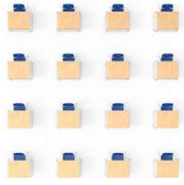
Relaxed
Lounge Work / Dine



Communal
Social Based Work



Focused
Individual/Class work



16 Worksurfaces
20' x 20' space



25 Worksurfaces
27' x 26' space



36 Worksurfaces
32' x 32' space

benefits you get from that context of nature,” she said. “I think one of the interesting things about the pandemic is how much research was done around poor sleep habits and about how people aren’t sleeping very well. One of the things that I’ve found is that (the outdoors) is actually very good for helping sleep.”

Working outdoors also helps with creativity. Collaborating outside improves wellness, reduces stress, creates more flexible spaces and also helps learning and brain development.

While Versteel has a broad range of products that will work in outdoor spaces, it also has the ability to do custom work. The company doesn’t believe in cookie-cutter solutions. Versteel works with its customers to find the best mix of products for the situation. If those products don’t fit, Versteel creates solutions that will.

For more information on the benefits of outdoor spaces and product adaptability, visit versteel.com/outdoor-spaces. **BoF**

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