

Libertines

'People are on the move. Work is now a transitional activity, often starting and ending at home but in a majority of cases taking place in multiple locations and across different organisations. Work has evolved, away from the performing of concentrated, isolated tasks and increasingly towards information sharing. The worker of today is mobile, transient and fluid. Technological, practical and organisational change has given rise to a different understanding of work which presupposes different needs for the user.'





‘And that’s been very important in the development of Ad-Lib,’ adds Robert. ‘We’ve invested heavily in the range – there are no existing parts re-used in it, it’s all new. Most manufacturers in our sector tend to have a kit of parts to which they make some cosmetic improvement. It’s the last five percent that makes the design difference. The attention to considered detail is vital. Ad-Lib is notable for its lack of visible fixings. This is the absolute opposite approach to what many do. Too many people design components and only then work out how to put it together. The secret is to think about the whole range, including all the options, right at the beginning of the process. We wanted to work with a designer with a world class pedigree – PearsonLloyd have a world class industrial design business. It was important to us that they have strong experience in other sectors – they work with Lufthansa, Virgin Atlantic and also in healthcare, to name just three very different yet very relevant examples.’

Luke Pearson explains the design principles that inform Ad-Lib. ‘The design of the chair is based on functional and ergonomic demands which have informed its aesthetics. Minimised sections, engineered to ensure no wastage, have been gently sculpted to provide calm and friendly surfaces: for example, the arm cap has no split lines on the fully wrapped surface. The well-defined waterfall of the seat not only guarantees high comfort while reclining or

▶▶▶▶ Ad-Lib’s development. ‘We’ve had strong business in multi-purpose seating for 10 years. It really started with Trillipse, designed by Paul Brooks and Colin Mustoe. Trillipse was a big success for us, and still is. It’s still the best in its class, but because there are copies out there, has become perhaps a little less individual.

‘What we wanted to do was redefine what’s needed in a multipurpose chair. That’s exactly why the tagline for Ad-Lib – multipurpose seating redefined – came about. When I say redefined, I’m talking about both style and function.

‘Ad-Lib’s a real family – comprising a light swivel work chair, as well as various options including cantilever and skid bases, four leg and so on.

‘It’s a properly designed family of chairs, as opposed to saying ‘I’ve got a four leg chair, now I need to bolt on these bits’. There are no other ranges out there that cover all the bases in one integrated family.’

Senator Chairman Colin Mustoe confirms the point. ‘The project to design Ad-Lib started about two years ago. It’s natural to see Ad-Lib as a Trillipse replacement, but that would be wrong. It’s not a replacement, it’s a progression.

‘Going back a bit, our first real proper design was our Freeflex range. It was the range that really spawned our brand. Then the first product that we put a lot of money into was Trillipse. It was a huge success and became a benchmark for the industry. Then, a couple of years ago, we saw that the opportunity was there for another

multipurpose chair. There was a chance for us to carry on where we left off.

Colin moves on to explain the thinking behind the decision to work with PearsonLloyd on the project.

‘PearsonLloyd operate in a lot of market sectors, and as a result have the right experience of working with innovative materials. We’ve worked with them before, on the Soul chair. We knew from that experience their capabilities in materials and sophisticated manufacturing techniques.’





▶▶▶stretching out, but ensures that the user does not come into contact with a hard edge. The contour of the seat has been designed to minimise pressure on the tuberosities, even without an upholstery pad. Holes allow cooling and maintain a good comfort surface, with the additional benefit of acting as drain holes.

‘When this seat is upholstered, it provides a slim, elegant solution with additional comfort. Upholstery is protected from edge damage as it is effectively ‘framed’, and hence stays clean longer and enjoys a longer life.

‘The back rest spans a closed-loop frame. This loop provides a handhold across the top which not only prolongs upholstery life – since there is no need to pull the chair back by grabbing textile surfaces – but aids lifting and moving. It can also be used as a jacket hanger. The back can be upholstered or left as a simple perforated plastic: again, this produces a good thermal surface. A spacer knit can be provided for an additional comfort interface to the back, as an alternative to foamed upholstery.

‘A high-performance elastomeric back can also be specified, which provides a more flexible sit for more task-related or focused periods, allowing smaller micro-movements of the back. Its stress-relieving pattern has been designed with respect to pressure-mapping, and the increased structural support top and bottom ensure correct posture is maintained.’

As Luke says, Ad-Lib’s all about options, not restrictions. This is subtle, considered design for new ways of working. It’s ambitious too – a complete integrated programme from its inception, rather than something that may (or may not) gather ad hoc additions later on. We reckon that Ad-Lib sets a new benchmark●