



SAVA CHAIRS

Stylex: They're Golden

by Brad Powell

There are guys that are fun, if not always easy to get to. **Stylex**, located in Delanco, NJ, near Philadelphia, falls in this category. **Bruce** and **John Golden** own and run the company, which has been in business for over half a century and now is in its third generation. So far as an outsider can tell, these first cousins get along famously and are of the same mind regarding what this seating company is about. That in itself is a joy to see in modern America. They love their business and its products. While profitability is important, and the company has been profitable, even in the dustbowl of 2009, the Goldenes have found a better answer for pride and success: cautiousness, with a sense of adventure and an eye on the next step forward in adding something to their market.

Stylex is probably best known for its multi-purpose and lounge seating, and deservedly so. It's



JOHN AND BRUCE GOLDEN

Rhythm, **Avo** and **Zephyr** chairs are visually and tactilely pleasing, and set fine examples for what can be done with multi-purpose stacking chairs. Its lounge seating – **MG** by Mark Goetz, **Come Together** by Sava Cvek, and **Paz** by Tod Babick – is inviting, while strikingly distinctive, but indicative of the Stylex design sense and quality.

Swivel chairs have also played an important role in the Stylex lineup; the three **Insight** lines come readily to mind. But a seating manufacturer that is brand and image sensitive must harbor aspirations of



RHYTHM

companies



AVO



ZEPHYR



MG

innovation beyond aesthetic signatures. This means developing a proprietary mechanism for the heart of the task chair, the swivel/tilt mechanism. In turn, this requires a substantial investment in design talent, careful thinking, trial and error and expensive tooling.



SAVA CVEK



PAZ



COME TOGETHER

The Golden boys have been nurturing this dream for many years and it has finally been realized with this year's introduction of **Sava**, named after the company's long-time design consultant, **Sava Cvek**, with whom they have found a mutually-respectful working relationship and repeated success.

The distinguishing characteristics of *Sava* are:

- >comfort
- >user-friendly control
- >design appeal

Consistent with the Stylex design attitude and its A&D target market, *Sava* has an elegantly tailored presence; neither conservative nor forward, it projects the always *just-right* appearance that many find most comfortable. Interestingly, while this impression of timelessness has been pursued for decades, it coincides with the current desire for simplicity and flexibility. As a result, *Sava* can be fitted so that it is *just right* for a variety of settings, from the boardroom to executive office to *touchdown* seating. In other words, designers can use the same chair, in different configurations, for every function in a large office.

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The appearance of the chair speaks for itself, but “refined elegance” comes to mind more readily than “muscular authority,” and this is reflected in the chair’s scale, as well as its aesthetics. The chair’s straightforward simplicity is deceiving, however. First, *Sava* is available in a variety of configurations that encompass conference, executive



SAVA: LEFT PROFILE



SAVA: REAR

and ergonomic task applications, each of which has appropriate adjustment capabilities. (In fact, the chair is entered in both the *Conference* and *Task Chair* categories in the Best of NeoCon competition.) The thought is that, for example, money for the conference configuration is better spent on fine leather upholstery than on the outer limits of adjustability. The tension control and the seat slide are removed from the conference configuration, but of course, conference chairs can be ordered with the full range of adjustability. (Tension is set at high for the

conference configuration.)

As mentioned, the central mechanism and the adjustment features were designed and tooled from the ground up. “The idea,” said John Golden, “was to make the adjustment controls low-profile, user-friendly and extremely versatile. Thus, the tension control enables adjustment appropriate for the lightest person, say someone of ninety pounds, to someone in the heaviest range with a simple movement of the wrist.”

Sava, of course, is available with all of the typical chair adjustments,



SAVA: MESH BACK, CUSHION SEAT



SAVA: FROM ABOVE



SAVA: LEFT ADJUSTMENT DETAIL

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tilt and swivel, tension control, height adjustment, tilt lock, adjustable lumbar support, seat depth, adjustable arms, and so on. Thankfully, gone are the days of the dragonfly-wing controls, with multiple levers extending beneath the seat on each side. The controls on Sava are visible, but attractively so, and each control has tasteful icons –which can be illuminated, for those with a penchant for technical titillation – to suggest how it works.

Of course, there are those who ascribe to the no-control view of chair design, and some have made this work reasonably well. Still, we have no problem with subtle, well-designed, easy-to-use controls. Sava has these, and, to us, they are as acceptable as any other design, and in some ways preferable. When you compare, for example, the tilt tension of Sava to, say, the redoubtable Aeron chair, we think you will agree that Sava has done it right.

We were taken by the apparent simplicity of the tension mechanism, which draws on the energy of two tough-looking springs. The complexity, we assume, is embedded within the four cams that control the tension level. In addition to the normal adjustments, it is possible to easily access the tension mechanism, for example, to set the tension at its highest level, say, for a larger person who might not ever find use for the “lighter” settings. All in all, it’s very straightforward in terms of ease of use.

As if to emphasize its versatility, Sava is available with a high or mid back, with no arms, fixed arms or adjustable arms. Upholstery is pretty much up to the customer. Stylex is fully familiar with and capable of delivering COM and COL production. Mesh, however, is available only in black for the time being, but the company is working on a slightly broader selection, which will probably also include platinum and bronze selections, based upon its extensive experience with the mesh of the Zephyr chair.

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Mr. Cvek has had extensive experience using and working with mesh fabrics, and has engineered a smooth material without the roughness and too-taught edge of some mesh chairs, and certainly not the amateurish looking application of some of the unsophisticated mesh work we saw when everyone first lunged forward to get a piece of the Aeron pie.

In many ways, *Sava* represents the culmination of a long transition period for Stylex. It achieved much success in the late 90s, but there was a selection process as it took direct aim at the

A&D community. This was not easy, especially in light of the two recessionary periods during the last decade. But now it is the time for coming out. And, with *Sava*, Stylex has redone its Chicago showroom with EastLake Studio in Chicago, going for LEED certification, which required working with the Merchandise Mart to upgrade, in a sustainable sense, nearby bathrooms.

The new showroom will feature work-area vignettes (conference, lounge, benching areas, etc.), LED lighting and many types of reclaimed materials including wall paneling of

salvaged barn wood and a large table of oak that, they say, was reclaimed from the bottom of Lake Michigan.

The price of the *Sava* chair is in the traditional range for this type of chair, around \$1,250 list, but it scales up with COL (customer's own leather) and is not intended to compete with the lower price points of the latest multi-purpose task chairs such as Herman Miller's **Setu**, Kimball's new Interstuhl **Campo** or even Knoll's **Generation**. Quite expectedly, *Sava* has a price reflecting the extent to which it incorporates steel and proprietary cast aluminum parts for its structure and operation.

"We are positioning ourselves above the mass task seating market," said Bruce Golden. "Our market is not for those jobs requiring five thousand chairs at a price point where we cannot compete. Rather, we have maintained the quality design levels appropriate for our targeted market." ■

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SAVA: ARM