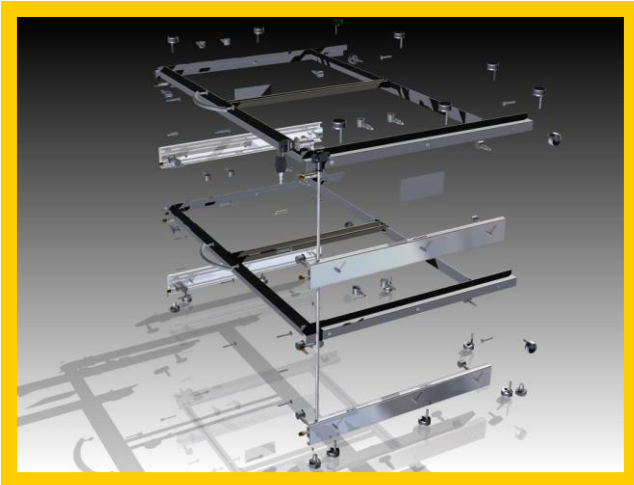


### Inventor: Part of the furniture at Lee & Plumpton



Norfolk-based Lee & Plumpton has come a long way since it was originally established back in 1974. A family-run business, the company today operates from a 200,000 sq ft state-of-the-art factory specialising in the design and manufacture of quality office furniture.

Three years ago, the company recognised that it needed to move on from its existing 2D-based design solution. “Upgrading to 3D was a key element in maintaining an industry-wide reputation for the quality of our product offering,” recalls product development co-ordinator, Warren Chapman.

“At the same time, 3D modelling capability was becoming increasingly important in order to ensure compatibility with our customer and supplier CAD users.” Working with leading Autodesk Manufacturing Software Reseller, Micro Concepts, Lee & Plumpton selected Autodesk Inventor Suite as being most suited to its needs: “The Autodesk name, together with its ability to integrate with other software solutions, were also key factors in our decision,” he says.

#### Rapid results

At the outset, Micro Concepts provided intensive training which, together with Inventor’s highly intuitive architecture, meant that Lee & Plumpton was able to realise the benefits of the new software almost immediately.

“We have found Inventor both easy to learn and easy to use,” confirms Chapman, “and it has significantly enhanced our design process. In short, we haven’t looked back since.”

The design team, for example, has seen a substantial improvement in its ability to turn round top quality designs more quickly. With 3D modelling, the company can now see each design take shape well before prototyping, which ensures that any design issues can be ironed out early on, so minimising the need for expensive redesign or reworking at manufacturing stage.

Some of the company’s work involves bespoke design and here too Inventor enables customers to play an effective role much earlier in the development. “The quality of the 3D imagery, together with the ability to make changes instantly, means that clients with little or no design expertise can visualise the product and make an effective contribution to its development,” confirms Micro Concepts sales manager, Mark Mills.

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Style plays an especially important role in the highly competitive office furniture market and here too, Inventor has made a significant impact. “The time saved in design development not only means we can bring more considered designs to market quicker,” says Chapman, “but, critically, we are also able to focus more on aesthetics in providing clients with a product with maximum visual appeal as well as durability. In short, from a design perspective, no stone is left unturned.”



### Broader benefits

For Mills, Lee & Plumpton provides a typical example of how Autodesk’s design automation solutions can deliver more broadly-based gains than are perhaps recognised by the customer at the outset. “As with many clients, initial discussions centred on the need to improve the company’s design capability through the introduction of 3D,” he recalls.

“However, in looking to provide the most relevant solution, as usual we looked closely at Lee & Plumpton’s business processes and identified a number of areas in which we could achieve significant operational improvements.

As with many manufacturing design businesses, data management has become increasingly important, especially since the company added an additional seat of Inventor in 2005. By using Autodesk Vault to manage its CAD files, for example, the company has improved version control.

“Not only can we be certain that everyone is using the same, and most up-to-date, design, but we are also able to revert back quickly and easily to an earlier design if and when required,” confirms Chapman.

**“By importing Inventor files directly into Autodesk’s Architectural Desktop software, we are able to provide a quality of space planning service which is the equal of our furniture design.”**

More recently, Autodesk Productstream has extended the company’s data management capability, by enabling non-CAD users throughout the business to access design data. “Some training is needed to ensure that non-specialists reap the full benefits of what Inventor can offer, yet it has certainly helped put design closer to the centre of our business,” he adds.

For Lee & Plumpton’s highly demanding customer base it is important to be able to see at the outset the quality of design the company can offer and here the ability of Inventor to integrate with Autodesk Viz allows the sales and marketing departments to utilise top quality CAD imagery in promotional and sales support materials.

### Space Planning

Nowhere is Inventor’s integration capability more important however than in the area of space planning.

“A key competitive ‘plus’ for us is our ability to provide clients with ‘the complete office furniture solution’,” confirms Chapman. “In practice this means not only offering a quality service from concept design through to manufacture, but also ensuring the most effective use of the office space available in each case.



“By importing Inventor files directly into Autodesk’s Architectural Desktop software, we are able to provide a quality of space planning service which is the equal of our furniture design.” And the importance of this for Lee & Plumpton cannot be underestimated, as today the company secures a significant number of major contracts specifically as a result of its space planning capability.

Chapman also continues to be impressed with the level of proactive support provided by Micro Concepts. In particular, it has taken advantage of the subscription Inventor Support package: as a result, it automatically receives all new releases of Inventor, full telephone and email support and can attend update technical training – in the form of Silver Support Subscription – seminars in order to realise the potential of each new release’s functionality.

“Inventor and Micro Concepts are now a fundamental part of our design capability,” concludes Chapman. “Indeed, you could say they have truly become part of the furniture!”

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**To learn how Micro Concepts, together with Autodesk Inventor, can help make your company become Number 1 in your market – call 01223 716200 or visit [www.microconcepts.co.uk](http://www.microconcepts.co.uk)**