

Decorator's Notebook

Building A Better Home Office

(NAPSA)—About 20 million people said they worked from home at least once a week last year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Add to that the millions of homeowners who have designated some corner of their house for bill paying and computer work, and you can probably see that the line between home and office has become blurred. However, until recently, the same couldn't always be said for home and home-office furniture.

"A homeowner's reluctance toward buying ready-to-assemble home-office furniture is not so much the fear of assembly. It's the fear of owning furniture that looks—well—assembled," explains home makeover guru and TV show host Michael Lowell.

Lowell and a number of other designers now offer lines of ready-to-assemble office furniture meant to be used anywhere in the home and made from new types of material that improve strength, appearance and function.

The new materials include some design classics such as wood veneers, metal and vinyl, mixed with some high-tech products including new types of pressed particleboard and thermally fused melamine (TFM) panels designed to hold colors and patterns and to improve surface appearance.

Also, MDF (medium density fiberboard) is now often used to add strength to pieces (no more wobbly legs or unstable bases).

In addition, many newer pieces



There are ways to design a home office without disturbing the look of your home.

are adorned with metal grillwork, bent glass, composite moldings, urethane and new types of coating such as EverSheen finish—a top-coat that adds to the furniture's durability.

A Greener Office

The new office-furniture materials don't just look good, they're environmentally friendly, too. A typical plant making MDF and similar materials consumes a daily average of 600 tons of wood waste. That means it diverts 1.2 million pounds of waste from landfills every day. In addition, plants have found new ways to reduce or reuse the waste they generate.

The Composite Panel Association even has an Environmentally Preferable Product (EPP) designation it gives to materials made from 100 percent recycled or recovered fiber content. EPP products must also be made in a way where product emissions meet or exceed standards set by the American National Standards Institute.

For more information, visit www.pbmdf.com.