

# officeinsight™ 6.18.07



## Cited

*“Architects,” [Elizabeth] Diller said – by which she meant “normal” architects – “will say, ‘We need a conference room,’ so they know it has to have a big table, and some chairs, and they’ll start looking at materials. We would start talking about power relationships.”*

*When I asked her whether they had subjected the conference room in their own studio to a similar analysis, Diller grinned. “Of course not,” she said. “We just needed a big table and some chairs.”*

**Justin Davidson on Elizabeth Diller (New Yorker, 5/14/07)**

## NeoCon 2007: An Overview

**NeoCon World’s Trade Fair**, at 39 years, has become our annual celebration of workplace design and furnishings. This year’s show had a record 500 companies exhibiting on the 7th and 8th floors. 425 products were entered into **The Best of NeoCon** competition, attendee pre-registration was up nearly 17%, and seminar registration was at a record level as well.



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## Chris Kennedy Remarks at BIFMA NeoCon Annual Breakfast

Over the last 38 years, NeoCon has evolved just as our thinking about it has changed. In the beginning in the late 1960’s, it was a show designed for manufacturers to reach out to a dealer base that could sell, install and service their product across the country. Over the years, the target audience has evolved. As designers and specifiers became more important, they were invited to NeoCon. In the late 80’s the architectural firms recognized that their interiors practice was a way to keep the firm busy during lean years in construction. They gobbled up the great interior design practices, and so we began to reach out to architects too.

*Full Story, page 15*

## Contract Magazine’s Best of NeoCon 2007: Gold Award Winners



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## Christopher Kennedy Remarks

### BIFMA NeoCon Annual Breakfast

June 13, 2007

This year's NeoCon is a record in every respect. There are more temporary exhibitors than ever before with a record 500 companies exhibiting on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors. Over 60 showrooms underwent major renovations. 425 products were entered into The Best of NeoCon competition. As a result of all of this, attendee pre-registration was up nearly 17% and registration for seminars – where many were sold out - was at a record level as well.

Over the last 38 years, NeoCon has evolved just as our thinking about it has changed. In the beginning in the late 1960's, it was a show designed for manufacturers to reach out to a dealer base that could sell, install and service their product across the country. Over the years, the target audience has evolved. As designers and specifiers became more important, they were invited to NeoCon. In the late 80's the architectural firms recognized that their interiors practice was a way to keep the firm busy during lean years in construction. They gobbled up the great interior design practices, and so we began to reach out to architects too.

When our own Mel Schlitt started IFMA, he created a profession and careers for people who had been building our nation's offices. These professional facility managers became our critical target audience in the 90's. Recently, with the reinvigoration of an entrepreneurial



Christopher Kennedy

American economy, we began to focus on business owners and end users as well.

Just as the show has evolved, so has our thinking. In the beginning, NeoCon was about selling product and that is still our guiding light. When I started at the Mart 20 years ago, one showroom manager told me that he just needed to move boxes. In those years, it was all about lead generation and new account development. Later, our thinking became more sophisticated. We began to see NeoCon as a place to legitimize buying decisions.

At NeoCon we could show business owners they were not simply buying office furniture but instead they were investing in their future. We wanted to help people understand that the contract industry can help companies create branded environments which ultimately help these companies create a competitive advantage in their competition for human capital.

We have seen the modern office evolve from a place of oppressive efficiency into a branded environment which acts to attract and retain employees, putting these knowledge workers at the forefront of corporate decision-making.

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***The contract industry's design leadership contributes to our success as a society because you help form our open outlook and shape our innovative culture.***

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Today I see NeoCon in a wholly different light than I used to. I see great design and it resonates with me in a way that it never has before. I see your products shaping the soul of our society and providing us a context in which to face our future. Our society is different than many

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other countries around the world. It is different than kingdoms, or kleptocracies, or socialist societies, or monarchies.

It is different because our society is a meritocracy. It is a place where what you do is more important than who your grandparents were. It is a place where your creativity and drive is more important than the clubs you join. It is a place where success comes from hard work and not from inherited stature. It is a place where your social status is defined not by what you have taken from the city but from what you have given back to the community.

As a cutting edge design show, NeoCon has a tremendous capacity to help reinforce this sense of meritocracy. This show and your design can contribute to our entrepreneurial civic outlook. We have seen great design introduced at NeoCon meant to tease out the imagination of employees and improve the lives of people all over the world. A coun-

try that embraces cutting edge design and innovative products, embraces new ideas. A country which embraces new ideas, embraces its future.

NeoCon represents a society that is always on the leading edge, always forward-looking and always contemporary. I am convinced that a society that is willing to embrace cutting edge design is more likely to embrace change and new concepts in the future, than is a society that is mired in the stilted traditions of the past. Cutting edge design encourages the acceptance of new ideas and indeed new approaches to traditional challenges.

The contract industry's design leadership contributes to our success as a society because you help form our open outlook and shape our innovative culture. A country which embraces cutting edge design will foster a whole new self-sustaining industry of entrepreneurs, who feed off new ideas and innovative products. New products fuel new jobs, and new jobs fuel everything else from

an expanding tax base to new homes to urban renaissance—but they all start with new product ideas and that demands an openness to great contemporary thinking.

We have seen great design in your showrooms meant to support the creativity of an innovation-driven economy. NeoCon has the potential to be a transforming event for everyone who works in offices you create. These environments ensure that our business leaders will continue to embrace new ideas, welcome fresh concepts, and fear no change.

A people who embrace cutting edge design, embrace new ideas. A people who embrace new ideas, embrace their future.

Thank you all for designing our work places, thank you for providing context to our lives, thank you for forming our entrepreneurial outlook and thank for your shaping our future.

Thank you. ▲



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Hear Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at NeoCon Express