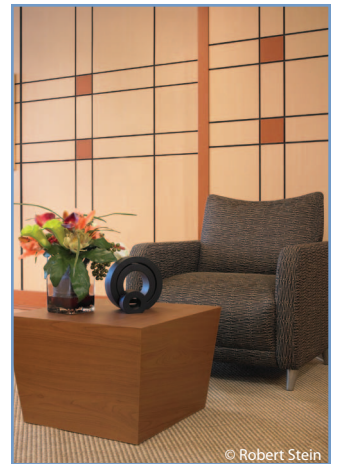
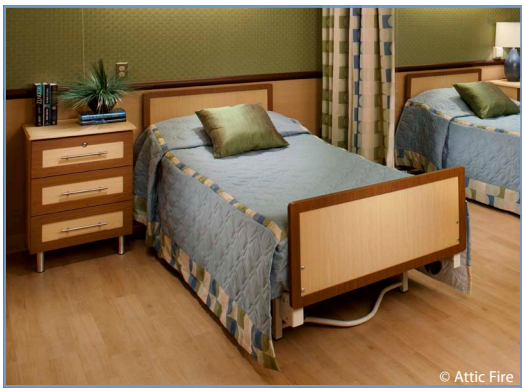
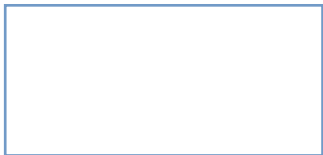


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TOP 10 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING NEW FURNITURE FOR SENIOR LIVING

If you're reading this, it's for one of 5 reasons:

- Your furniture products, be they seating, tables or casegoods are broken and beyond salvaging (for which you may have been cited), or are perpetually out of service, awaiting 'free time' to be restored, repaired or re-finished;
- Your furniture purchases have not held up, and have not remained attractive for as long as you had expected them to, adding increasing maintenance costs to your bottom line.
- You want to increase revenues and enhance your reputation, especially when up against a competitor's new build or recently renovated facility. Having attractive common areas (such as dining and lounge/ lobby) and residence rooms can significantly affect your census as families draw conclusions on the quality of care based on first impressions of your facility;
- You've had liability issues, and possibly been sued, typically as a result of joint failure in seating.
- You have a new build, and require furniture to be delivered that will allow you to open. You're doing your research in order to give yourself the best return on investment possible;

While there are many items to consider when making furniture purchases for a senior living facility, Kwalu, a leading provider of furniture within this market, provides the following suggestions for making the best decisions for your community and your bottom line:



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Choose Furniture With The Longest Product Lifecycle

Actual costs of any products need to factor not only in initial/up front costs, but also increasing maintenance costs (both labor and materials); the amount of factored-in excess due to failures or break-ages; the length of time the product is in service before it needs to be replaced, and shipping costs for replacement furniture. Check on the replacement cycle of furniture in your current facilities, and then compare it with the products you are currently considering purchasing. If they are fundamentally the same product, you can expect slightly higher expenditure going forward, as your replacement costs will increase over time due to inflation, increase in material costs, shipping and handling etc.

Try to find products that can document an improved ROI. Kwalu's Virtually Indestructible™ products look as new in year ten as they did on day one. Furniture should be built to last, so that it doesn't fail as result of regular, sustained normal use. Even better if it withstands the daily challenges in senior facilities: wheelchairs, Geri chairs, monitor carts, etc. Offsetting constant furniture replacement costs puts dollars back into your highest priority line item: high quality staff and exemplary resident care.

Select Furniture That Significantly Decreases Maintenance Costs

Find a product that is easy to maintain. Look for seating, tables and casegoods that can be easily cleaned and repaired in seconds with steel wool, rather than items that require stripping, staining, varnishing and numerous labor hours to maintain their visual appeal. Ensure that the products you purchase are built to exacting engineering and manufacturing standards, preferably with patented construction that will virtually eliminate your liability due to injury from furniture product failures. This will also decrease labor costs as you will no longer be paying to keep furniture serviceable and in use.

Spills of all kinds are common in senior healthcare environments. Stain resistant, removable fabrics and cleanouts make items easier to clean and maintain. Pair Kwalu's patented, non-toxic, high-impact, scuff-, scratch- and water-resistant finish with high-performance fabrics (some of which have antimicrobial treatments and/or are for products that are bleach-cleanable) for the ultimate in easy maintenance and minimal-fuss housekeeping.

Focus On Furniture That Best Supports Infection Control Protocols

Infection control protocols are critical in caring for your residents. Find furniture that will support your efforts in limiting healthcare-associated infections, by being antimicrobial, water-resistant and easy to clean. Products need to be tolerant of the harshest cleaning requirements and substances without damaging the finish. Also, look for furniture manufactured from material that will not split, swell, crack or chip as a result of normal usage. Lastly, look for furniture with limited grooves, nooks and crannies where debris and spill-related soil can lodge without being easily disinfected/cleaned.

Carefully Evaluate The Warranty: Both Scope and Length

Not all warranties are created equal. The warranty should be for a substantial period of time: at least a decade, cover both construction and finish (not only manufacturer's defect as is typical) and not be pro-rated. Normal usage of the product should not void the warranty! Search the furniture world and it becomes apparent that ensuring customer satisfaction and product integrity just doesn't happen- especially from both manufacturing and finishing perspectives. Kwalu products are backed by the industry's only 10-year, performance-based, warranty on both construction and finish, making them ideally suited for any environment.

Pay Attention To Lead Times and Installation Services

Look for a company that manufactures in North America. This should ensure that lead times are within 4-6 weeks, as opposed to the 12-16 weeks for manufacturers/ suppliers who have to ship their imports from overseas. Some companies with sufficient manufacturing capacity may even be able to deliver within 2-3 weeks, resolving issues when you have incurred citations for existing furniture.

Some companies offer 'turn-key' services, with a national network of installers and on-site technicians to ensure that the removal of existing furnishings and the installation of new products goes off without a hitch. If you do not have sufficient staff to handle a large delivery and installation, this should be a serious consideration. The dollars spent on installation services are correlated with a significant decrease in time, effort and inconvenience to staff and residents.

Consider Overall Style: Product Variety For All Areas Of Your Community

Traditional, transitional or contemporary? Select furniture and components to reflect one of these themes throughout your facility. The furniture company should offer a complementary range of designs, styles and finishes across their product lines, so that you can have a cohesive design story from your entrance and lobby, through common areas such lounge, dining and activity rooms, to resident rooms. The design of the furniture should ultimately reflect the spirit or ethos of your facility.

Aesthetic considerations will be the major contributing factor to potential residents' and their families' first impressions. It will also influence ongoing satisfaction with existing staff, residents and their families. Currently, evidence-based design has demonstrated that homelike furnishings and style offer the most soothing environments, decreasing the need for certain medications, helping residents remain calm and providing a general sense of wellbeing for both staff and residents.

Check to see if the company you've selected offers other solutions that extend beyond furniture, such as wall protection and handrails, to ensure that your facility maintains optimal appearance and performance with minimal effort.

Take Heed Of The Company's Reputation and History

Look for manufacturers that specialize in your market segment, as they will be intimately conversant with your specific concerns and limitations. Find a company with a strong track record within the industry. Check references - don't be afraid to ask for key clients. If the company offers a substantial warranty, check to see when it was established and how many years it has been in operation. Ask the manufacturers for local and current customer references. They should be able to provide you with any testing certificates you require. Look for companies that put their money where their mouths are - i.e. support your industry through tradeshow, affiliations, memberships in industry groups and organizations etc. Ask about industry awards for exemplary design and outstanding service.

Look For Products That Are Specifically Designed With Your Daily Challenges In Mind

One size definitely does not fit all. Pay attention to the company's specific focus. Select products designed specifically for long-term care and commercial applications that are comfortable and appropriate for your environment. Manufacturers who specialize in furniture for the senior living market will ensure that seating has wide arm/hand grips that aid with ingress and egress. The depth of the chair, sofa or loveseat will be adequate and the foam will be firm to prevent the indignity of sprawling backwards. The seating will be scaled appropriately for the elderly. The edges of all exposed areas in both seating and casegoods should be radiused, to prevent bruising and cutting fragile, elderly skin.

Find A Company That Offers Superior Design Support Through Custom Products

Know that the label of 'custom' need not be cost-prohibitive. Sometimes floor space might require a custom product. Regulations with regard to storage space for residents are constantly changing. Especially with renovations of older buildings, providing adequate storage for residents can be a challenge. Look for companies with custom capabilities that can design products to fulfill your specific needs in regard to dimensions, space utilization, custom color matching, or integrating to match existing décor. There's nothing worse than discovering that your furniture company is a "one trick wonder", with no other products to coordinate with the rest of your facility.

Green Can Be Good And We're Not Talking Color

There are many affordable green options available today. Again, pay attention to the product lifecycle. Check for products that don't release VOCs and can contribute to LEED points via substantial recycled content, manufacturing processes, green fabrics and more. Internal air quality and VOCs have a significant impact on those with decreased immune systems and compromised respiratory capacities – common in elderly residents. Look for companies that use certified wood products in their manufacturing and utilize reusable or post-recycled content whenever possible.



Bearing these suggestions and considerations in mind should assist you in making the necessary decisions that will help avoid liabilities, increase revenues, decrease labor costs and improve your return on investment.

Good luck!

