

Innovation

Steelcase Unveils Limited-Edition SILQ Chairs for TED

A TED Talk helped spark SILQ — a breakthrough in office seating design. Now, Steelcase unveils limited-edition TED-inspired chairs.



TED 2018 ignited our passions to create, invent and disrupt. Smart, edgy, exceptional speakers told us how they made the impossible, possible or how they built something entirely new. TED attendees seek to be inspired. This year, James Ludwig, Steelcase global vice president of design & engineering, returned to TED with an invention sparked, in part, by a TED Talk he took in as an attendee years ago.

In addition to hearing amazing stories, this year's TED attendees had the opportunity to sit in [SILQ](#), a breakthrough in office seating design produced by Ludwig's team. SILQ removes the machinery found in so many [office chairs](#) and replaces it with a new material composition and patent-pending process. SILQ is more organism than machine. Its material, shape and construction allow it to respond to the inputs people give it. Its unique sit is a match for the way people work today, moving from room to room depending on their task.

We're excited to be at [#TED2018](#) this week sharing our latest innovation, the [#SILQchair](#). A TED Talk helped inspire SILQ's design – learn why: <https://t.co/XCWaKWXUWW> pic.twitter.com/O3ZW7HmREV

— Steelcase (@Steelcase) [April 12, 2018](#)

“Breakthrough innovation always seems easy after it's done,” said [Ludwig](#). But, making something so simple is difficult. It requires identifying the right problem, the right people and the right context. “Innovation is often a mash up of experiences we've had and things we've seen combined in new ways. SILQ is no different.”

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For Ludwig, TED was a great influence and inspiration. He saw Aimee Mullins' [TED Talk](#) “It's Not Fair Having 12 Pairs of Legs.” The Paralympic athlete and advocate's prosthetic legs got him thinking about how something like carbon fiber can be thin yet strong, durable yet flexible. This was one of the elements that helped lead to SILQ.

The theme for TED 2018 was “The Age of Amazement.” For Ludwig, his small, innovative design and engineering team amazed him when they solved the problem of the simple system. The only adjustment for SILQ is height. How it's made, shaped and constructed does the rest. Not only did the team create it using carbon fiber, they also created a new process using a material composition that's both less expensive than carbon fiber and a game-changer for future product development.

To celebrate “The Age of Amazement” at TED 2018, Ludwig curated five limited-edition TED-inspired chairs which he will give away to attendees. Those attending TED this year were asked to share their [#AmazementIn5Words](#) on Twitter and Instagram. The sculpting and tailoring of SILQ makes it the [perfect canvas](#) for designers to express their unique vision. For TED, Ludwig drew upon powerful graphic gestures, a nod to robotics and the red and black synonymous with the famous brand.

“I've been coming to TED for years,” says Ludwig. “I'm never surprised, in the sense that I'm always surprised.” This year, he found psychologist [Steven Pinker's TED Talk](#) especially impactful. Pinker used data to show that there's much cause for optimism in the world today. When Pinker compares today's data to that from 30 years ago, humanity is safer, happier and more peaceful. It's validation of an optimistic point of view on the future.

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