

# When the Partnership Fits

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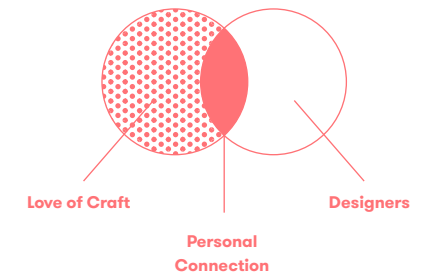
—Jay Chapman, Vice President  
of Product Development at Studio TK

Imagine two expert upholsterers. One lives in America and the other in the Netherlands. Their heads are bent over the same challenging project. They swap hard-earned trade secrets, both fully in the thrall of creation. That’s the utopia Jay Chapman, Vice President of Product Development at Studio TK, describes when building a partnership with a new furniture brand. It’s a collaboration that’s played out since the founding of Studio TK, first with B&B Italia and soon followed by Alki and Artifort. But more than just establishing a manufacturing agreement, Jay says that it’s the human connection that really makes a successful partnership.

Nowhere is this more evident than with Studio TK’s partnership with Artifort and its most recent collaboration on the F500 Series by designer Geoffrey Harcourt. For Jay, to understand how two companies fit you need to look beyond furniture design. Often, it’s a matter of understanding the company you’re working with, and in particular, its culture – what motivates them, how they approach problem-solving, or how they live out their values at work.

Finding common purpose among two brands with two distinct cultures is ultimately what lies at the heart of a fruitful collaboration. Jay explains it’s a lot like a marriage: you need patience to put the work in and to build trust. “Artifort was truly caring, which made them extremely excited to explain, almost over-explain, their process. Everybody was invested in the product and understood the importance.”

At the core of the partnership is a shared affinity and love for their craft. In many ways, the design is just a by-product of a bigger story rooted in a common humanity. “It’s amazing the amount of personal connection—that has nothing to do with product—that arises from these partnerships,” Jay explains. “People across the world are entrusting their creation with you. Even if they’re doing it old school or differently than you, you still do it that way. It’s a sign of integrity and mutual respect. It’s moving, honestly.”



This shared purpose is what empowered Studio TK and Artifort to embark on a journey bringing the F500 Series stateside. Over the span of 14 months, the two companies worked tirelessly so Studio TK could replicate the lounge chair in its own facility. Regular phone calls, emails, and flights to each other’s workshops ensured that every last detail was built to specification.

“So many things had to be hashed out,” Jay explains. “Inventory of pieces and components, the price point, the space required. We took so much information from their system and put it into ours, all the while making sure we didn’t miss anything. We talked endlessly about what was and wasn’t working. The product needed to look exactly the same so that a buyer couldn’t tell where it was manufactured.”

More than just a transfer of knowledge around a single product, Jay relays that you get to learn something new about your craft that will shape you for years to come. “We would be crazy not to apply the knowledge gained from a partnership to a new product. It’s an invaluable experience.” And it’s an experience that extends in both directions. Through the exchange, partners have discovered new ways of producing their own products based on a technique they picked up while observing at Studio TK’s facilities.

As with any partnership, there is always a mutually beneficial goal for each party. On the surface, one company gets to introduce a new offering to its customers, while the other gains access to a new market to sell its product. But as Studio TK and its partners have learned throughout this process, a true partnership is so much more than external rewards. It’s a community builder, a cultural bridge, and a pathway towards personal and professional growth. Or as Jay summarizes, “It’s the relationship. That, to me, is the most amazing thing that we’ve achieved with these partnerships.”