

Herman Miller to Debut 'Cube Cooler'

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By Reuters , [eWEEK](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Office furniture maker Herman Miller Inc. wants to let cooler heads prevail when it comes to the often-heated issue of how hot or cold offices should be.

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Herman Miller is launching a \$300 desktop heating and cooling device that it hopes will become as much a part of office life as the desks, chairs and other office wares it has long been known for.

The company is set to unveil the "C2" this weekend in Chicago for NeoCon, the office furniture industry trade show.

At 2.5 pounds (1.1 kg) and 10 inches high, it looks like a small humidifier. In company tests, starting with a surrounding air temperature of 72 degrees, the C2 raised the temperature within six inches by 40 degrees, and was able to cool it by eight degrees, company spokesman Wayne Baxter said.

It could open doors for Herman Miller with retailers that would not otherwise stock its products, said Robyn Hofmeyer, who manages the company's accessory collection, including C2.

The company expects the C2 to be profitable in its first year, and aims to produce at least 10,000 in that period. It is part of a strategy to generate revenue from customers who, for example, aren't buying a full desk or cubicle, Baxter said.

"They're trying to focus on the entire working environment, whether it's at an individual desk or a group outside the office," said Sabrina Carollo of Ariel Capital, which owns Herman Miller shares. "Any complementary product makes sense."

About 80 percent of people are comfortable in air that is between 69 and 73 degrees, said Donald Young, spokesman for Houston-based International Facility Management Association.

But surveys of his members reveal "too hot" and "too cold" as employees' top two complaints, and a C2 is cheaper than moving a whole team because of one unhappy worker, he noted.

"(Maybe) something like this could bring that person into the comfort zone," he said. "It's light, it's portable. I'm not aware of any devices quite like this one."

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The C2's environmental benefits are another selling point, said Stan Guffey, co-owner of Nashville, Tennessee's [highbrowfurniture.com](#), the only retailer taking preorders for the product.

"Green is hot," Guffey said. The C2 had been up on his Web site three days at most when he started receiving preorders, although he would not say how many.

The C2 is 41 percent recyclable, and businesses can count it toward environmental certification using the points-based LEED system, Herman Miller spokesman Bruce Buursma said. It also uses 90 percent less energy than a typical space heater, Baxter said.

Guffey noticed the cord in his C2 prototype loosened too easily, which could cause it to shut down. But the company caught the problem and fixed it in its next prototype, Baxter said.