The modern workplace is continually evolving to meet the changing needs of people, technology, and tasks. Private offices are disappearing. Individual workspaces are shrinking. Panel heights are lowering. And shared, collaborative spaces and open work environments are quickly becoming the new standard. All of these changes have increased the visual impact seating has within any given space.

In addition, chairs are being asked to do more, in more places. As companies recognize the benefits of collaboration, they are looking for chairs that offer both flexibility and comfort for a variety of tasks. These chairs must accommodate many postures, from focused, heads-down work to active meetings. And chairs should create a visual aesthetic that works in various settings throughout the open floorplan, from formal conference rooms to playful brainstorm areas.

As companies search for the perfect seating solution, it’s easy to find options that offer a beautiful aesthetic appropriate for an open plan. But these stylish chairs don’t always provide the comfort or flexibility necessary for active, collaborative work. Or it’s easy to find comfortable and adaptable seating options, but these hardworking chairs don’t often deliver the versatile design aesthetic required in an open plan.

It’s challenging to find one chair that can meet all the requirements of today’s office spaces, including a beautiful aesthetic, adaptable performance, and design versatility.

Until now.
Bringing Clarity to the collaborative office environment.

With the goal of creating a seating solution that would deliver all of the beauty, performance, and versatility needed in today’s modern workspaces, Allsteel identified the perfect partner. BMW Group DesignworksUSA is one of the only design firms to specialize in automotive, transportation, and consumer products, providing a 360-degree view of the influences and trends shaping the consumers’ world. It’s no surprise that it was named the No. 1 Most Innovative Company in Design in 2010 by Fast Company magazine.

“Furniture is one of the products that designers are passionate about, so we all wanted to be part of it,” explained Patrick McEneany, Creative Director/Product Design, BMW Group DesignworksUSA. “And we were impressed to see how Allsteel keyed into the way people work today.”

The partnership between Allsteel and BMW Group DesignworksUSA was grounded in collaboration and research. The team asked architects, designers, and endusers throughout the process for feedback, from initial concepts to the refinement of details. In addition to collaborative workshops, the team was involved in multi-city testing and met with a variety of companies who helped influence the design.

“In terms of the research process, Allsteel was very thorough,” said Hector Santos, Project Manager, BMW Group DesignworksUSA. “There were no holes in the project, no room for individual opinions, so we could trust the outcome. It wasn’t about one person because it went through the proper thinking.”

A thoughtful process shared by both Allsteel and BMW Group DesignworksUSA defined that approach. The process includes strict attention to the importance of design in creating an experience, a high level of detail, and an understanding of how people use products.

“What gives this product a BMW Group influence isn’t necessarily a formal gesture,” said Johannes Lampela, Senior Designer, BMW Group DesignworksUSA. “It’s how we followed the development process. That process was the influence.”

The team pushed for the final design to be as lean as possible, following a “design of reduction” philosophy that would preserve only the essential elements of function and form.

“The natural inclination for some designers is to add more features,” said McEneany. “Our team’s design of reduction philosophy wasn’t just about limiting parts. It was part of our rigorous enthusiasm for simple design and simple form.”
Key design drivers focused the team as they worked to create a new seating solution:

- Simple - professional, modern, approachable
- Intuitive - easy to use, easy to understand
- Honest - clean lines and profiles, authentic materials
- Active - low back for over-the-shoulder conversation, open arms for multiple postures

“With those key design drivers, we were able to take a very wide, broad view and direction,” said Bianca Fleischer, Senior Industrial Designer, BMW Group DesignworksUSA. “We explored a multitude of designs to find new ways to use seating as well as new technical solutions. With the research, we had a clear understanding of usability, simplicity, operation, and versatility.”

**Introducing a chair designed to create an experience.**

There are multiple ways that people experience a product, and the BMW Group DesignworksUSA design philosophy evaluates them with three unique “reads.” The team insisted that Clarity was superior in all three ways users can experience the chair:

- First Read: First impression. Size, shape, and proportion.
- Third Read: Sitting and using the chair. Details and finish, touchpoints, and adjustments.

The first experience happens when you see the clean, balanced, and honest design and shape of the Clarity task, guest and lounge chairs, and how their proportions seamlessly fit within the workspace as well as the surrounding environment. Clarity’s streamlined arms, low back, and simplified shape give it a unique visual interest that’s current and inviting, yet not distracting.

“The design shows restraint in office furniture. So it has a timeless look that has a calming effect on a space because even when there are several chairs around and not everything is in order, the space doesn’t feel busy,” said McEneany.

Clarity’s lounge chair option offers a wider proportion that signifies a less formal use or environment. And Clarity chairs without arms change the impression to a more casual, open feeling.
The second experience occurs upon closer inspection of the details of the chair’s components and craftsmanship. The chair’s parts are constructed of clever materials that enable increased flexibility.

The durable and recyclable aluminum frame and base are available in several finishes, and mesh is available in eight colors. These options transform the personality of the chair and allow designs that blend in or stand out, depending on the company culture or “attitude” of the space.

It also becomes apparent that the mesh seat and back require no structural support or cross brace, which keeps the design pure and modern. And there’s just one simple adjustment lever visible for raising or lowering the height of the chair.

In addition to creating a pure aesthetic, the reduction of parts results in a lightweight chair, making it easy to move and repurpose Clarity throughout the office floorplan.

The final experience: the sit. Can a chair this stylish and streamlined be comfortable? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. Clarity is comfortable on the first use, with fewer adjustments.

The hidden-motion mechanism, embedded out of sight within the frame, automatically adjusts to the user’s weight and leaning position. The mesh seat and back provide a simplified sit, offering instant comfort and support that reacts to multiple postures and is sensitive to all body sizes.

“You don’t have to fuss with it,” said Fleischer. “You can take multiple postures. You can lean over the shoulder or turn around easily, so you can communicate and work with others around you, not just in front of you. You can side sit. Turn around. Use the back. It adjusts to you.”

The open arm style allows more active sitting without interference, while armless chairs encourage multiple postures, supporting the collaborative style of team areas.

**Clarity. It goes with everything. It goes with everyone. It goes everywhere.**

Allsteel Clarity puts into focus everything that’s required in today’s modern offices. A clean, timeless design. Intuitive, adaptable comfort. And the design versatility to adapt to any space, as well as any type of work that happens. From focused deskwork to active collaboration to engaged lounging.
“Clarity is the essence of a chair, because it is able to move with the user through all types of environments, and at the same time cater to all types of users,” said Fleischer.

Because the form and the function are simplified, Clarity is as much at home in a private office as it is in a collaborative workspace. It works in a formal conference room as well as a casual lounge area. It’s one chair that transcends the entire floorplan. The one chair that is always a reflection of the space it’s in and the people who use it.

“What’s interesting about Clarity is how it looks in different environments. It takes on a new appearance as you change the context,” said Lampela. “For final use, it really depends on the space it’s in because it adapts to so many types of environments and uses.”