



# BoF

The Business of Furniture  
Sunday, May 31, 2026

## HIGHLIGHTS

**14** **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT:** *Corva: The New Foundation of the Modern Workspace*

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1994 - To keep up with growth and the need for more space, LightCorp builds a 100,000-sq.-ft. home for itself on the south side of Grand Haven.

## Built on People: LightCorp Celebrates 40 Years

AS LIGHTCORP REFLECTS OVER FOUR DECADES IN BUSINESS, IT REMAINS GROUNDED IN THE PEOPLE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND COMMUNITY THAT HAVE SHAPED ITS JOURNEY.

As LightCorp prepares to celebrate its 40th anniversary, President Marc Langeland finds it hard not to marvel at how much day-to-day business operations have changed since 1986. Langeland, who will mark 37 years with the company this year, recalls:

“In those early days, purchase orders were created on typewriters and sent via postal mail. The fax machine was just becoming commonplace. There were no CAD drawings yet- everything was done by hand. Data was stored on floppy disks and taken from computer to computer.”



Langeland

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Light Corporation began with just one customer, Westinghouse Furniture (who would later become industry legend Knoll), one task light, and a handful of employees working from the back corner of Shape Corporation's new finishing factory in Grand Haven, Michigan. Shape Corp, originally Light Corporation's parent company, shares a common heritage through its founding by the Verplank family.

What started as a single solution eventually expanded through decades of development, capability-building, and acquisition, transforming LightCorp into a multi-category workplace solutions manufacturer serving customers across North America.

Yet despite four decades of change, the company's vision has remained steadfast: to provide opportunities for people to thrive by enhancing the lives of generations of workers, their families, and the community.



“Our culture has always been an important part of our company, and we continue to work hard on it,” said Langeland. “We want our associates’ lives to be better because they were part of LightCorp.”

Over the years, that commitment has extended beyond competitive wages and benefits. Associates have access to continuing education opportunities, tuition assistance, wellness initiatives, retirement matching, and paid opportunities to give back within the community. But according to Langeland, the company has always aimed to go beyond traditional workplace support.

“We’ve always operated like a family,” he said. “I know that sounds cliché, but we’ve tried to take care of each other like family, too. Whether someone is navigating a health crisis, a family emergency, or a difficult season of life, we’ve worked to provide flexibility, support, and resources when people need them most.”

The result is a workplace where employees often choose to build long-term careers. LightCorp’s average tenure consistently exceeds thirteen years, and in 2025, more than 58 percent of associates had been with the

company for a decade or longer. In many cases, those careers span generations. 26 percent of current associates either work alongside or have previously worked alongside a parent, child, sibling, or spouse at the company.

In recognition of the milestone, LightCorp plans to celebrate with a picnic this summer, honoring the associates, past and present, families, and relationships that have shaped the company throughout its 40-year history.

That mindset of caring for others extends beyond LightCorp’s walls and into the broader West Michigan community. Giving back has long been woven into the company’s culture — a philosophy influenced heavily by Shape Corporation founders, Gary and Midge Verplank’s belief that businesses have a responsibility to strengthen the communities around them.

“Both my dad and uncle felt that businesses exist to better the communities in which they operate,” adds Kyle Verplank, LightCorp’s Executive Chairman. “They were the 4th generation of our family to work and live in the Tri-Cities and realized from an early age that healthy communities and thriving businesses are codependent. The success of a company is driven by the people who operate it and the



6/24/86 First shipment of lights to West.

1986 - LightCorp starts with one customer, Westinghouse Furniture (which later becomes Knoll), one product, and 5 associates in a corner of a Shape Corp factory in Grand Haven, Michigan.



2025 Flag Planting Memorial Day Volunteering - Cammie Sees

communities they come from, so it has always been about giving back to the people and communities that helped create that success. It's a mutually beneficial relationship, and it's something we never take for granted. Our family continues to lead the company guided by this same philosophy."



2025 Volunteering for Muskegon YMCA

At LightCorp, that philosophy is reflected in both the company's programs and in associate-led involvement throughout the community. As part of their benefits package, associates receive eight paid hours each year to volunteer with the organization or cause of their choice. The company's longstanding partnership with the United Way of Greater Ottawa County, along with its annual employee toy drives supporting Toys for Tots, has been part of LightCorp's culture for decades.

The company has also invested in helping introduce younger generations to careers in manufacturing and business. Over the years, LightCorp has partnered with Grand Haven High School to participate in career expos and provide students with firsthand exposure to manufacturing-related trades and professions. And throughout many summers, the company has also welcomed high school and college interns interested in engineering, business, and related fields. For many students,



Summer Intern Kendall Berghuis 2025



2000 - LightCorp is awarded the National Small Business of the Year Award from the United States Small Business Administration and wins the Healthy Workplace Award from the Michigan Fitness Foundation - Governor's Council.

those experiences offer an early introduction to the wide range of careers available within West Michigan manufacturing.

When asked what has allowed LightCorp to endure for four decades, Langeland points not to a single product or milestone, but to the people behind the company.

“I think our people care and genuinely want to do the right thing,” he said. “That carries through to our quality, delivery, customer relationships, and reliability. Doing the right thing has always been part of who we are — even when it isn’t the easiest path.”

Over time, that consistency has helped build long-standing relationships with customers, many of whom have partnered with LightCorp for



2013 - The Michigan DEQ recognizes LightCorp with the Neighborhood Environmental Partner Award for their efforts to improve the environment in their local community.

decades. The company's commitment to reliability, responsiveness, and service continues to earn recognition from some of the largest names in the contract furniture industry.

Earlier this year, LightCorp received its sixth Steelcase Premier Supplier Award since 2015. In 2025, MillerKnoll also recognized the company with Gold Supplier status — an honor that reflects the trust and partnerships built over many years of collaboration.

Forty years after its beginnings in the corner of a factory floor, LightCorp continues to evolve alongside the workplace industry it has served for generations. Yet while technologies, products, and workplaces have changed dramatically since 1986, the company believes its guiding principles remain much the same: invest in people, strengthen the community, and strive to do the right thing. **BoF**