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Stand-Up PC Table

Comments on Nov 2003 Draft Drawings from Luke

These comments and slight changes are based on my analysis of the draft drawings that Luke did in November, 2003. He did a good job of capturing my needs, from this document and my explanations to Mary, which she successfully conveyed. These minor changes result from my going over my needs and my measurements again, and studying the drawings carefully.

Mary, I direct the comments at you, as I have only spoken to you. But Luke—thanks for your efforts in designing this piece for me.

[Bracketed notes in blue italics are from after our meeting on Saturday, Feb 21].

Cut-out in front apron for knees: As you and I discussed in December, the big omission is the cut-out needed for knees when I sit at the desk. I think what you proposed, a curved cut-out about 20-24" wide, is reasonable. I recall your sketch as not being a plain circular curve, but a little more varied than that.

[Mary saw an arch from another Pompanoosuc piece and thought it would work. She thinks a 24" gap in the knee well will be good for knees, and that the 2 sides will visually work well with some hand-painted tiles I am considering mounting there.]

Need more dimensions on final drawings: In poring over the drawings in the PDF files that Luke did, I found that there were a few dimensions not marked on them that I would like to see on the final drawings, before sign-off for manufacturing. These include

- ? inside H of the hidden shelves *[she thinks this is 9" but I need to know]*
- ? the depth of the printer shelf in the middle *[she thinks this is 10"]*
- ? the distance the feet are inset from the vertical line that drops down from the top edge *[she thinks this is exactly the same as the overhang, because the leg tapers are on the inside]*
- ? the gap between the outside edges of the hidden shelves and the side aprons *[she does not know]*

[Shouldn't be a problem to get these on the dimensions and x-ray views. Luke made the x-ray view for this piece but does not usually. That's great, since it was VERY helpful for me.]

Clearance of legs from wall moldings: Other than the knee opening, my biggest concern is that if I make the top of the desk flush with the walls, the legs will not clear the moldings on the wall near the floor. They are hard to see in the photo, but I think now, from re-attempts at crudely measuring them, that they are about 1¼ to 1½ ". So, the 1" overhang shown on the drawings (is it 1" on all sides? I assume so) needs to be increased to 1.5", at least on the left side and back. Can it be different on various sides? This is one of the things that is not shown as a dimension on the drawings; can it be?

[No problem. She increased it to 1.5" on all sides.]

Adjustments to H, W of hidden shelves and apron: A couple of issues here. With a cut-out in front apron for my knees, which we talked about being 20-24", this would increase the H gap between the 2 hidden shelves from 16" to 20-24", reducing the shelf width from 18" to the 14-16" range. I think this will be OK, since the depth of the hidden shelves is 20". Also, though I don't see a dimension for the inside height of the hidden shelves, since the apron is 10" I guess it is about 8". I may be able to reduce this 1-2" depending on the actual inside H. The PC's I expect are mostly < 5" though one is about 6.5".

[She estimates the new hidden shelf width to be 14.5" but Luke's new drawing will confirm.

We're leaving the apron at 10" for now, and Luke will confirm the inside dimension.

I also asked about slightly tapered hidden shelves, where the width is a little more at the rear.]

Adjustment to gap in back apron: The x-ray drawing shows that the gap in the back apron is 2.5" high. I think that it would be useful for me to be able to put my hand through this, and to allow more heat to escape from the PC and stuff on the hidden shelves. Can this be made 4.5" or 5" without any problems?

[Yes, increased to 5".]

Adjustment to printer shelf, for printer and printer wire clearance: The main dimensions drawing shows the clearance for a printer to be 11.5". Thinking of how I would use this, I may want to increase this a little. This could be possible from 2 sources: the reduction in the inside height of the hidden shelves, mentioned above, and lowering the printer shelf from 16.38" above the floor to 15.5" above the floor. My original measurements show the top of the outlet being 15.38" above the floor, so I think this would work.

[Changed the 16.38" distance from floor to underside of printer shelf to 15.5".]

In addition, it is not clear if the printer shelf has a gap at the back, between it and the wall; there might be something there because of the top overhang and the leg tapering. If not, I do need some gap there, since I will want to drop power cords from the printer and speaker on that shelf to the outlet below.

[There will be a ½" gap between the back of the printer shelf and the back line of the legs. But I also have a 1.5" distance to the wall because of the overhang, right?]

5 keyholes wire holes, not 3: I would like 5 holes, not 3. One should be centered between the sides, two should be inset 5" from the sides, and the other 2 inset 16" from the sides.

[No problem.]

Mockett wire management: I browsed the mockett.com web site, and liked some of the products they offered. Did Luke have a specific wire management product there he recommended? I recall you saying "no" but I was wondering if he had any experience with the WM6 wire manager for a leg. It seems to be plastic, and I wonder if the double-sided tape would really work. Luke?

[No specific recommendations.]

Additional small under-printer shelf: I've realized I will most likely have 3 separate surge suppressors (see photo on p. 5) that contain outlets that work with the DC power bricks that so many PC accessories use. One of them will be for the printer, sub-woofer, and cable modem that are likely to be on the printer shelf. I would love to get a small simple shelf, about 7" x 10", that I can suspend from under the printer shelf, to put one of the surge suppressors on, to provide easy access to the single ON/OFF switch for me. I would want to use 5" or 6" screws to suspend it, and just need the shelf and the holes pre-drilled to make it easy for me to connect.

[Mary said they normally don't do this—partly because they don't can't guarantee that the free shelf would not warp. I said I would sign a waiver, I don't need a guarantee—it's just that getting such a shelf from you is much easier than me getting it later. I can provide the screws and the "suspension tubes" the screws would go into so that the mounted shelf would be firmly attached with just screws.]

Original Description:

I'd like to get a piece built to fit a particular space in my home office, something to use as a stand-up PC desk/table, with two hidden shelves underneath for the PC and some of the ugly hardware, and a lower shelf for a printer and speaker. I won't stand at the desk all the time—I'll probably get some kind of a bar-height chair that I can use with it as well—but standing at it will be an option for me and my wife, for quick use of the PC. It will replace the metal and plastic PC cart I use now. The new PC will be smaller, and the monitor will be a large LCD one that might even mount on the wall.

I have definite functional needs that the desk/table needs to fulfill (and of course, I want it to be a beautiful piece that is nice to look at by itself –by hiding the PC and some of the equipment under the surface, I hope the table is nice to look at even when in use!). And I know I want it to be made in cherry, with a non-gloss finish. But I am looking for the furniture maker to put his or her design and aesthetic skills to work to propose something; I don't just want a stock piece. My goal is to have a desk that is beautiful to look at while still being a functional home to a full PC environment (hiding the PC box and surge protectors, and having wireless mouse & keyboard, and a wall-mounted LCD, go a long way to help in this, but there will still be a few devices on the desk: 2 speakers, DVD-RW drive, backup drive, video editing box, graphics tablet, scanner, telephone—all hopefully of nice industrial design). This will all replace

the ugly setup I have now (see photo in Figure 1).



Figure 1: the location for the table/desk

Probably I can best describe what I have in mind, in writing, only by breaking it down into its constituent pieces, since I am writing this in my office (and not working directly with you). I think of the table/desk as having 6 parts:

- ? the *surface*
- ? the *apron*—the 4-12" wide board that the *surface* sits on
- ? the *legs*
- ? the *hidden shelves*
- ? the *lower shelf*
- ? the *drawer* (maybe)

So I will give the specs that the piece should meet, part by part. I figure getting this information down will increase the chance that an hour of design thought for my functional requirements will make the difference in getting an end result that works for my needs.

Surface

1. The width should be 60", since the space it fits in is 62" (left wall to right door frame; this "includes" the left floor molding thickness, whatever it is) and I want the table to fill the space.
2. The depth should probably be 24", as the space is 25 ¼" deep (from back wall to the round trim on the left). I like it to be flush against the back wall, or within 1/8" of being so.
3. **I think a 40" height is probably right.** Standing, sitting, my height, my wife's height, etc
4. I want the solidness of a 1½" thickness, and I prefer non-round (especially not bull nose!) edging, either square, slightly rounded (smooth) square edging, or tapered of some sort.
5. I think I'd like 4 or 5 notched slots spaced across the back of the *surface*, to control wires going from accessories on the desk down to the PC underneath. My mind sees notches shaped a little like old-fashioned key holes (to be discussed). I want them in the back, not in the middle, and they will always be open (no plastic gimmicks to fill them).



Apron

6. The height of the apron is mostly an aesthetic decision, but it does need to hide the *hidden shelves* that hold the PC and accessories. I imagine it will be 8-10".
7. The back apron needs to have a gap across the entire length of the piece, probably about 2", because of wiring needs. Wires will come down through the keyhole slots on the surface, through the gap at the top of the apron, and into the equipment on the hidden shelves. **Figure 2: keyhole shape**
8. I would be interested in some kind of decorative accent on the apron: a raised beading of a darker wood, or something the furniture maker does. I am also thinking of getting some artistic ceramic tiles to mount on the front apron (on either side of a drawer, if it makes it into the design); how can this be planned for?
9. A drawer in the center or on the right side might be desirable, if there is room for it given the needs of the *hidden shelves*—but the shelves is more important.

Hidden Shelves


10. Having 2 *hidden shelves* under the *surface* to hide a small PC is one of the central functional design goals for this piece. I am using a smaller PC now, and am looking for a similar PC for this new desk, and I want it to be hidden under the *surface*, out of sight, along with ugly accessories. 
11. However, the shelf has to be accessible, as I need to be able to slide the PC in and attach & detach cables from it while it is on the shelf, by crouching on the floor under the table.
12. I believe the shelf is just a U-shaped piece attached to the underside of the *surface* itself, and perhaps to the *apron* (this needs to be discussed).
13. The largest PC I am considering has dimensions of 17.5"D x 17.6"W x 6.6"H, though my most likely one is 16"W x 17"D x 4.5"H. They all sit flat, like a dictionary. I should probably have the shelf be as high as possible given the overall design constraints of the table and the size of the *apron*, so that higher equipment might fit in if I need it to.
14. I think the orientation that makes sense is to have the front/back of the PC facing to the left/right side of the table (thus the shelf should be about as wide as the PC is deep). And the PC will have to be lifted into place from the left/right side, since the width of the table/desk (60") is where I have the room to maneuver a PC underneath while crouching on the floor.
15. I think the best orientation of the U-shaped *hidden shelves* is for them to extend to go the full length from front to back. If there were one, a width of about 22" might be right; however, with 2, a width of 15" where each is towards each side with space in the middle between them, this might give me more room to put accessories under the *surface* and still be wide enough to hold the depth of the PC.

Figure 3: my dictionary-sized PC

Legs

16. The legs need to have a smaller footprint than the *surface* so that the *surface* can be flush against the wall while the legs miss the wall's moldings. (The styling I want would have this anyhow, but thought I'd mention it.)
17. I would prefer somewhat tapered legs, and do not want round legs.

Lower Shelf

18. The lower shelf is for holding my printer and the sub-woofer speaker, and perhaps another accessory or two.
19. The main issue for me on the lower shelf is that it not get in the way of my feet if I am sitting at the desk; with a *surface* depth of 25", this may be an issue. Maybe a V-shaped shelf, or one only half the depth of the *surface*? I assume the width is the full 60" or thereabouts.
20. My printer is 18"W x 14"D x 8H but could sit on a shelf only 10" deep.
21. The main power outlet is on the center of the back wall. The top of it is 15.8" above the floor. The shelf should probably be just above these, to somewhat hide the outlets but still leave room for the plugs. This could be messy if the height is wrong. Or there could be a little face that hides the outlet in my wall (with a hole through it for cord?).

22. The cable TV line (for broadband internet connection) is on the left wall; the top of it is 14" above floor.

Drawer

23. If there is room for a drawer, given the needs of the *hidden shelves*, I would like one. I think one in the center, with a hidden shelf on either side, might work. The trick is to still have room for me to crouch under and slip a PC onto the shelf—no part of the drawer rails or other mountings can get in the way.

Wire management

24. I'd love to be able to hide most of the wires, but there are a ton of them, and will be more in my new setup. One of the toughest parts is that so many of the accessories for the PC (the speakers, the cable modem, the router, the wireless mouse base station, the printer, the DVD player) all requires converter plug modules, which are bulky and a pain to work with. I currently use two APC Pro-8 surge protectors meant to work with these converter plugs, and they need to hidden too (on the hidden shelf probably, with their own power cord going down a leg). The thick and inflexible cable wires from the left wall are a pain too.



Figure 4: APC Pro8 with converter plug

- The main need is to hide wires going up-and-down on the legs, with a lesser need for holding wires as they cross the width of desk along the back.
25. Any wire management ideas in the desk would be welcome, if the furniture maker builder has seen them work, though I don't want anything too elaborate because of cost.
 26. I have found on the Web (Google image search) brass things called safety cup hooks that I think can be adapted to hold some of my wires. They have to be crudely screwed into the table to work, but I might still need them. Any alternatives?
 27. The keyholes I mention above are simply to prevent wires from being something crushed between table and wall—and permitting wire adjustments to be made even if the table is flush against the back wall.
 28. One choice thought for wire management on the inside of the *apron* or on the *hidden shelves* is sturdy metal (brass or nickel?) clips that can be screwed solidly into the underside of the *surface* and the inside of the *apron*, that allow wires to be held without slipping out—finding the rights ones is the trick. I may even want to install them after I received the table.
 29. If you have ideas on any wire management integrated into the lower shelf or the legs, that would be especially welcome, given the thickness and inflexibility of the cable TV (broadband) cable coming out of the left wall (2 of them).

This is a lot of writing for a small project (but it's in my blood—I write software specifications for a living). But it let's me get the basics down for a furniture craftsman to understand, and then a reasonably short telephone conversation can be used to discuss the problem areas, decision areas, and such.

I hope this makes the design effort more efficient. Please let me know if I am right or wrong on that, as I have other pieces I am thinking about getting done too!

Key Dimensions

The following are the key dimensions I am concerned about:

Description	Measurement	Status	Comment
width x depth	60" x 24"	final	
height	40"	final?	needs to be right height to work at standing up and sitting at bar stool
thickness of surface	1½"		solid
surface overhang	1"	discuss	need more in back?
legs	2" tapered		2-sided taper?
apron height	10"	I need to visualize	to allow room for hidden shelves
height of lower printer shelf		discuss	would like to just hide outlet cover (recess needed?)

Still Needs Discussion

- ? design of hidden shelves
- ? design of printer shelf (shape, recess, thickness, back apron?)9
- ? cable management for back of table, and on rear face of rear legs
- ? possibility for drawer still, with 2 hidden shelves?
- ? apron and decorative tiles, and beading
- ? design and placement of keyholes
- ? safety cup hooks for cable management

