

# Wood vs. Laminate

**The selection of natural wood or laminate components in the workplace is dependent upon several factors. What is the desired aesthetic? How will the office function? And what are the long- and short-term budgetary considerations?**

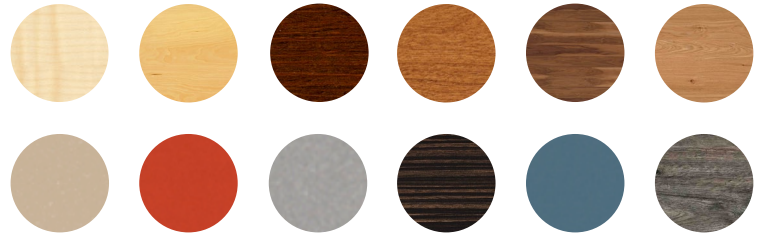
## An Explanation of the Difference

Aesthetically, wood gives the workplace an element of distinction. It projects an air of respectability and success that is hard to achieve with man-made materials. Wood adds warmth to any environment and may be the most “transitional” of the surface mediums. Although it is often associated with traditional settings, wood works well in contemporary spaces, too. When wood surfaces are combined with calm structural lines and simple hardware, the resulting look is modern without being cold.

Laminate, by comparison, has a more relaxed aesthetic. Because it is a man-made material, it offers the option of incorporating cooler tones like grey and white into a space, thereby providing a trendier, if not more contemporary feel to the workplace. Wood-grain laminates blend the best of both worlds. They add warmth and a traditional feel while allowing budgetary restraint. In terms of functionality, either option can make sense. If an office anticipates a high degree of reconfiguration, laminate might be the preferable choice. Laminate components offer pattern consistency, whereas natural wood carries a need for grain alignment. On the other hand, if the office has a tendency to “stay put” or if furniture is to be purchased infrequently, wood veneer may be the preferable choice.

## Best Quality Materials

Both wood and laminate finishes offer a high degree of durability. The nature of that durability, however, differs in form. Laminate’s durability allows it to withstand not only daily use, but also abuse. Because laminate is comprised of resin-permeated papers, bonded together to form a rigid surface material, it has an impressive ability to withstand hard knocks. The downside is that laminate doesn’t allow for repair. By contrast, wood does allow for repair. Although wood’s inherent strength is less than that of laminate, it can be substantially increased through Knoll’s



Wood Veneer finishes (top), laminates (bottom)

	Wood	Laminate
<b>Wood Grain</b>	Variation Cathedrals & Islands	Consistency Linear
<b>Color</b>	Variation	Controlled
<b>Cost</b>	\$\$\$ Low yield/higher cost	\$\$ High yield/lower cost
<b>Aesthetic</b>	Traditional	Contemporary

proprietary finishing process, which renders Knoll veneers impervious to water, food, permanent marker and extreme temperatures. Fully finished, Knoll veneers rival laminate in their durability under normal circumstances and are the standard-bearer for the industry.

## Which is Right for You?

Budgetary considerations make both products sound investment choices. Laminates offer a lower cost up front, but wood veneer’s higher initial cost is offset by its ability to be revitalized over time and thus purchased less often. Additionally, both are well suited for use throughout the entire floor plan, as Knoll’s core palettes of laminate and veneer options are broad enough to meet all aesthetic needs. Whatever your preference, the reasons for choosing either laminate or wood are as unique and noteworthy as a well designed office. Both offer versatility, beauty, durability and distinction.