CASE STUDY / HERMAN MILLER

Caper

Good seating, within reach.

A chair in a shared room has more than one job. It must support the person sitting, then move aside, join a group or stack away. Caper brought sitting and managing space into the same design problem.[S05,S10]

For Herman Miller, Jeff Weber set out to make that everyday chair comfortable, mobile and affordable. His proposition was to find greater performance in familiar materials, shaped and assembled with care.[S01]

“Too much good design seems expensive,” … “I wanted to break that cliché.”

JEFF WEBER / CAPER DESIGN STORY



Herman Miller · Design: Jeff Weber · Introduced 1999[S04]

Sources: S01 Design story · S04 Company timeline · S05 Caper brochure (2023) · S10 Environmental summary (2010)



CASE STUDY / HERMAN MILLER

Questions made physical.

How could a light structure provide meaningful support? The studio archive makes that question tangible. A drawing and a full-size prototype reveal the relationship between the seat, back and frame.





A SEAT THAT CAN GIVE

The drawing separates the suspension seat from the perforated back. The prototype makes that relationship physical, with the seat supported within its own frame. The finished family offered both molded and FLEXNET seats; Herman Miller describes the suspension option as a way to reduce pressure points.[S05]

A BACK TAKING SHAPE

Our Build to Learn process explored details as seemingly small as the perforations in the back. The openings let heat and moisture escape, while the material around them supports the body. Small details matter to the person sitting in the chair, so we give them the same care as the overall form.[S06]

For Jeff's review: confirm each object's date, the question tested, what was learned and the change that followed. The archive does not yet establish the test sequence.

Sources: S05 Caper brochure (2023) · S06 Product sheet (2023)



CASE STUDY / HERMAN MILLER

More work from each part.

Affordability had to be built into the chair. Herman Miller's 2010 account links Caper's economy of materials and components to lower production costs. The finished construction shows how a small number of elements can carry several jobs.[S10]





Frame components from the studio archive.

SUPPORT, AIRFLOW, A PLACE TO GRIP

Injection molding brings the back's contour, perforations and handhold into one component. Its shape and flexibility support sitting; the openings release heat; the handhold helps someone lift and position it. The same part serves the body and the work of managing a room.[S06,S09]

LIGHTNESS THAT DOES USEFUL WORK

The armless molded-seat stacker weighs 9.5 pounds. Standard chairs stack six high on the floor or fifteen on a cart. Those choices connect material economy to an everyday consequence: chairs can be moved individually, stored compactly or transported together.[S07]

Cascade Commercial Products identified its role molding Caper backs in its 2015 report. That documents a production contribution; its role in original development still needs studio confirmation.[S19]

Sources: S06 Product sheet (2023) · S07 Stacking chair details · S09 Technical specifications (Jan 2018) · S10 Environmental summary (2010) · S19 Cascade report (2015)



CASE STUDY / HERMAN MILLER

Made for people in motion.

Sitting is rarely still. We turn toward another person, change position and shift our attention from one task to the next. Caper's multipurpose version accommodates those small changes with swivel, tilt and seat-height adjustment.[S08]



The Caper family: stacking and multipurpose chairs, with stools for higher work surfaces.[S05]

ONE IDEA, DIFFERENT WAYS TO SIT

Different bases and seat heights carry a recognizable design into different settings. A stacker serves a shared table; a multipurpose chair offers adjustment at a desk; stools extend the family to higher work surfaces.[S05,S08]

The connection is between the chair and the person: turning to join a conversation, settling into a working height or leaning back to pause. These small accommodations give Caper's promise of everyday comfort a practical form.[S08]

"There should always be a human benefit associated with whatever it is we're designing."

JEFF WEBER / ON HIS DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Sources: S02 Jeff Weber profile · S05 Caper brochure (2023) · S08 Multipurpose chair details
Images: Studio Weber project archive and supplied Herman Miller product photography. Studio review draft · October 12, 2026.

