



(51) International Patent Classification:

A47B 13/08 (2006.01) A47B 91/00 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/US2024/033627

(22) International Filing Date:

12 June 2024 (12.06.2024)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

63/472,984 14 June 2023 (14.06.2023) US

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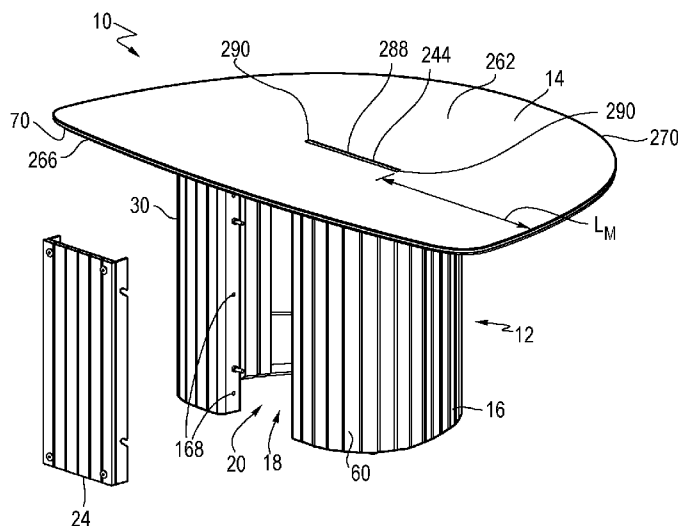
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(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CV, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IQ, IR, IS, IT, JM, JO, JP, KE, KG,

(54) Title: CONFERENCE TABLE AND COMPONENTS AND METHOD FOR THE USE THEREOF

FIG. 1



(57) Abstract: A conference table includes a base and a worksurface supported by the base. The worksurface has a peripheral edge and an aperture having a node and at least three branches extending radially outwardly from the node. The base has a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening and a panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening. One or more electronic components may be coupled to the panel. A cable retention device may be coupled to a utility cable above the worksurface. The cable retention device includes an inlet formed in a peripheral side, a first outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the peripheral side at a location spaced apart from the inlet, and a second outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in a bottom.

KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY,
MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MU, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA,
NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO,
RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, ST, SV, SY, TH,
TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, WS,
ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, CV, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SC, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, ME, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

- *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*
- *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments (Rule 48.2(h))*

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CONFERENCE TABLE AND COMPONENTS AND METHOD FOR THE USE THEREOF

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 63/472,984, filed June 14, 2023 and entitled “Conference Table and Components and Method for the Use Thereof,” the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to a conference table and components, and to methods for the use, assembly and reconfiguration thereof.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Workspace systems are often configured with one or more cameras and/or displays allowing people at remote locations to interface with on-site workers in a workspace. The on-site workers typically gather about a conference table, such that work papers and electronic devices may be easily viewed and accessed while conducting a conference call or video meeting. The conference tables are not often suitably shaped to accommodate the on-site workers in a proper viewing configuration. In addition, technology components, including processors, power sources, data storage devices, modems, video transmission equipment, etc., are either exposed, thereby providing an unsightly aesthetic, or are ensconced in a cabinet or structure, wherein the electronic components are not accessible, for example if adjustments and/or maintenance is required.

[0004] In addition, the on-site workers will often carry and interact with personal smart devices, or electronic mobile devices, including laptop computers, tablets and smart phones. The on-site workers, however, may not carry with them cords or cables allowing them to power the devices and/or to transmit data to and from the devices. Typically, conference tables may be configured with a power or data outlet, but not a cord or cable interface. Even if a cord or cable is provided, for example by an on-site worker, the cord or cable may fall through an opening in the table, or be pulled out of a port. In addition, worksurfaces configured for

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videoconferencing, for example with a relatively wide footprint, may not allow the workers at the periphery to reach or access a centrally located power/data source.

SUMMARY

[0005] The present invention is defined by the following claims, and nothing in this section should be considered to be a limitation on those claims.

[0006] In one aspect, one embodiment of a conference table includes a base and a worksurface supported by the base. The worksurface has a peripheral edge and an aperture having a node and at least three branches extending radially outwardly from the node. Each of the branches has a greatest width, and the node has a width greater than the greatest width of each of the branches. Each of the branches has a proximal end opening into and communicating with the node and a terminal end spaced from the node. Each of the terminal ends is located a distance relative to the peripheral edge of the worksurface permitting a user to access a cable retained at the terminal end, but also discouraging users from inadvertently depositing objects through the aperture. For example, in one embodiment, the terminal ends are located less than or equal to 36 inches from the peripheral edge. In one embodiment, the terminal ends are located at least 6 inches from the peripheral edge.

[0007] In one aspect, one embodiment of the conference table has a base including a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening and a panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening. In one embodiment, the panel is pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall. The panel may include a bottom portion pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall about a horizontal axis. The panel may include an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover, or to the frame, wherein the mounting plate comprises electronic component mounting features. One or more electronic components may be coupled to the mounting features, with a utility cable coupled to the electronic component and extending through the aperture in the worksurface.

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[0008] In another aspect, one embodiment of a cable retention device includes a housing having a bottom, a peripheral side, a top, an inlet formed in the peripheral side, a first outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the peripheral side at a location spaced apart from the inlet, and a second outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the bottom. A utility cable may pass through the second outlet if overlying the aperture, or through the first outlet if not overlying the aperture.

[0009] In another aspect, one embodiment of a conference table includes a base having a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening in the peripheral wall, and a moveable panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening. The panel includes an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover or to the frame, wherein the mounting plate is configured with an electronic component mounting feature. A worksurface includes an upper surface, a bottom surface defining in part the interior space and an aperture communicating between the upper surface and the interior space.

[0010] In yet another aspect, one embodiment of a method of using a conference table includes maintaining a connector portion of a utility cable on an upper surface of a worksurface with a pod fixedly connected to the utility cable, wherein the utility cable extends through an aperture in the worksurface and wherein the pod is larger than the aperture. The method further includes moving the pod relative to the upper surface to position the connector portion and thereby moving the utility cable relative to the aperture, positioning an electronic mobile device on a worksurface, and connecting the electronic mobile device to the utility cable

[0011] The various embodiments of the conference table and cable retention device, and methods for the configuration and use thereof, provide significant advantages over other conference tables, and components used therewith. For example and without limitation, the disclosed components allow for on-site workers to easily power and connect their electronic devices, even when gathered

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around a conference table configured for video conferencing. The utility cables are maintained on the surface of the worksurface, and may not be easily dislodged, or pulled through an aperture in the table. The configuration of the aperture ensures that the cables are accessible to users positioned around the periphery of the worksurface. The conference table also provides quick and easy access to electronic components stored and mounted in an interior space thereof.

[0012] The foregoing paragraphs have been provided by way of general introduction, and are not intended to limit the scope of the following claims. The various preferred embodiments, together with further advantages, will be best understood by reference to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a conference table, with a door shown in an exploded configuration.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a conference table, with a door shown in an exploded view.

[0015] FIG. 3 is an exploded perspective view of the conference table shown in Figure 2.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a top view of the conference table shown in Figure 1.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a top view of the conference table shown in Figure 2.

[0018] FIG. 6 is a bottom perspective view of the conference table shown in Figure 2.

[0019] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the conference table shown in Figure 1.

[0020] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of the conference table shown in Figure 1 with an outer cover portion of a panel in an open position, and a tray in an closed position.

[0021] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of the conference table shown in Figure 1 with a panel in an open position.

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[0022] FIG. 10 is a perspective view of the conference table show in Figure 1 with an outer cover portion of a panel in an open position, and a tray in an exploded position.

[0023] FIG. 11 is a perspective view of the conference table show in Figure 1 with an outer cover and tray in an exploded position.

[0024] FIGS. 12A-C show a panel in a closed position, a panel in an open position and a close-up view of the panel hinge.

[0025] FIG. 13 is an exploded view of a panel.

[0026] FIGS. 14A and B are cut-away views of a conference table with a panel in an open position and a closed position respectively.

[0027] FIG. 15 are perspective views of a conference table with a panel in an open position and a partially exploded position.

[0028] FIG. 16 is a partial perspective view of a worksurface with an aperture and cable retention devices disposed thereon.

[0029] FIG. 17 is a top perspective view of one embodiment of a cable retention device.

[0030] FIG. 18 is a bottom perspective view of the cable retention device shown in Figure 17.

[0031] FIG. 19 is a top perspective view of a first clamping component.

[0032] FIG. 20 is a bottom perspective view of a second clamping component.

[0033] FIG. 21 is a schematic side view of a cable retention device positioned over an aperture.

[0034] FIG. 22 is a view of one embodiment of a cable with a pair of cable retention devices secured thereto.

[0035] FIG. 23 is a view of a cable retained on a conference table by a pair of cable retention devices.

[0036] FIGS. 24A and B are cross-sectional views of a cable retention device coupled to a cable and overlying an aperture and spaced apart from the aperture.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

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[0037] It should be understood that the term "plurality," as used herein, means two or more. The terms "longitudinal" as used herein means of or relating to length or the lengthwise direction 2, for example between the opposite ends of a table. The terms "lateral" and "transverse" as used herein, means situated on, directed toward or running from side to side, and refers to a lateral direction 4 transverse to the longitudinal direction. The term "coupled" means connected to or engaged with whether directly or indirectly, for example with an intervening member, and does not require the engagement to be fixed or permanent, although it may be fixed or permanent (or integral), and includes both mechanical and electrical connection. The terms "first," "second," and so on, as used herein are not meant to be assigned to a particular component so designated, but rather are simply referring to such components in the numerical order as addressed, meaning that a component designated as "first" may later be a "second" such component, depending on the order in which it is referred. For example, a "first" outlet may be later referred to as a "second" outlet depending on the order in which they are referred. It should also be understood that designation of "first" and "second" does not necessarily mean that the two components or values so designated are different, meaning for example a first cable retention device may be the same as a second cable retention device, with each simply being applicable to separate but identical components.

BASE:

[0038] Referring to FIGS. 1-3 and 6, a conference table 10, 110 includes a base 12, 112 and a worksurface 14, 114 supported by the base. The base 12, 112 includes a peripheral wall 16, 116 defining an interior space 18, 118 and an opening 20, or doorway, providing access to the interior space 18, 118. The peripheral wall 16, 116 may have a variety of different shapes in plan view, including a generally gumdrop shape with a flattened (e.g., linear) rear wall 122, defined in part for example by a moveable panel 24 covering the opening 20, a pair of linear side walls 124 forming an acute angle α with the rear wall 122, two curved corners 126 transitioning between one end of each of the side walls 124

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and the rear wall 122 and a curved apex 128 disposed between opposite ends of the side walls 124. The panel 24 is moveable between an open position wherein the interior space 18, 118 is accessible through the opening 20 and a closed position wherein the panel 24 is disposed over the opening 20, 120. The peripheral wall may have other shapes in plan view, including various polygonal, circular or elliptical shapes.

[0039] The base 12, 112, and peripheral wall in particular, includes a frame 30, 130 having top and bottom plates 132, 134 and a plurality of spaced apart stiles 136 extending vertically between the plates 132, 134. The frame 130 may include a plurality of modules 140, 142, 144, each having a top and bottom plate section and two or more stiles 136. For example, linear modules 142 may define in part the linear side walls 124, while curved modules 140, 144 may define the curved corners 126 and apex 128. The modules 140, 142, 144 may be coupled, for example by abutting adjacent stiles 136 and clamping them together with bolts 148. Intermediate ribs 151 may be secured to the stiles 136 at locations vertically spaced between the upper and lower plates 132, 134 to provide additional support for a skirt 60, 160. Floor engaging components 162, such as glides or leveling devices, may be mounted to the bottom of the bottom plate for engagement with the floor.

[0040] The skirt 60, 160, made for example of polyethylene terephthalate (PET), wraps around the frame 30, 130 and is disposed between the upper and lower plates 132, 134. The skirt may 60, 160 be coupled to the stiles 36 with fasteners, including mechanical fasteners such as screws, snaps or ties, or with adhesive. The skirt 60, 160 may include score lines 164, which do not penetrate the entire depth of the panel, but allow the skirt to bend and conform to the shape of the frame. In one embodiment, the skirt 60, 160 is disposed between lip portions of the upper and lower plates 132, 134 extending outwardly from the stiles 136, with ends 166 of the skirt folding inwardly along the sides of the opening 20 and being secured to the stiles defining the perimeter sides of the opening with fasteners 168, with tension in the skirt maintaining the position thereof around the frame. In this embodiment, the skirt 60, 160 may be secured

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only to the end stiles defining the opening 20. When installed, the skirt 60, 160 defines the interior space 18, 118, along with a bottom surface 70, 170 of the worksurface 14, 114.

[0041] Referring to FIGS. 7-15, the panel 24 may be removably secured to the frame 30, 130. In one embodiment, the panel 24 is pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall 16, 116, and the frame in particular, and may include a bottom portion pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall about a horizontal axis 72 with a hinge 74. The panel 24 includes an outer cover 76 having a frame 78 and a skin 80, made for example of the same material as the skirt 60, 160. In one embodiment, the frame 78 includes a base plate 82, a pair of mounting flanges 84 extending from opposite sides of the base plate 82 and a rim 86 extending from a periphery of the base plate in a direction opposite the mounting flanges. The rim 86 defines a recess in which the skin 80 is disposed and mounted. In other embodiments, the rim may be omitted, with the skin 80 being attached to the base plate with fasteners 88, such as screws, bolts or adhesive. The base plate 82 and skin 80 may have an opening 90 formed therein so as to define a handle, which may be gripped by the user to lift and pivot the panel about the axis 72. The opening 90 may be an elongated horizontal slot shaped and sized to receive a user's fingers.

[0042] Each mounting flange 84 includes a pair of longitudinally spaced slots 92, 94. The slots are angled upwardly from a mouth at the edge of the flange toward a top of the flange, for example at an acute angle β . In one embodiment, the bottom slot 92 further includes an elongated portion 96 extending parallel to an edge 98 of the flange. The elongated portion 96 extends vertically upwardly when the panel 24 is in the vertical, closed position as shown in FIG. 12C. The frame 30, 130 includes a pair of laterally extending pivot axles 100 extending inwardly into the opening 20 near the bottom of the base, and defining in part the hinge 74, and a pair of pins 102 extending inwardly into the opening 20 near the top of the base to define a latch. To install the panel, the panel 24 is moved such that the pivot axles 100 are inserted through a mouth 104 of the bottom slots 92 and into the elongated portion 96 of the slots. The panel 24 may then be pivoted about the

axles 100, forming the hinge 74. The panel may be lifted slightly vertically to align a mouth 106 of the top slots 94 with the pins 102, with the axles moving in the bottom slots. Once the top slots 94 are aligned with the pins 102, the panel 24 may be moved vertically downwardly, with the angle (β) and orientation of the slots 92, 94 drawing the panel 24 inwardly to the closed position. In this way, the panel 24 is both removably coupled to the frame 30, 130, meaning the panel may be removed simply by disengaging the pivot axles 100 from the bottom slots through lifting, and is also pivotally connected to the frame, for example by pivoting about the pivot axis 72 and with the weight of the panel 24 maintaining the connection between the panel and frame by way of gravity. It should be understood that the panel 24 may be pivotally connected to the frame with other types of pivots and secured thereto in a closed position, for example with a latch, detent, hook, or other locking device.

[0043] The panel 24 further includes an electronics mounting plate 108 having a base plate 200 and a pair of mounting flanges 202 extending from opposite sides of the base plate. The mounting flanges 202 may overlap with the mounting flanges 84 of the cover. In one embodiment, the mounting flanges 84, 202 may be coupled, for example with fasteners, such that the base plates are spaced apart and provide air circulation therebetween. Alternatively, the mounting flanges 202 may each include upper and lower slots 204 206 having the same shape and being aligned with the slots, such that the mounting plate may be separately moved and removed relative to the base, as shown for example in FIGS. 8 and 9. The slots 204, 206 are formed in the corner of the base plate 200 and mounting flange 202. The base plate 200 is maintained spaced apart from the base plate 82 by way of the slot locations, such that air circulation between the plates is maintained.

[0044] The base plate 200 includes electronic component mounting features 210. The mounting features 210 may be configured as a plurality of openings 212, which may receive fasteners such as screws or bolts, extending through the electronic components 220, or clamps or other components engaging the electronic components. In one embodiment, the plurality of openings 212 define a grid or array 214 of openings, providing limitless numbers of mounting

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configurations. The base plate may include an opening 216, such as a slot, that is aligned with the openings 90 in the cover. The mounting plate 108 may be removably coupled to the cover 76, or removably coupled to the frame 30, 130, meaning different mounting plates, with different electronic component 220 combinations, may be quickly and easily exchanged. The electronic components 220 may include without limitation processors, power sources, data storage devices, modems, video transmission equipment, etc. For example, in one embodiment, the electronic components 220 may include DSP, Mixers & Network Interfaces, which are components that assist AV installers with managing multi-microphone installations in boardrooms, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc. The electronic components 220 may also include Mini Computers, which are components typically used for running the video conferencing software (ex. Microsoft Teams or Zoom) as well as providing audio and visual input/output. The electronic components 220 may also include Power Supplies & Adapters (Power Management), which may include many different power adapters/bricks required for any DSP, Mixer, Network Interface, Mini PC, microphones, room controller, laptop, phones, etc. devices used at the table. These power adapters work to convert AC (alternating current) power from a standard electrical outlet to DC (direct current) power utilized by the associated device. In some instances devices may require Power over Ethernet (PoE) allowing them to receive power through the Ethernet cable that connects them to the network. With the various sources of power that can be utilized dependent on the device it would not be uncommon for power adapters to be utilized as well.

[0045] In another embodiment, shown for example in FIG. 13, an additional, or auxiliary, mounting plate 230, or sheet, may include various electronic components 220 preassembled thereon. The auxiliary plate 230 may be coupled to the mounting plate 108 with fasteners. The auxiliary mounting plate 230 may be removed with the mounting plate, or separately removed. In one embodiment, an electronic component 220 is coupled to the mounting features 210, and a utility cable 250 is coupled to the electronic component and extends through an aperture 260 in the worksurface 14, 114.

WORKSURFACE:

[0046] Referring to FIGS. 1-6 and 16, in one embodiment, a worksurface 14, 114 has an upper surface 262, 264 configured to receive various personal and office related items, such as computers, documents, telephones, storage items and the like, while providing a suitable surface for writing. The worksurface 14, 114 is supported by the base 12, 112, which is secured to a bottom surface 70, 170 of the worksurface. The worksurface 14, 114 may have a variety of different shapes in plan view, including a generally gumdrop shape with a relatively straight rear edge 266, 268 and a curved edge front edge 270, 272. The rear and front edges 266, 268, 270, 272 may have linear edge portions and curve edge portions, for example at the junctions between the front and rear edges. The curved front edge 270, 272 is shaped and sized to allow a plurality of users to sit adjacent the front edge and face and/or observe a camera and/or display 274 positioned adjacent to or spaced from the rear edge 266, 268. For example, as shown in the embodiment of FIG. 4, three users are positioned around the front edge 270, while in the embodiment of FIG. 5, five users are positioned around the front edge 272. The flattened rear edge 266, 268 provides indicia to the users that chairs should not be positioned therealong for video conferencing. The conference table may be sized to accommodate more than five users. The peripheral edges 270, 272 of the worksurface 14, 114 extend outwardly from the side surface of the base 12, 112, for example a distance sized to comfortably fit the user's legs under the worksurface. The monolithic structure of the pedestal base, and uninterrupted overhang of the worksurface, avoids the need for table legs that may block various user positions from being useable. This configuration allows the users of the table to sit at any location around the worksurface that suits their use.

[0047] As shown for example, in FIG. 5 and 6, the worksurface 14, 114 may include first and second worksurface piece 280, 282 abutting along mating edges 284, 286. The worksurfaces may be joined with mounting plates 289 underlying and coupled to the bottom surfaces 70, 170 of each worksurface. In addition, a plurality of clamping devices 291, for example zip bolts, may be

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mounted to the worksurface pieces 280, 282 and clamp together the abutting edges 284 286 of the worksurface pieces. The worksurface pieces 280, 282 may have different finishes, including being made of different materials and/or with different exterior colors and/or tactile surfaces. The worksurface 14, 114 may be made for example and without limitation from particle board with HPL, LOP or veneer exterior, plywood, plywood with Forbo linoleum, or combinations thereof, and may include metal, wood or stone, such as granite.

[0048] As shown in FIG. 4, the worksurface 14, 114 is configured with an elongated aperture 294, configured in one embodiment as a linear slot 288, having terminal ends 290 that are spaced L_m from the front peripheral edge 270, 272 at a maximum of 36 inches from the peripheral edge, and in one embodiment a maximum of 32 inches from the peripheral edge, and in one embodiment at a distance of about 30 inches from the peripheral edge. In one embodiment, the terminal ends 290 are spaced a distance (L_m) of at least 6 inches from the peripheral edge. As shown in the embodiment of FIGS. 5 and 16, the aperture 296 includes a node 298 and at least three branches 300, 302 extending radially outwardly from the node. In other embodiments, the aperture may include two branches extending non-parallel from the node. The terminal edges 304, 306 of the branches are located within L_M of the front peripheral edge 270, 272, or positioned a maximum of 36 inches from the peripheral edge, and in one embodiment a maximum of 33 inches from the peripheral edge, and in one embodiment at a distance of about 32 inches from the front peripheral edge of the worksurface pieces. In one embodiment, the terminal ends 304, 306 are spaced a distance (L_m) of at least 6 inches from the peripheral edge. In one embodiment, each of the branches 300, 302 has a greatest width (W_1), while the node 298 has a width (W_2) greater than the greatest width (W_1) of each of the branches. The greatest width (W_1) of each of the branches 300, 302 is less than .53 inches, while the node 298 has a width (W_2) of greater than 1.0 inches in one embodiment, and about 1.50 inches in one embodiment. Each of the branches 300, 302 has a proximal end 310 opening into and communicating with the node 298, meaning a cable may be passed (e.g., slid) from one branch 300, 302 through the node 298

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and into another branch 300, 302. The node 298 is sized and configured to permit a standard U.S. power plug (e.g., Type A and Type B) to pass through the node in one embodiment, or a standard power plug for a designated jurisdiction, but do not permit a user's hand or cable retention device 420 described below to pass through.

[0049] As shown in FIG. 5, two of the branches 300 may be defined by adjacent, spaced apart edges 320, 322 of the worksurface pieces. In one embodiment, three branches 300, 302 are arranged in a T-shape. Each of the branches 300, 302 has pair of upper edge corners on an upper surface of the worksurface(s) and a pair of lower edge corners 326, 328, 330 on a lower surface of the worksurface(s). As shown in FIG. 6, at least portions of at least some of the lower edge corners 326 are chamfered. For example, all of the lower edges 326, 328 defined by the worksurface piece 282 may be chamfered, while the lower edge corners 330 defined by the worksurface piece 280 are not chamfered. The worksurface piece 282 defines a first portion of the front peripheral edge and at least a portion of one of the upper edges of one of the branches and the second worksurface piece 280 defines a second portion of the front peripheral edge and at least a portion of the other of the upper edges of the one of the branches.

[0050] As shown in FIGS. 16 and 23, the utility cable 250 extends through the aperture. The utility cable may be configured as a USB, USB-C, USB-B, USB-Mini, USB-Micro, or HDMI cable, or a power cord connected to a power source mounted in the interior space 18, 118 of the base, for example on the panel mounting plate 108, 230. The utility cable 250 includes a connector portion 400 disposed above the worksurface. The connector portion 400 is configured to be plugged into, and electrically connected to, an electronic mobile device 402, such that power and data may be transmitted to the device 402. Users sitting adjacent the front peripheral edge may access the connector portion 400 and plug the connector portion into their electronic mobile devices 402 to power and exchange data between the electronic mobile device and electronic components 220 mounted below the worksurface in the interior space 18, 118. The electronic mobile device 402 may be a computer, including a laptop computer, a tablet,

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mobile phone, including smart phones, and/or any electronic device carried by a user and capable of being powered and/or transmitting data.

CABLE RETENTION DEVICE:

[0051] Referring to FIGS. 16 and 21-24B, the connector portion 400 may be susceptible to passing through the aperture 294, 296, whether through one of the branches 300, 302 or the node 298. A cable retention device 420 may be secured to the cable 250 above the worksurface 14, 114 to prevent the connector portion 400 from passing through the aperture 294, 296. In addition, a cable retention device 420 may be secured to the cable 250 below the worksurface 14, 114 to prevent the cable 250 from being disconnected from an electronic component 220 disposed in the interior space 18, 118, and also with the weight of the cable retention device 420 acting as a cable retraction device and pulling the cable downwardly through the aperture by the force of gravity. In one embodiment, shown in FIG. 22, a first cable retention 420 device may be coupled to the cable 250 at a distance D1 from the connector portion 400. In various embodiments, D1 may be between 2 and 6 inches, and preferably about 3 inches. A second cable retention device 420 may be coupled to the cable 250 at a distance D2 from the connector portion 400. In various embodiments, D2 may be between 15 and 35 inches, and preferably about 26 inches. The connector portion 400 is allowed a travel distance of D2-D1, thereby allowing a user to pull the cable 250 through the aperture 294, 296 such that the connector portion 400 is located at a desired location above the worksurface. The chamfered, or rounded, edge 326, 328 on the bottom of the aperture reduces wear on and snagging of the cable.

[0052] The cable retention device 420, otherwise referred to as a pod, includes a housing 422 having a bottom 424, a peripheral side 426, a top 428, an inlet 430 formed in the peripheral side, a first outlet 432 in communication with the inlet and formed in the peripheral side at a location spaced apart from the inlet, and a second outlet 434 in communication with the inlet and formed in the bottom. The housing 422 may be configured with first and second clamping components 436, 438, one or both which may define in part the inlet 430. The first clamping

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component 436 defines the top 428 of the housing and the second clamping component 438 defines the bottom 424 of the housing. In one embodiment, the second clamping component has a channel 440 with a bottom surface 442 and an opening communicating with the channel. The opening 444 is open to the bottom 424 of the housing and also to the side 426, and defines the first and second outlets. The channel 440 defines the inlet 430 in the side 426 opposite the outlet 432. First and second resilient components 450 are disposed between the first and second clamping components 436, 438, for example in recesses 452, 454 formed in each of the clamping components. The resilient components 450 are compressible, and may be made of foam. The cable 250 is disposed in the channel 440 between the first and second resilient components 450. The clamping components are then coupled, for example with fasteners 460, thereby compressing the resilient components 450 against the cable 150 to hold the cable and prevent the cable from being pulled through the cable retention device. The channel 440 is preferably sized to handle the largest standard cable that may be used, with the resilient components 450 gripping and retaining smaller cables. For example, HDMI cables typically have a significantly larger diameter than a standard USB-c cable, but with both cables being retained by the cable retention device.

[0053] The fasteners 460 may include screws, bolts, snap-fit tabs, pivot locks, or other suitable connectors. A foot 462 may be disposed on the bottom of the housing, and cover the fasteners 460, for example on a bottom of the clamping component. The foot 462 may be made of polyurethane polymer, and provides a sufficient coefficient of friction to prevent unattended sliding of the cable retention device for example due to the weight of the cable and connector, but allowing the user to manipulate the cable retention device by sliding the device along the surface of the worksurface. The foot 462 includes a slot 464 aligned with the outlet 434.

[0054] The cable retention device 420, or pod, is moveably supported on the upper surface 262, 264 of the worksurface, and is shaped and dimensioned to prevent the pod from passing through the branches 300, 302 or the node 298. For

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example, the pod has a greater width and/or length than the width of the branches and/or node. The inlet 430 and the first outlet 432 are parallel to the upper surface, while the second outlet 434 opens downwardly toward the upper surface 262, 264. The utility cable 250 passes through the inlet 430 and first outlet 432 when the pod is not overlying one of the branches 300, 302 or the node 298, as shown in FIG. 24A, but the cable 250 passes through the inlet 430 and the second outlet 434 when the pod and the second outlet 434 are overlying one of the branches 300, 302 or the node 298 as shown in FIG. 24B. A second cable retention device 420 is fixedly connected to the utility cable and disposed below the worksurface, wherein the second pod is shaped and dimensioned to prevent the second pod from passing upwardly through the branches 300, 302 or the node 298. In this way, the second pod prevents the utility cable from being dislodged from a connection to an electronic component 220, such as a power source, in the interior space 18, 118.

OPERATION:

[0055] In operation, and referring to FIGS. 16 and 22-24B, an installer passes a utility cable 250 through the aperture 294, 296 with the connector portion 400 disposed above the worksurface and a plug 421 disposed below the worksurface 14, 114. A cable retention device 420 is secured to the utility cable 250 above the worksurface. A second cable retention device 420 may be secured to the utility cable 250 below the worksurface if desired. The plug 421 may be coupled to an electronic component 220. A user may access the connector portion 400 and connect the connector portion to an electronic mobile device 402, thereby providing power and/or data to the electronic device 402. When done, the user may disconnect the connector 400 from the electronic device 402, with the cable retention device 420 maintaining the position of the connector 400 on top of the worksurface. The user may move the connector position 400, and cable retention device 420, on the worksurface, with the cable 250 passing through the outlet 432 if not overlying the aperture, or through the outlet 434 if overlying the aperture.

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The cable may slide along the chamfered surface depending on the location of the electronic component 220 in the interior space 18, 118.

[0056] In this way, a method of using the conference table includes maintaining a connector portion 400 of the utility cable 240 on the upper surface of the worksurface with the cable retention device 420 fixedly connected to the utility cable 250, wherein the utility cable extends through an aperture 294, 296 in the worksurface and wherein the cable retention device has a larger or different footprint than the aperture such that the cable retention device is prevented from passing through the aperture. The user may move the cable retention device relative to the upper surface to position the connector portion 400 and thereby move the utility cable 250 relative to the aperture 296, 294. The user may position the electronic mobile device 402 on the worksurface and connect and disconnect the electronic mobile device to the utility cable 250, without fear that the cable will fall through the aperture. In addition, the utility cable is prevented from being pulled through the aperture by engaging a bottom surface of the worksurface with a second cable retention device 420 fixedly engaged with the utility cable 250 below the worksurface 14, 114.

[0057] If the user needs to access the interior space 18, 118, for example to secure a cable retention device 420 to a cable 250, or to replace one or more electronic devices 220, such as a power source, in the interior space, the user may move the panel 24 relative to the opening 20 from a closed position, wherein the panel is disposed over the opening, to an open position, wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening. The user may remove the inner mounting plate 108, 230, whether attached to the outer cover, or separately mounted to the frame. A second mounting plate may then be attached to the cover, or mounted to the frame. The panel 24 may thereafter be moved to the closed position. The user may also simply replace electronic components on the mounting plate in the open position without removing the panel or mounting plate from the base. The generally horizontal positioning of the mounting plate 108, 230 outside the interior space provides easy access to the electronic components 220.

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[0058] Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. As such, it is intended that the foregoing detailed description be regarded as illustrative rather than limiting and that it is the appended claims, including all equivalents thereof, which are intended to define the scope of the invention.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A conference table comprising:
a base; and
a worksurface supported by the base and comprising a peripheral edge,
wherein the worksurface comprises an aperture comprising a node and at least three branches extending radially outwardly from the node, wherein each of the branches comprises a greatest width, and wherein the node comprises a width greater than the greatest width of each of the branches, and wherein each of the branches has a proximal end opening into and communicating with the node and a terminal end spaced from the node, wherein each of the terminal ends is located within 36 inches of the peripheral edge of the worksurface.
2. The conference table of claim 1 wherein each of the branches has pair of upper edges on an upper surface of the worksurface and a pair of lower edges on a lower surface of the worksurface.
3. The conference table of claim 2 wherein at least portions of at least some of the lower edges are chamfered.
4. The conference table of claim 2 wherein the worksurface comprises a first worksurface piece defining a first portion of the peripheral edge and at least a portion of one of the upper edges of one of the branches and a second worksurface piece defining a second portion of the peripheral edge and at least a portion of the other of the upper edges of the one of the branches.
5. The conference table of claim 3 wherein the first and second worksurface pieces have different finishes.

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6. The conference table of claim 1 wherein the greatest width of each of the branches is less than .53 inches.
7. The conference table of claim 1 wherein the width of the node is greater than 1.0 inches.
8. The conference table of claim 1 further comprising a utility cable extending through the aperture.
9. The conference table of claim 8 wherein the utility cable comprises a USB-C cable connected to a power source mounted on the base.
10. The conference table of claim 8 further comprising a pod fixedly connected to the utility cable, wherein the pod is moveably supported on an upper surface of the worksurface, and wherein the pod is shaped and dimensioned to prevent the pod from passing through the branches or the node.
11. The conference table of claim 10 wherein the pod comprises an inlet opening parallel to the upper surface, a first outlet opening parallel to the upper surface, and a second outlet opening downwardly toward the upper surface, wherein the utility cable passes through the inlet and first outlet when the pod is not overlying one of the branches or the node, and wherein the cable passes through the inlet and the second outlet when the pod and the second outlet are overlying one of the branches or the node.
12. The conference table of claim 1 wherein the branches and node are arranged in a T-shape.
13. The conference table of claim 10 wherein the pod comprises a first pod, and further comprising a second pod fixedly connected to the utility cable and

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disposed below the worksurface, wherein the second pod is shaped and dimensioned to prevent the pod from passing through the branches or the node.

14. The conference table of claim 1 wherein the base comprises a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening and a panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening.

15. The conference table of claim 14 wherein the panel is pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall.

16. The conference table of claim 15 wherein the panel comprises a bottom portion pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall about a horizontal axis.

17. The conference table of claim 14 wherein the panel comprises an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover, wherein the mounting plate comprises electronic component mounting features.

18. The conference table of claim 17 further comprising an electronic component coupled to the mounting features, and further comprising a utility cable coupled to the electronic component and extending through the aperture in the worksurface.

19. A cable retention device comprising:

a housing comprising a bottom, a peripheral side, a top, an inlet formed in the peripheral side, a first outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the peripheral side at a location spaced apart from the inlet, and a second outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the bottom.

20. The cable retention device of claim 19 wherein the housing comprises first and second clamping components defining in part the inlet.

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21. The cable retention device of claim 20 wherein the first clamping component defines the top of the housing and the second clamping component defines the bottom of the housing.
22. The cable retention device of claim 20 further comprising first and second resilient components disposed between the first and second clamping components.
23. The cable retention device of claim 21 wherein the second clamping component comprises a foot defining in part the bottom of the housing.
24. The cable retention device of claim 23 wherein the foot is made of a polyurethane polymer.
25. A conference table comprising:
 - a base comprising a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening in the peripheral wall, and a moveable panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening, wherein the panel comprises an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover, wherein the mounting plate comprises an electronic component mounting feature; and
 - a worksurface comprising an upper surface, a bottom surface defining in part the interior space and an aperture communicating between the upper surface and the interior space.
26. The conference table of claim 25 wherein the panel is pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall.
27. The conference table of claim 26 wherein the panel comprises a bottom portion pivotally mounted to the peripheral wall about a horizontal axis.

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28. The conference table of claim 25 comprising an electronic component coupled to the mounting feature, and further comprising a utility cable coupled to the electronic component and extending through the aperture in the worksurface.

29. The conference table of claim 25 wherein the aperture comprises a node and at least three branches extending radially outward from the node.

30. The conference table of claim 29 wherein each of the branches has pair of upper edges on an upper surface of the worksurface and a pair of lower edges on a lower surface of the worksurface, wherein at least portions of at least some of the lower edges are chamfered.

31. The conference table of claim 25 wherein the worksurface comprises a first worksurface piece defining at least a first portion of the aperture and a second worksurface piece defining at least a second portion of aperture.

32. A method of using a conference table comprising:
maintaining a connector portion of a utility cable on an upper surface of a worksurface with a pod fixedly connected to the utility cable, wherein the utility cable extends through an aperture in the worksurface and wherein the pod is larger than the aperture;

moving the pod relative to the upper surface to position the connector portion and thereby moving the utility cable relative to the aperture;

positioning an electronic mobile device on a worksurface; and

connecting the electronic mobile device to the utility cable.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the pod comprises a first pod, and further comprising preventing the utility cable from being pulled through the aperture by engaging a bottom surface of the worksurface with a second pod fixedly engaged with the utility cable below the worksurface.

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34. The method of claim 32 wherein the utility cable is connected to a power source mounted to a base supporting the worksurface.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the base comprises a peripheral wall defining an interior space and having an opening, and further comprising moving a panel relative to the opening from a closed position, wherein the panel is disposed over the opening, to an open position, wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening, and wherein the power source is mounted on the panel.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the panel comprises an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover, wherein the power source is mounted on the inner mounting plate.

37. The method of claim 35 wherein the inner mounting plate comprises a first mounting plate, and further comprising removing the inner mounting plate from the outer cover and coupling a second mounting plate to the cover, and moving the panel to the closed position.

FIG. 1

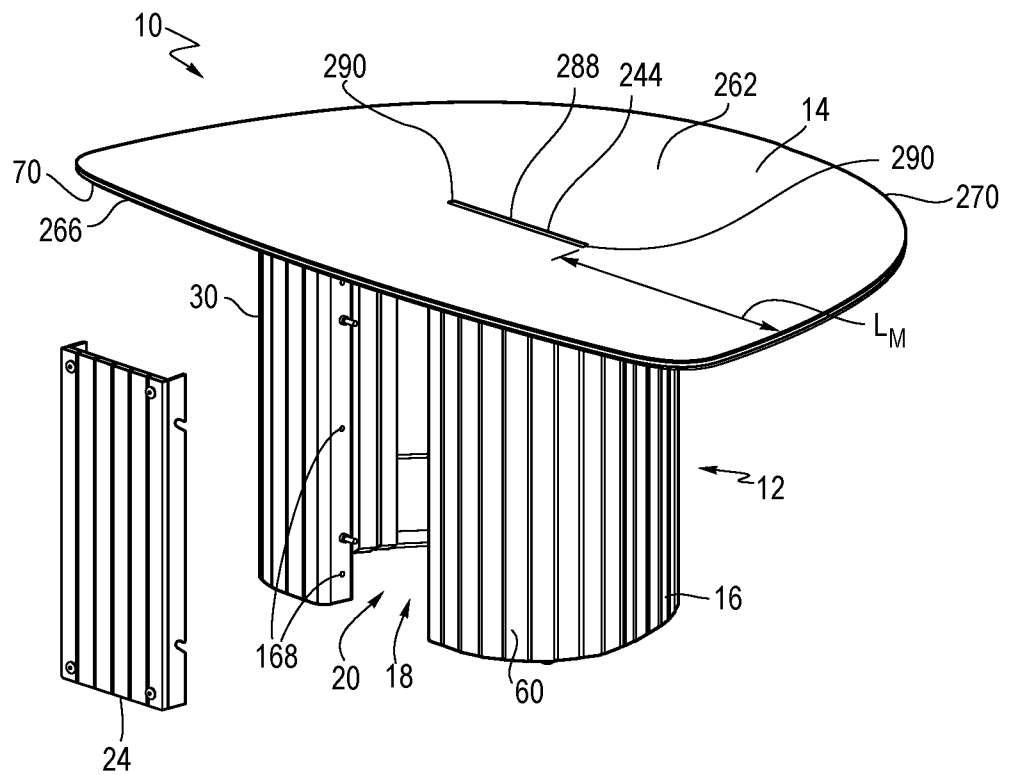


FIG. 2

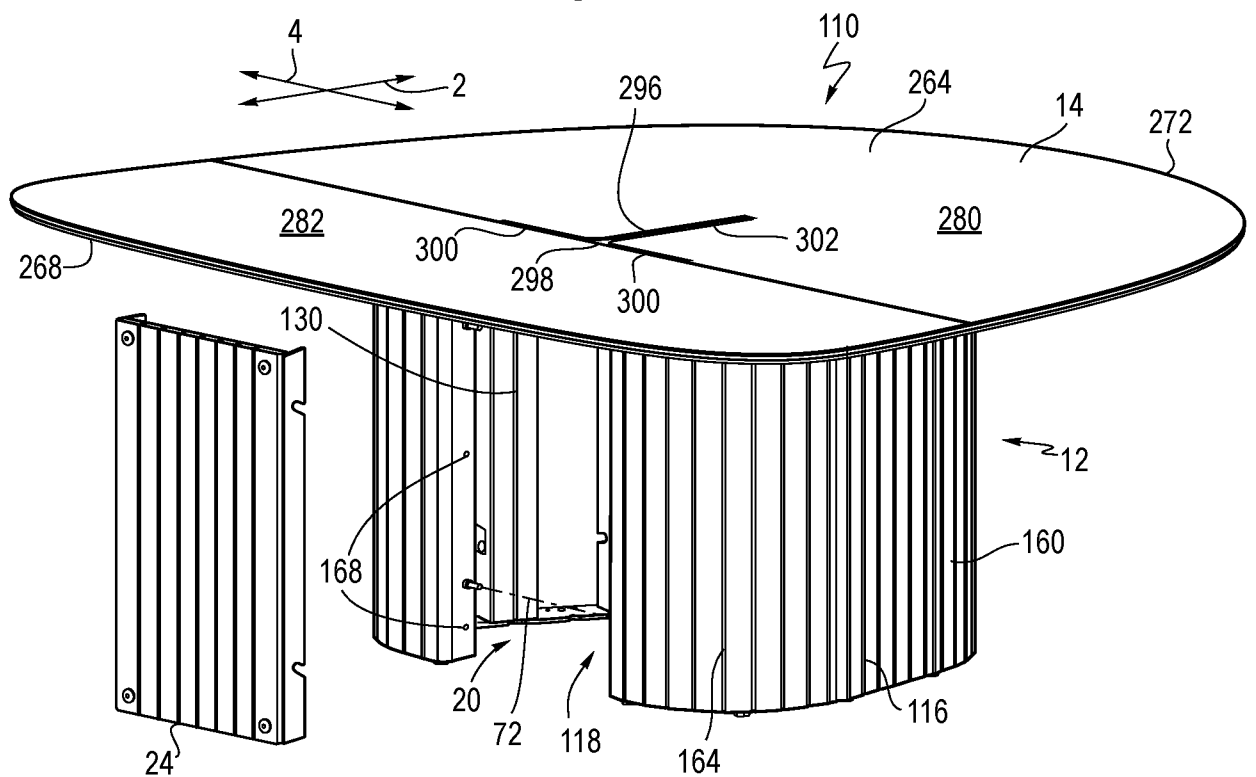
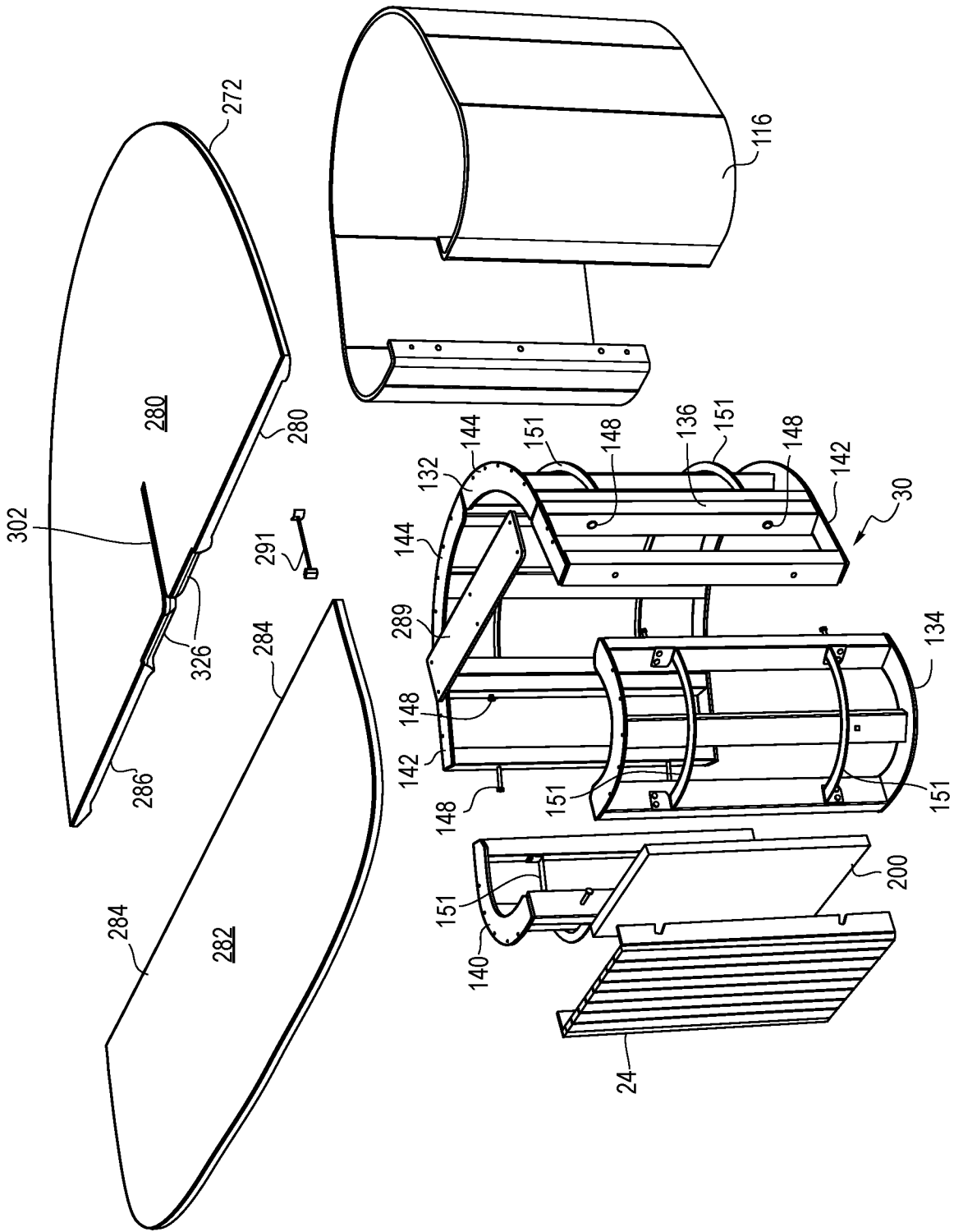


FIG. 3



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FIG. 4

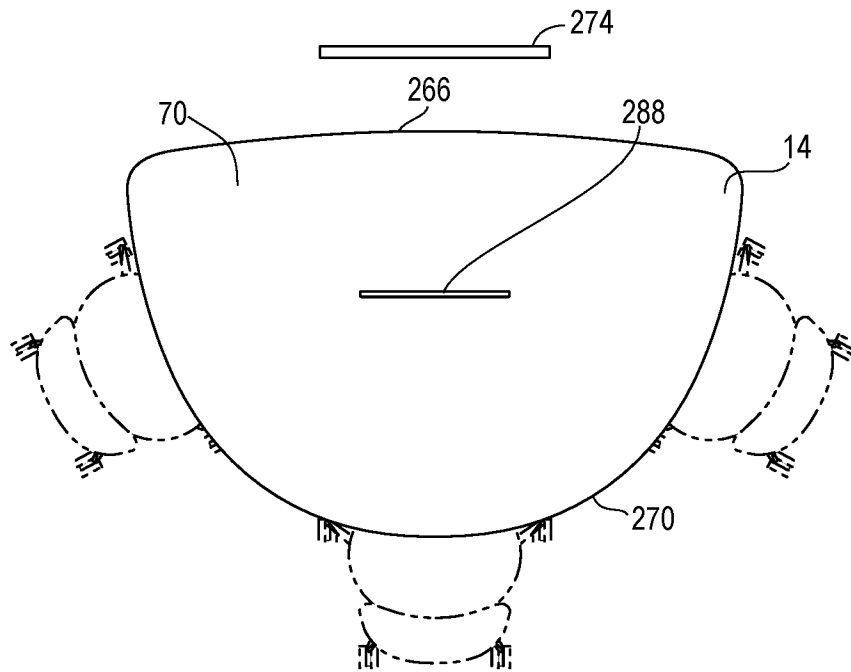


FIG. 5

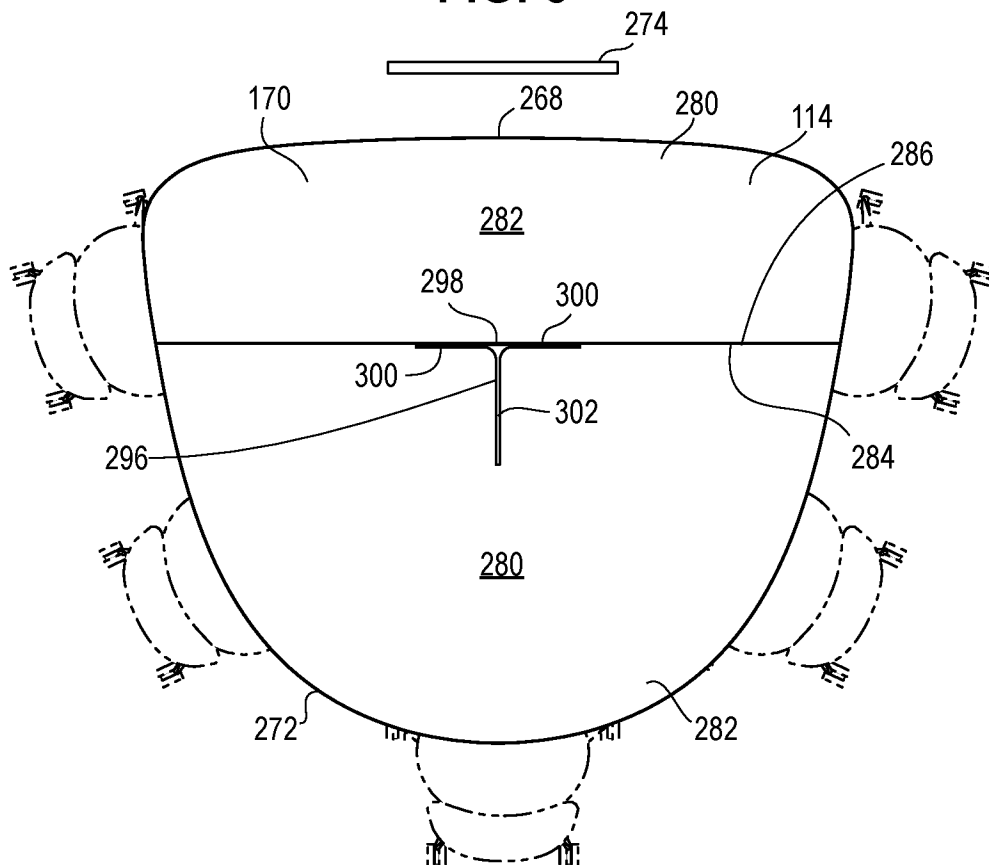
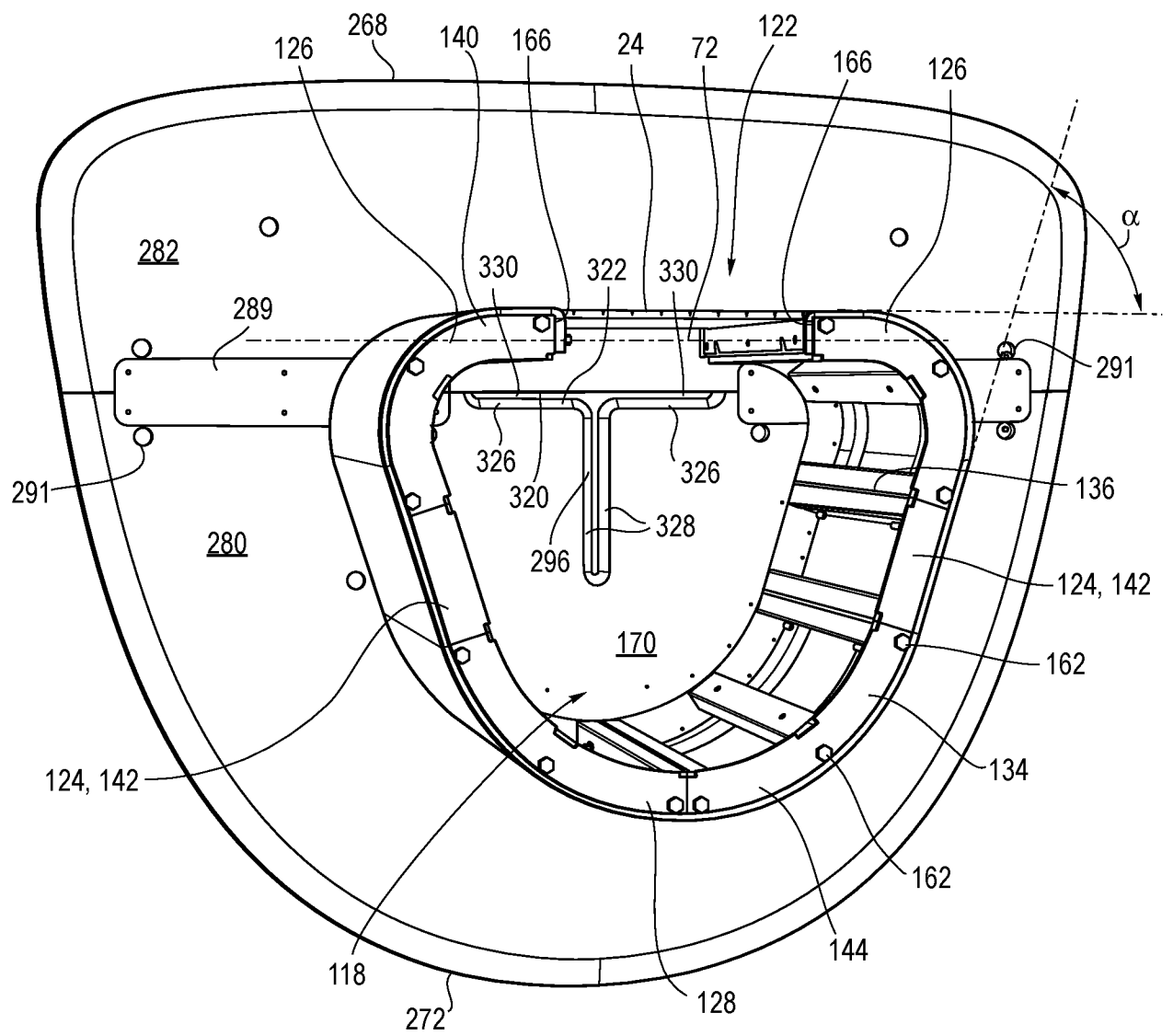


FIG. 6



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FIG. 7

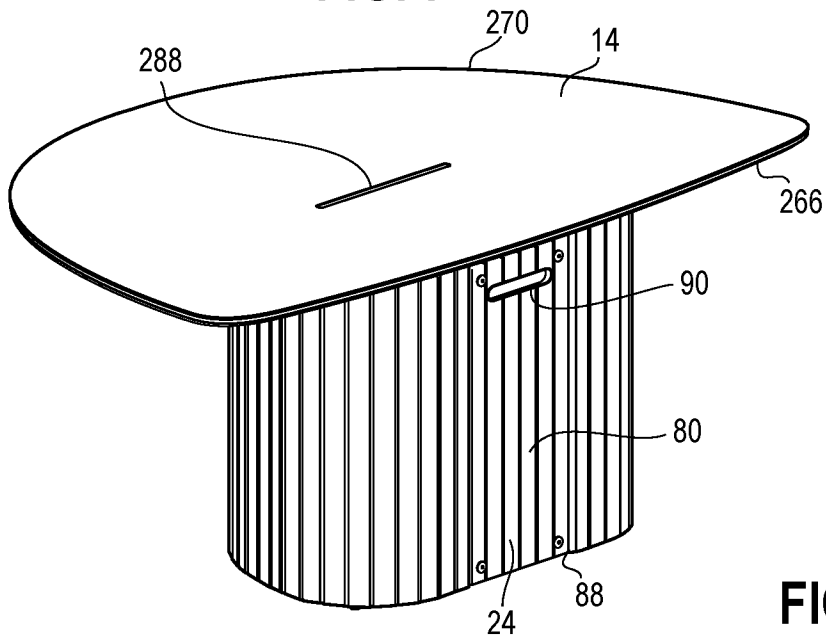


FIG. 8

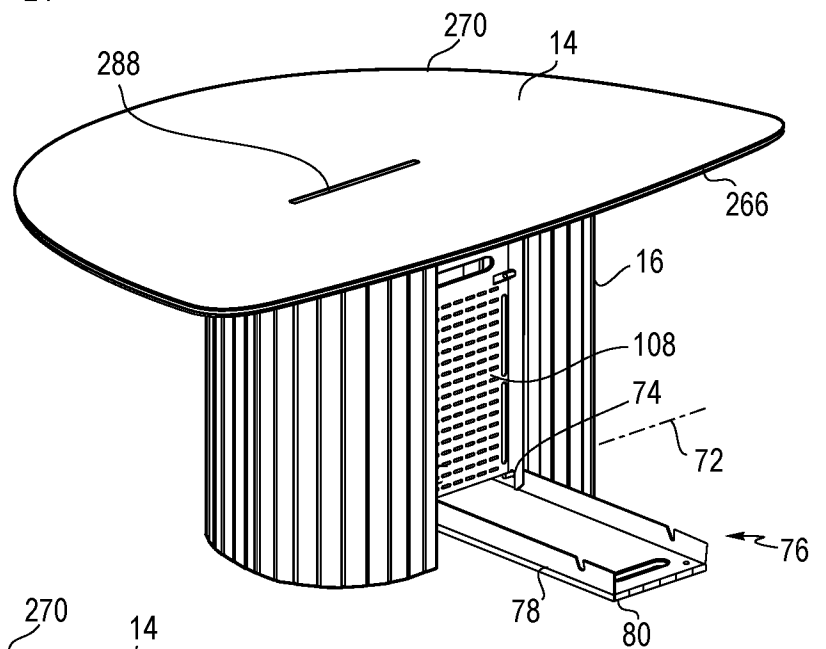
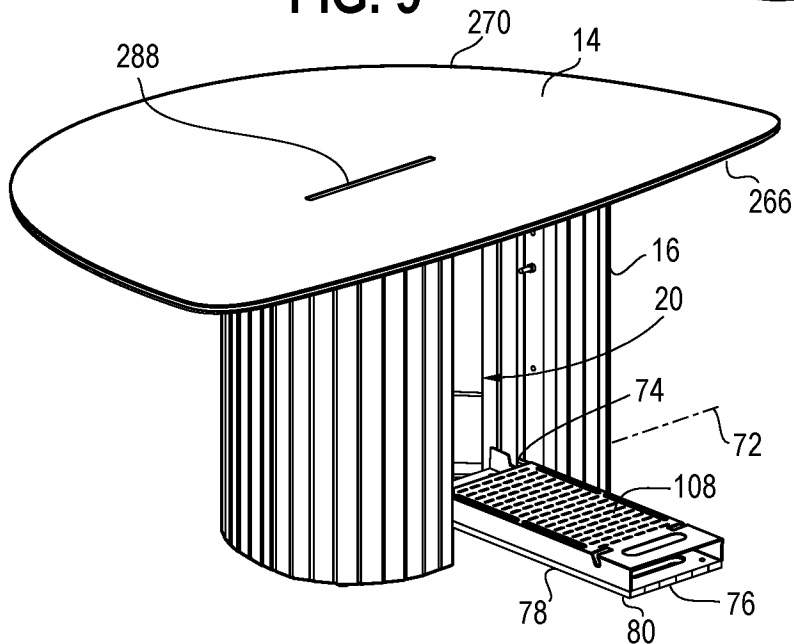


FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

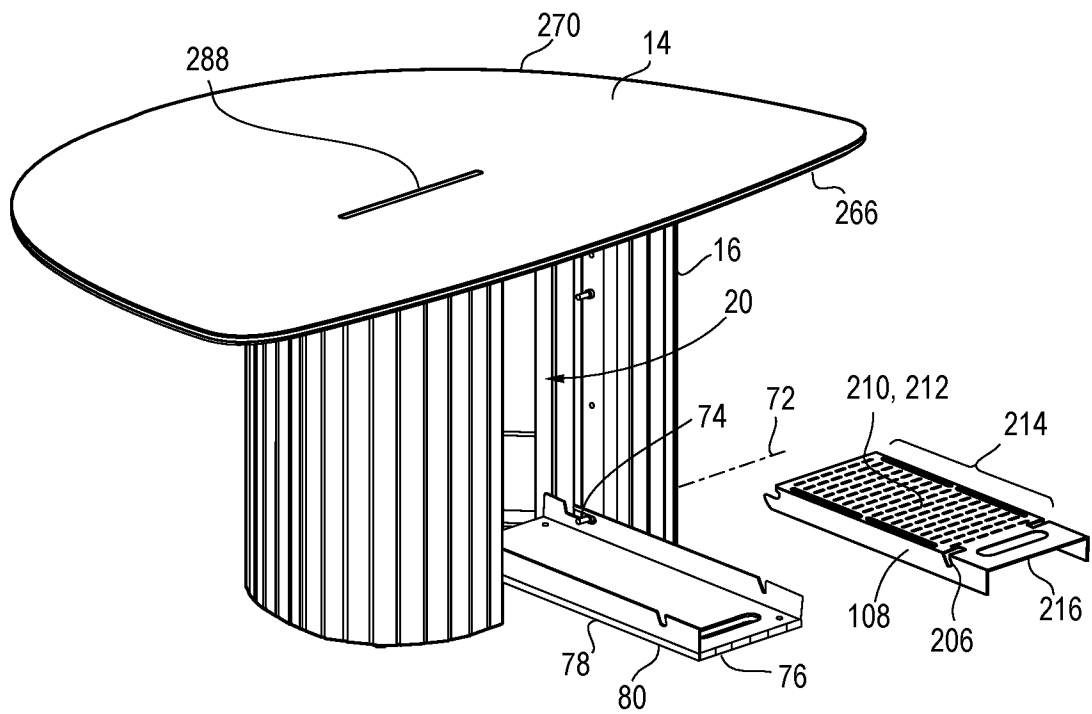
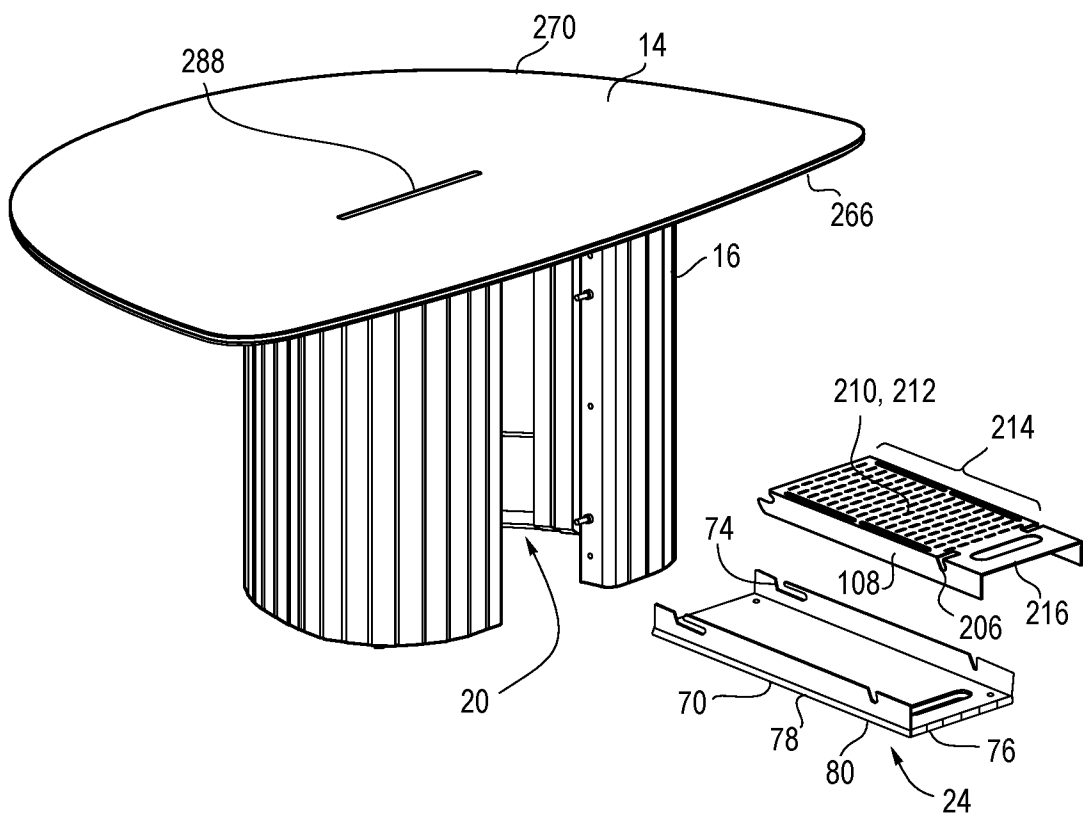


FIG. 11



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FIG. 12A

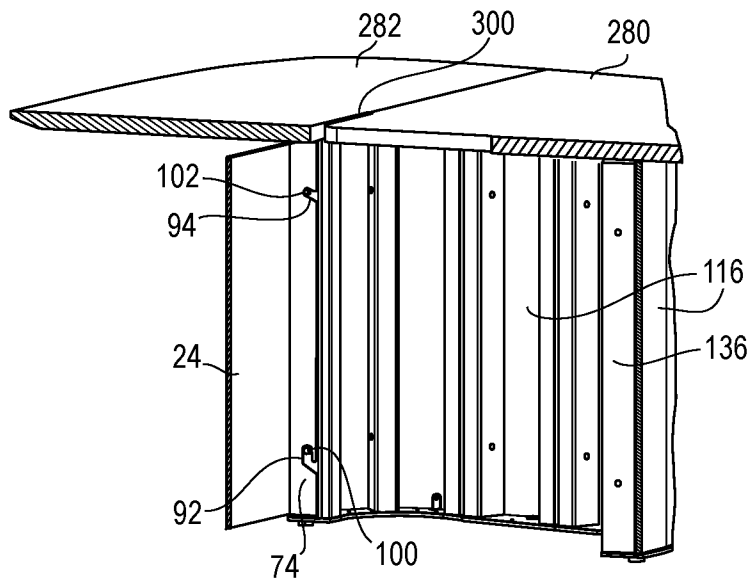


FIG. 12B

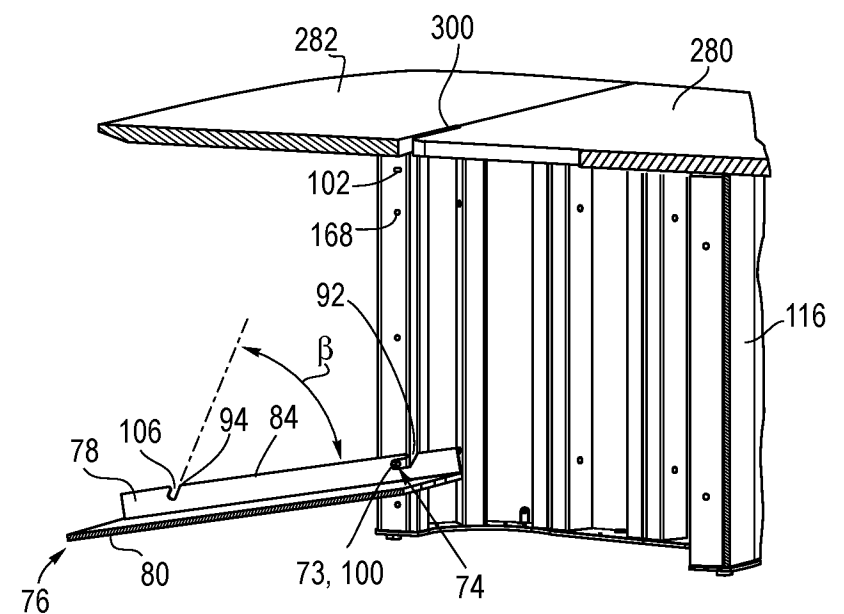


FIG. 12C

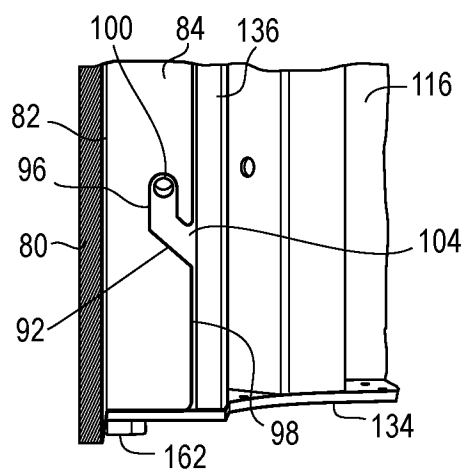
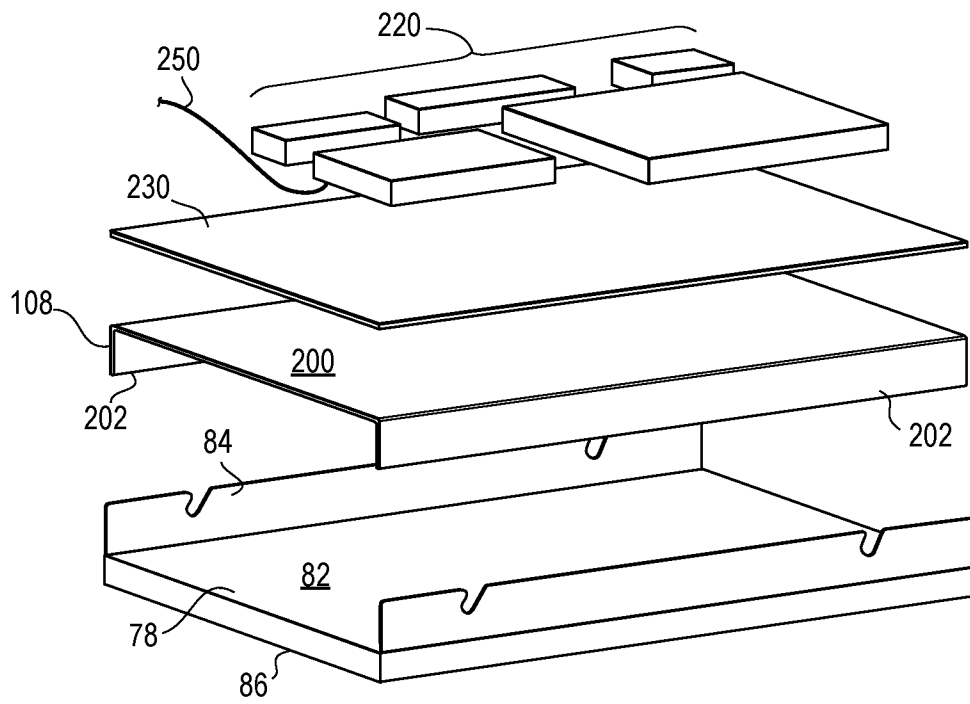


FIG. 13



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FIG. 14A

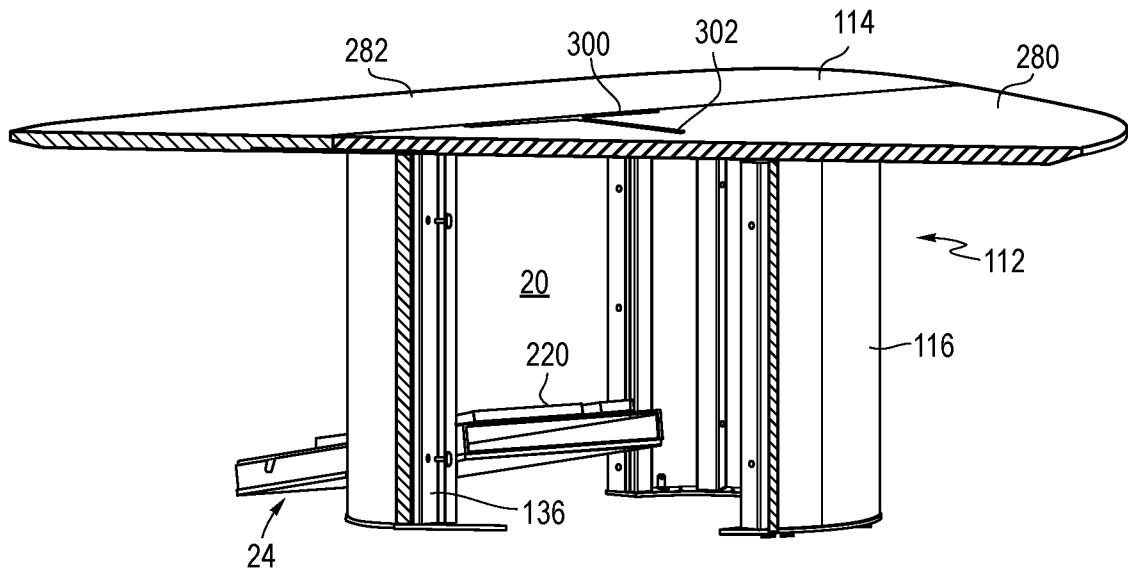
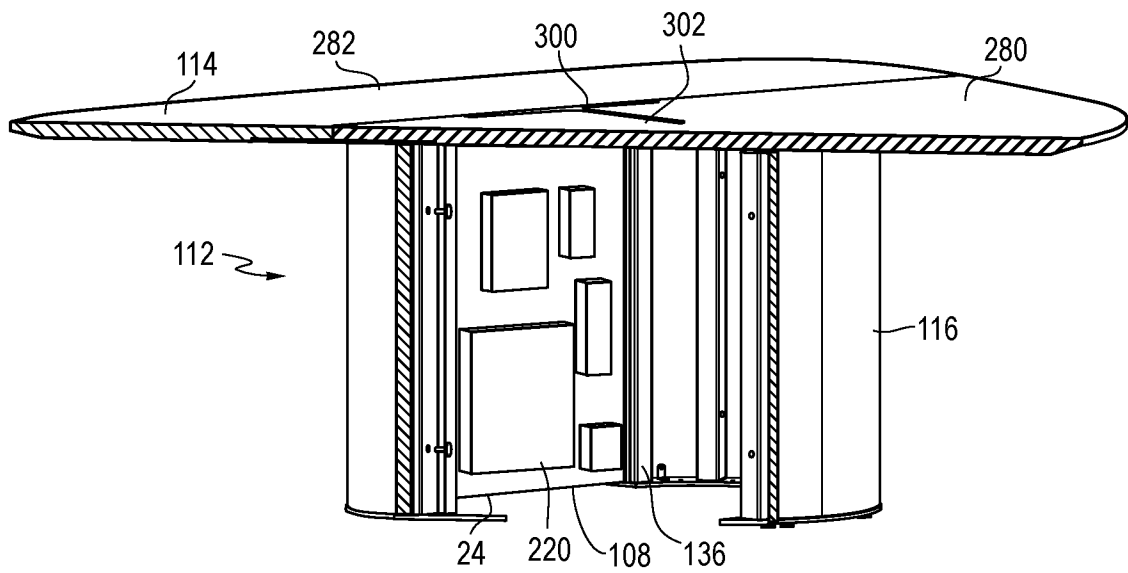
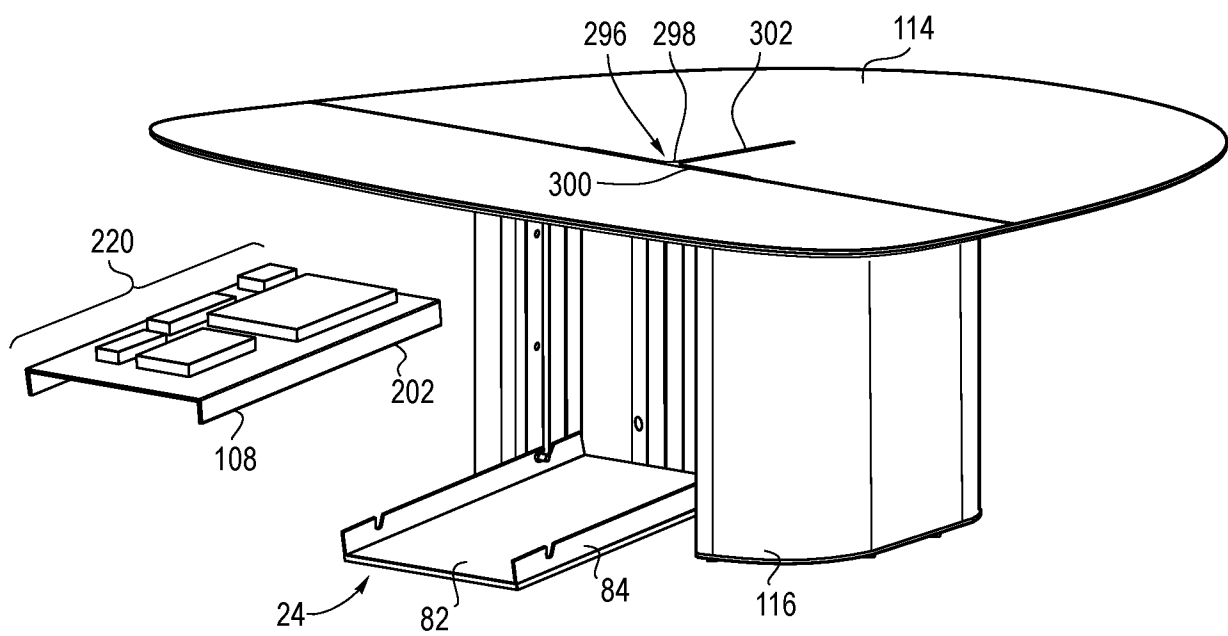


FIG. 14B



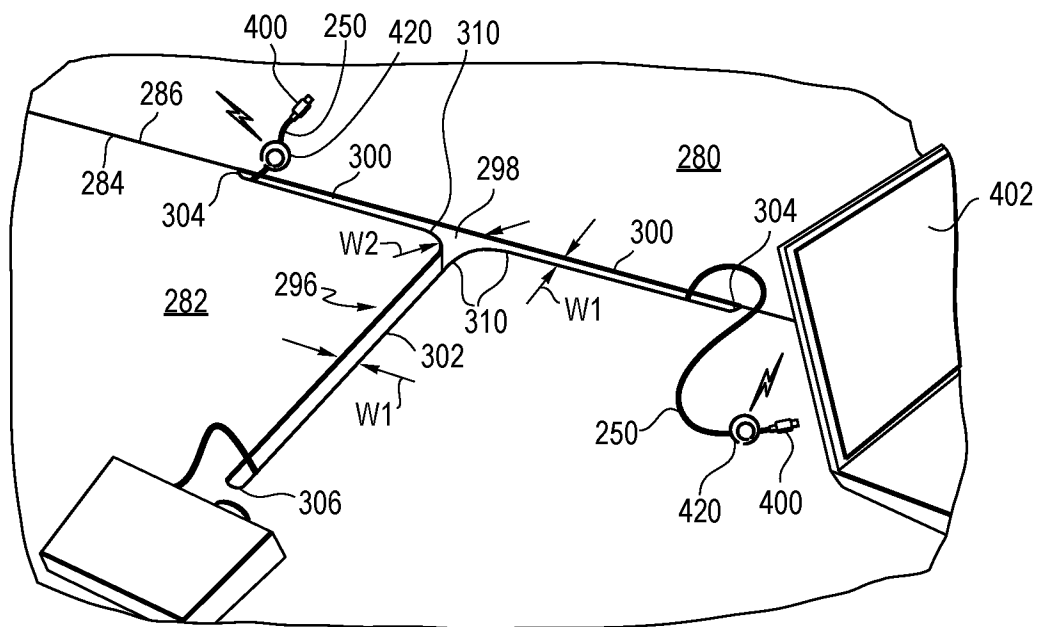
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FIG. 15



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FIG. 16



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FIG. 17

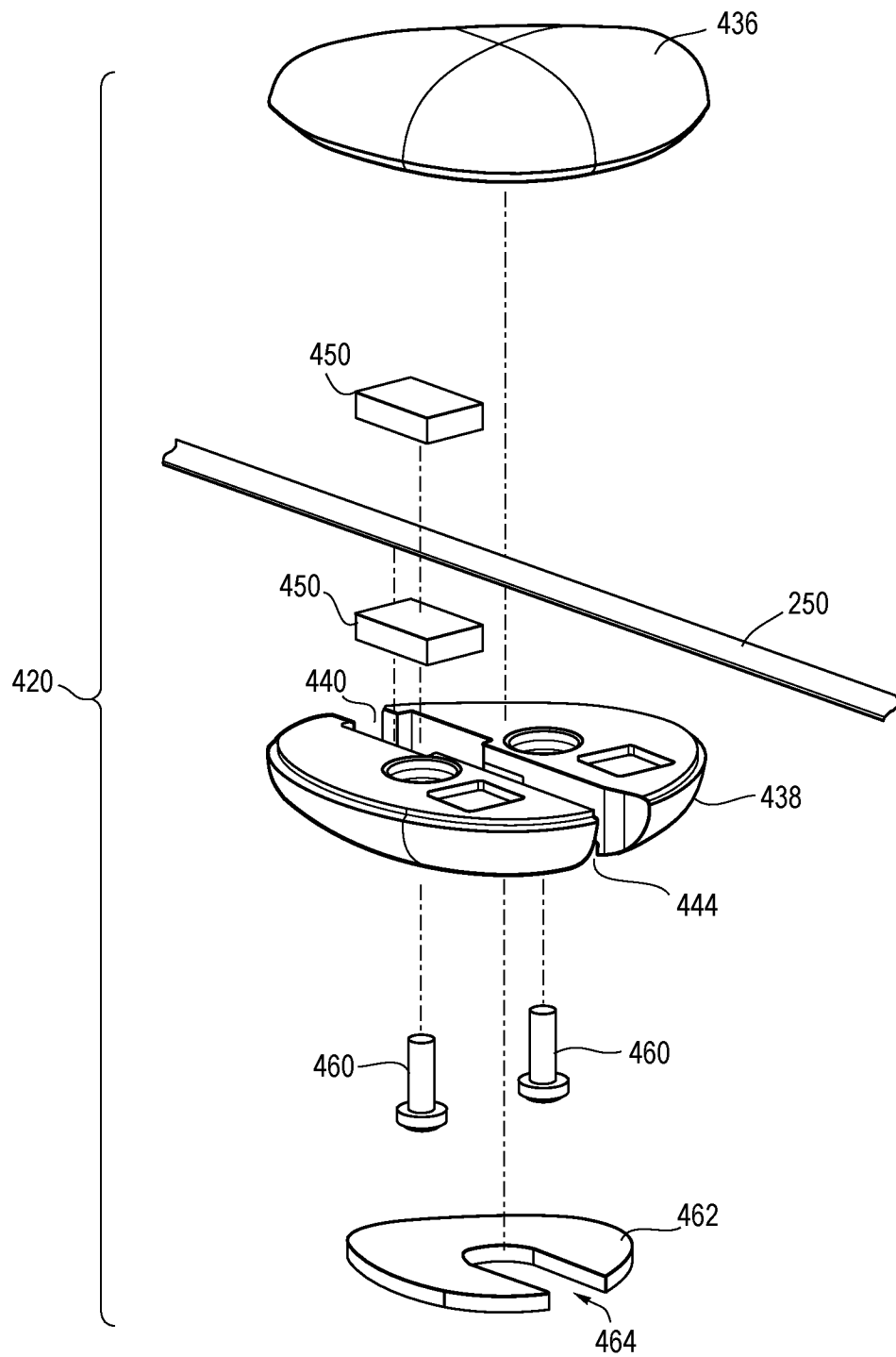
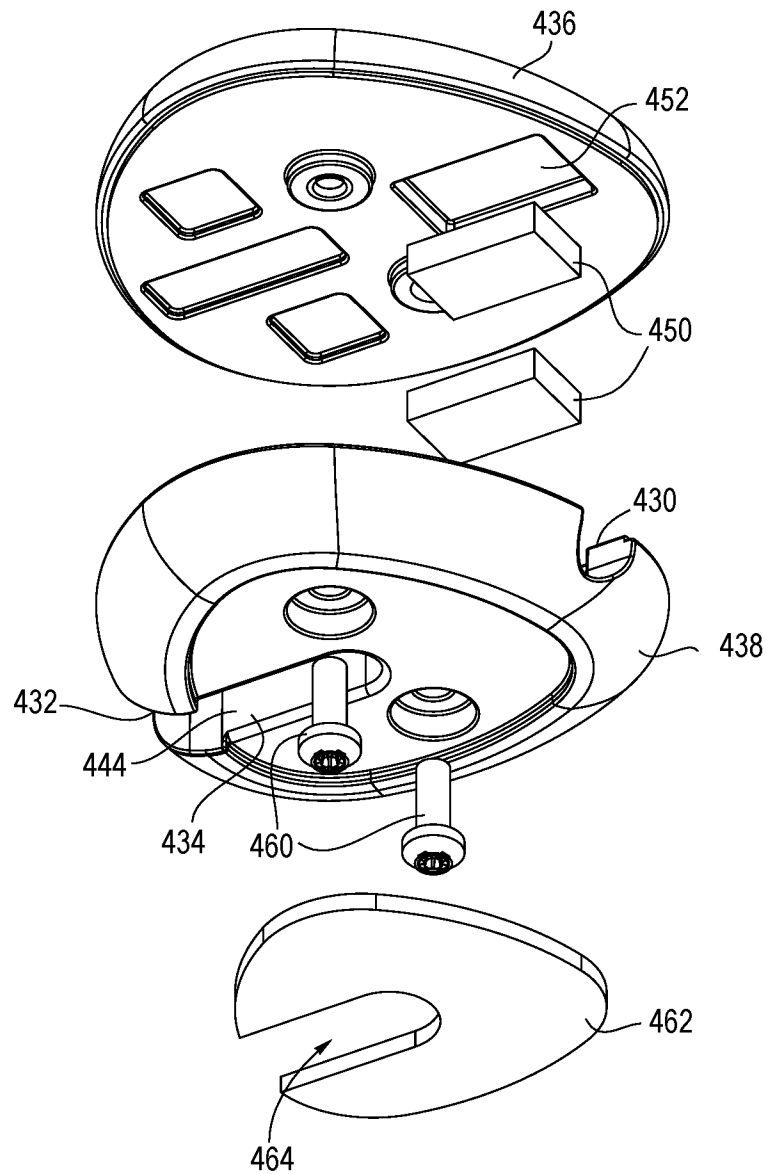


FIG. 18



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FIG. 19

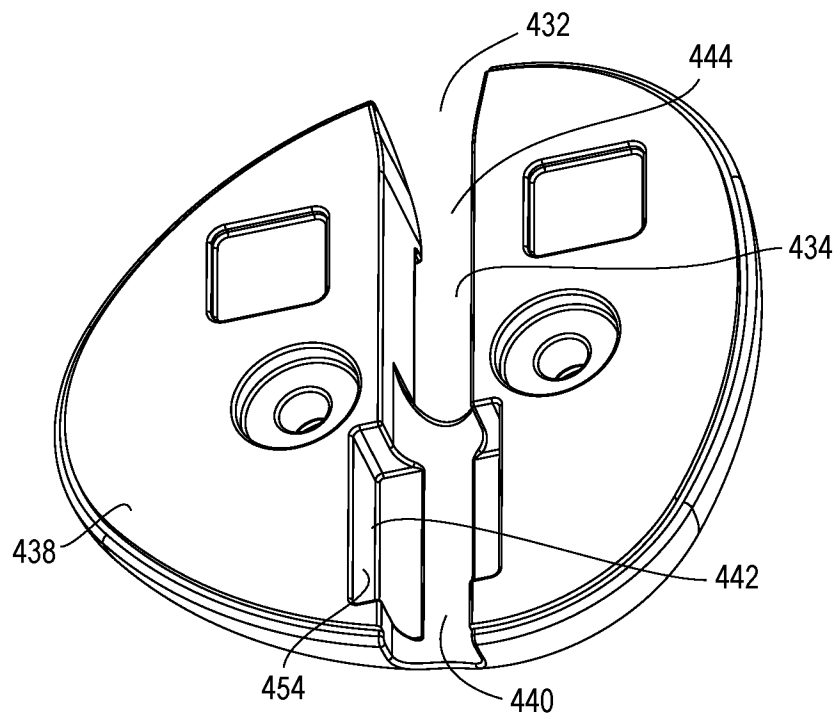
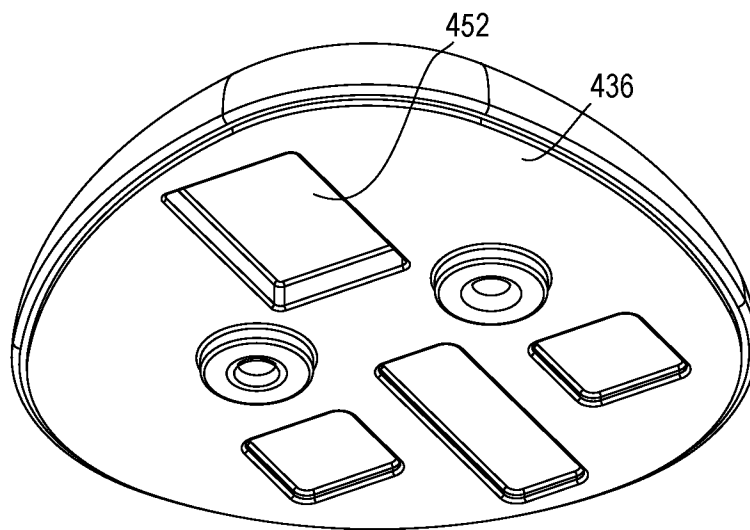


FIG. 20



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FIG. 21

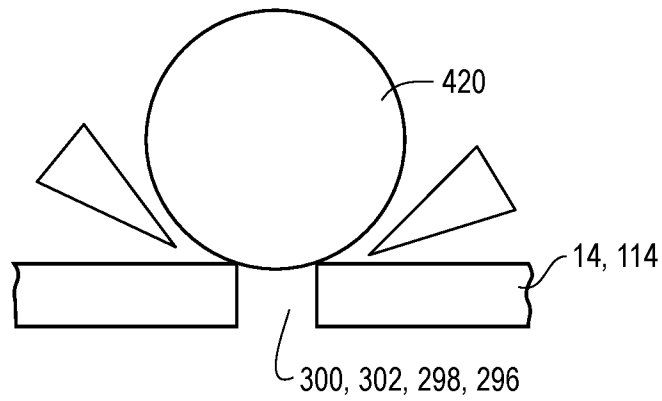


FIG. 22

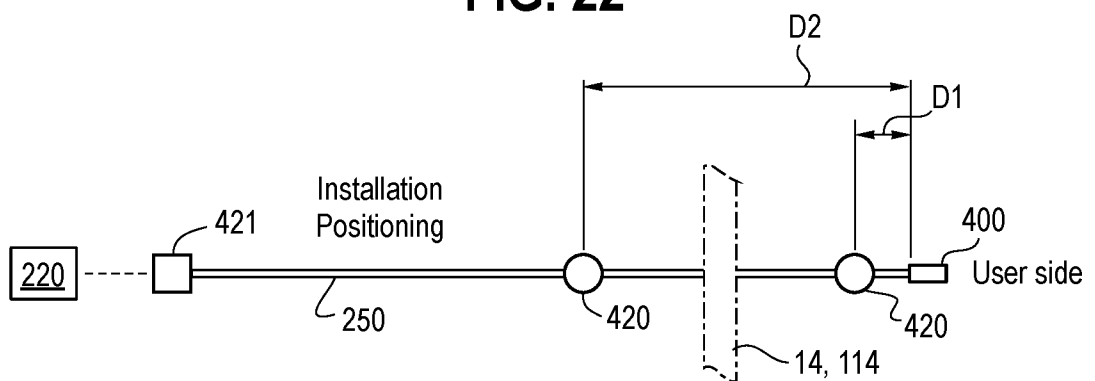
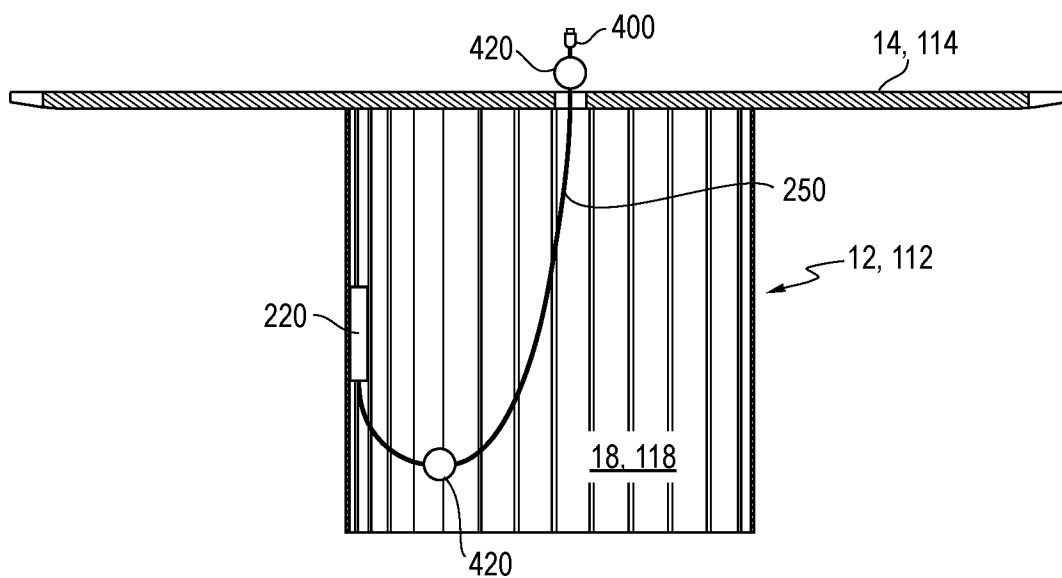


FIG. 23



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FIG. 24A

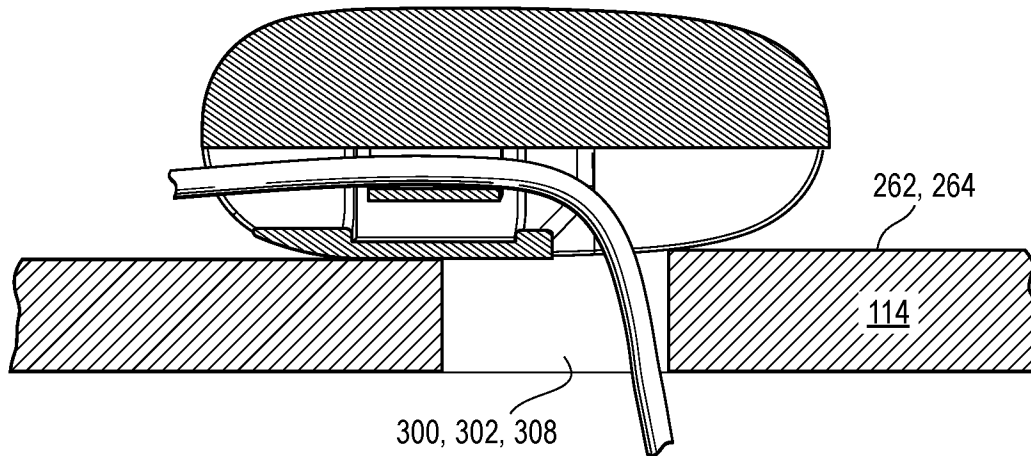
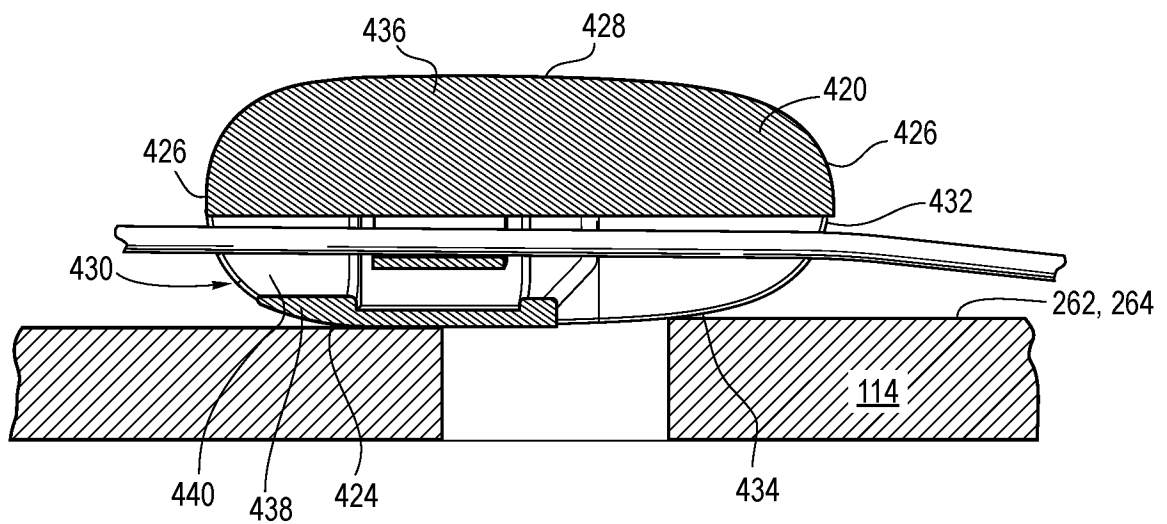


FIG. 24B



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2024/033627

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC: A47B 13/08 (2024.01); A47B 91/00 (2024.01) CPC: A47B 13/08; A47B 91/005; A47B 2200/0079 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) See Search History Document Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched See Search History Document Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) See Search History Document		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X Y	JP 2019-76626 A (KOKUYO CO. LTD.) 23 May 2019 (23.05.2019) see machine translation see machine translation	1, 2, 4, 6-9, 12 3, 5, 10, 14-16
Y	US 6,455,776 B1 (MILNE) 24 September 2002 (24.09.2002) entire document	3, 5
Y	US 2020/0037756 A1 (LORD) 06 February 2020 (06.02.2020) entire document	14-16
A	US 2022/0279919 A1 (REGENCY SEATING INC.) 08 September 2022 (08.09.2022) entire document	1-18
Y	PAUL DOWNS. Custom Conference Tables. Internet. 30 May 2023. [Retrieved on 12 September 2024]. Retrieved from internet: <URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20230530104757/https://www.custom-conference-tables.com/about-tables/other-conference-table-materials > pages 1-8	5
☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: “A” document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance “D” document cited by the applicant in the international application “E” earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date “L” document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) “O” document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means “P” document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed “T” later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention “X” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone “Y” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art “&” document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 12 September 2024 (12.09.2024)		Date of mailing of the international search report 23 October 2024 (23.10.2024)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS MAIL STOP PCT, ATTN: ISA/US P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Facsimile No. 571-273-8300		Authorized officer TAINA MATOS Telephone No. 571-272-4300

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2024/033627

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.: **1-18**

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be examined, the appropriate additional examination fees must be paid.

Group I, claims 1-18, is drawn to a conference table comprising: a worksurface supported by the base.

Group II, claims 19-24, is drawn to a cable retention device.

Group III, claims 25-31, is drawn to a conference table comprising: a base comprising a peripheral wall defining an interior space.

Group IV, claims 32-37, is drawn to a method of using a conference table.

The inventions listed as Groups I-IV do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons:

The special technical features of the Group I invention: a worksurface supported by the base and comprising a peripheral edge, wherein the worksurface comprises an aperture comprising a node and at least three branches extending radially outwardly from the node, wherein each of the branches comprises a greatest width, and wherein the node comprises a width greater than the greatest width of each of the branches, and wherein each of the branches has a proximal end opening into and communicating with the node and a terminal end spaced from the node, wherein each of the terminal ends is located within 36 inches of the peripheral edge of the worksurface as claimed therein are not present in the invention of Groups II-IV. The special technical features of the Group II invention: a cable retention device comprising: a housing comprising a bottom, a peripheral side, a top, an inlet formed in the peripheral side, a first outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the peripheral side at a location spaced apart from the inlet, and a second outlet in communication with the inlet and formed in the bottom as claimed therein are not present in the invention of Groups I, III and IV. The special technical features of the Group III invention: a base comprising a peripheral wall defining an interior space, an opening in the peripheral wall, and a moveable panel moveable between an open position wherein the interior space is accessible through the opening and a closed position wherein the panel is disposed over the opening, wherein the panel comprises an outer cover and an inner mounting plate removably coupled to the outer cover, wherein the mounting plate comprises an electronic component mounting feature; and a worksurface comprising an upper surface, a bottom surface defining in part the interior space and an aperture communicating between the upper surface and the interior space as claimed therein are not present in the invention of Groups I, II and IV. The special technical features of the Group IV invention: a method of using a conference table comprising: maintaining a connector portion of a utility cable on an upper surface of a worksurface with a pod fixedly connected to the utility cable, wherein the utility cable extends through an aperture in the worksurface and wherein the pod is larger than the aperture; moving the pod relative to the upper surface to position the connector portion and thereby moving the utility cable relative to the aperture; positioning an electronic mobile device on a worksurface; and connecting the electronic mobile device to the utility cable as claimed therein are not present in the invention of Groups I-III.

Groups I-IV lack unity of invention because even though the inventions of these groups require the technical features of a conference table comprising: a base; and a worksurface, wherein the worksurface comprises an aperture, these technical features are not special technical features as it does not make a contribution over the prior art.

Specifically, US 2022/0279919 to Regency Seating teaches a conference table (table 220; figure 1) comprising: a base (support 30; figure 1); and a worksurface (tabletop assembly 290; figure 1), wherein the worksurface comprises an aperture (elongated central opening receiving grommet 200; figure 1; paragraph [0026]).

Since none of the special technical features of the Group I-IV inventions are found in more than one of the inventions, unity of invention is lacking.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2024/033627

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	HEILI POWER. Power Track. YouTube. 02 November 2020. [Retrieved on 12 September 2024]. Retrieved from internet: <URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILMioqWj8KE >. entire video	10