

a customer story

professional services

Establishing a new legal tradition.



Quarles & Brady LLP
Madison, Wisconsin

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Credits:

Forrer Business Interiors
Patricia S. Algiers & Associates

Law offices have always been about tradition. But now the practice of law is changing dramatically, and age-old law offices are getting a makeover. At Quarles & Brady LLP, a law firm with a national practice and more than 100 years of history, a new workplace is breaking some old traditions.

The firm's new 30,000 square-foot space on the top two floors of 33 East Main in downtown Madison, WI overlooks the state capitol building and the city's beautiful Lake Mendota and Lake Monona. The 360-degree views are spectacular. But even more impressive is what's going on inside the new space as Quarles changes how it performs and delivers legal services.

"The days when most legal work was done by individual lawyers in individual offices are coming to a close," says Don Schott, office

managing partner. The practice of law is much more collaborative today, and that's just one of the dramatic changes effecting law firms and other professional service firms. These firms all face:

- global clients and global competition
- the rising cost of real estate
- technology that affects every phase of professional practice
- different generations of workers with different needs and expectations
- a continual need to attract and retain talent

Quarles needed a workplace that could address these changes. "The firm wanted to position the firm for the future, to reinvent the way they practice law," says Pat Algiers, president of Patricia S. Algiers & Associates and leader of the multi-disciplinary design team.

To tackle these changes, the firm had to let go of traditional law office approaches. For example, partners in the firm traditionally have selected their own furniture. It was a perk of attaining partnership status in the

firm. "The result was beautifully decorated individual offices, but no real sense of shared enterprise," says Schott. Today, "clients ask who the team is that will be working on their matters."

Younger attorneys look for a collaborative work environment and support for how they want to work, including great tech support. "The more we can do to retain them once they're here, the better off we are."

■ ■ ■ ■ Don Schott,
Office Managing Partner

When it comes to staff, Quarles' retention rates are better than the national average, but the task of finding and keeping great talent never ends. Schott says office appearance counts because "the first impressions of our firm that law students and recruits get are very important."



Left: Private offices for partners and associates support confidentiality needs, but also allow collaborative work: Elegant Impact wood casegoods and Elective Elements 6 furniture set a tone that's "modern, upbeat, and forward looking."

Right: Workstations for legal assistants are designed with Answer systems furniture. The larger 8 x 10 floorplate allows for greater collaboration within the workspace.



To move forward, Quarles left behind outdated traditions such as the expensive and inflexible millwork in their old offices. Algiers and the design team specified "a family of products from Steelcase that would work together, let us establish a standard, and allow for flexibility in the future."

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"People in law offices now work as a team. So, for example, the secretarial workstations are larger, 8x10, and they each have a mobile ped with a cushion top, so someone from the team can come up and have a discussion. In the old school, the secretary always went to someone else," says Algiers.

Office administrator Donna Hurd notes "these workstations have low panels (54") so they're more like offices. It conveys an appreciation for their professionalism and what they bring to the firm."

Accounting specialists have the same size workstations, but with higher panels and sliding doors. "We used Answer systems furniture specifically because the practice is evolving. Quarles can change it, for example, by adding horizontal panels for another degree of privacy, or use the furniture in

other areas of the firm," says Algiers. Private offices for partners and associates support confidentiality needs, but also allow collaborative work: transaction tops on the worksurfaces welcome other members of the legal team to "pull up a chair and we can have a quick meeting," says Bennett Berson, Q&B partner. Elegant Impact wood casegoods and Elective Elements 6 furniture set a tone he calls "modern, upbeat, and forward looking."

"As soon as you walk off the elevator, it says the right things about our firm. Clients are very positive about the office now."

■ ■ ■ Bennett Berson
Q&B Partner

The new Quarles workplace became more collaborative practically at move-in. "In the old offices I was on a different floor with few attorneys. It was not the 'stream of commerce' for the office, a place you could exchange ideas. I love having my colleagues all around and up and down the hall. There's more informal conversation, more bouncing ideas around. That's a big positive for me," says Berson.

Algiers calls the Leap Lounge, the standard in all partner offices, a "huge plus. It allows

attorneys to have a desk chair and a lounge chair, and an ottoman that works as a table for a laptop."

Conference rooms near the reception area offer a great view of the State Capitol Building and make a convenient place for collaboration. "I had a prospective client in the conference room. There are two comfortable chairs and a Switch sofa. The client warmed up to the place instantly and it really set the tone for the meeting," says Berson.

Informal cafés were once found primarily in advertising agencies. Other professional firms have realized the potential of these spaces for informal conversation, team building, training, and the easy exchange of ideas that leads to innovation. At Quarles, Café Q exemplifies what an informal café can add to an organization.

This cafe offers stacking chairs and stools, stand-up height tables, and a counter that seats ten. Kitchen equipment, a Starbucks® coffee machine, vending machines, a large plasma screen TV, and entry to an outdoor balcony make the cafe a multipurpose place. It's quickly become an informal gathering space for staff, and a comfortable spot to meet with clients in a casual atmosphere: the in-house place to meet rather than going outside to a coffee shop or restaurant. Café Q even supports the firm's branding with dramatic tiles in Q&B's distinctive red hue.



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Tamara Infusino, account manager,
Forrer Business Interiors



"Law firms usually feel stuffy. This one is modern, laid back, inviting, bright and warm," says Hurd. "As soon as you walk off the elevator, it's says the right things about our firm. Clients are very positive about the office now," says Berson.

"It's really a destination space," says Tamara Infusino, account manager for Forrer Business Interiors. "Law firms operate in a competitive environment, and this office is a competitive advantage. It attracts both clients and staff. It's the kind of place where people really want to meet and work."

Clients get it, too. "We've devoted more of our space to common areas and spaces our clients will share with us, areas we'll work in together rather than to individual office space," says Schott. "Clients are surprised and impressed that the design is so modern and nontraditional. They find it refreshing and exciting."

Also refreshing is the project's cost. While most law firm build-outs average \$95 per square foot, Quarles set a far lower budget and met it: \$65 per square foot. Savings came in a variety of ways: flexible furniture instead of built-ins, a single carpet style throughout the space, using granite surface materials only in prominent places, even refreshing the company's existing art collection with new mattes and frames.

Law offices that are more collaborative, tech savvy, and distinctly image-enhancing yet cost-effective: the Quarles & Brady work environment reinforces a brand that's been around for more than a century, while setting some new precedents for the legal profession.



Products used:

Steelcase®: Answer® and Elective Elements® 6 systems furniture, Impact™ casegoods, Convene™ tables, Leap® WorkLounge, Leap® and Think® task seating

Metro: Topo Lounge and Lounge Jr. seating

Brayton®: Enea™ tables, barstools and stacker chairs, Switch™ lounge chairs and tables

Details®: Underline™ task lighting

Vecta® tables and Designtex fabrics

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Quarles & Brady's new offices offer spectacular views of great natural beauty from the 8th and 9th floors of the 33 East Main Building in Madison, and the office is bathed in natural light. So it's especially fitting that the interiors help preserve the outside environment by using several sustainable products. For example, Café Q has a floor made of bamboo, a quick-growing, resilient and naturally water resistant material. The floors in the supply rooms are made from recycled tires. Sherman Williams Harmony® low VOC paint is used throughout the space and Designtex panel fabric is 100% recycled polyester.

Seating choices are "green" by design. Leap chairs are 98% recyclable by weight, and made with 30% recycled content. The Think chairs in the conference areas are 99% recyclable, and contain up to 44% recycled content. Both chairs are Cradle to Cradle™ certified by McDonough Branaugh Design Chemistry and GREEN-GUARD Indoor Air Quality Certified.

"It was important that Steelcase showed us its commitment to sustainability, and was another factor that made us a good match," says Don Schott, office managing partner.