

Case Study

Financial Services Firm Balances Flexibility, Employees' Acoustic Experience in Office Redesign

A global banking client wanted to ensure that its offices could adapt to the future of work and engaged Trinity Cerami to define an approach and framework for designing a workplace with a spectrum of optimal acoustic environments to support flexibility.

The framework was intended to serve as a reference throughout the design process to guide decision-making, aligning aesthetic as well as functional needs. When it came time to apply the acoustic framework to its offices for the first time, the banking client again turned to Cerami for assistance.



Challenge

A global banking client wanted to apply a new framework for acoustic environments as it redesigned office space to make it more flexible and reduce the cost of construction in the future.



Solution

Cerami evaluated the impact of demountable partitions on the acoustic environment and helped the company balance its desire for flexibility with the employee experience to deliver a wide range of acoustic environments within a single site.



Result

By focusing on end users' needs, Cerami enabled the company to deliver the experiences its employees need to get their jobs done, from collaborating to focusing and more, while meeting the company's goal of having a flexible, future-ready workplace.

Challenge

When a global banking client began to redesign office spaces in two Chicago-area buildings, plans revolved around the use of demountable partitions, which are essentially partial height partitions terminating to the underside of the ceiling grid intended to be removed or reconfigured. This becomes much easier to change Day 2 than fixed plaster drywall construction as the needs of the business change, i.e., if a company decides to convert one large office into three smaller ones (or vice versa). But while demountable partitions make future flexibility easier and more cost-effective, they also pose unique challenges for the acoustics of an office space.

The banking client wanted to ensure that its new acoustic framework was applied when the new offices were built out. Cerami was engaged to ensure that the company could realize its acoustic goals while still adhering to its new standards designed to enable flexibility and reduce future construction costs.

Solution

Cerami partnered with the banking client to ensure that design decisions made to enable flexibility wouldn't get in the way of meeting end users' needs for sound separation and speech privacy, background noise, and reverberation control—needs that varied within a single location depending on the experience a given space was designed to deliver. For example, in a conference room where attendees rely on audio-visual technology, preventing echoes may be a primary concern, while a café might instead be designed to present a fun, bustling start to the day.

Part of the challenge stemmed from the demountable partitions, which can allow sound to travel between spaces. Cerami evaluated a wide variety of details and finishes to improve the design, making recommendations to the client that ranged from better gasketing at critical connection points, use of a sound masking (white noise) system, and soft materials to reduce echoes. Throughout the process, the Cerami team considered everything from finishes and furniture placement to plants, paintings, and shelving—anything that could influence how sound quality throughout the workplace affects the day in a life of an employee.

Cerami also played a key role in educating the global banking client about the construction standards that had been set at the company level and the different acoustic experiences and environments that could address the requirements of the new flexible workplace. By explaining each environment in layman's terms, Cerami was able to bring the acoustic criteria and metrics to life in a way that enabled the project team to make decisions experientially. By helping the client think about what each group of employees needed to do in each space throughout the course of the day, Cerami was able to help the company balance its desire for flexibility with the need for confidentiality in some areas of the office.

Result

The ideal workplace contains a mix of experiences, each of which has a different acoustic environment. By focusing on the acoustic experience and needs of the end user—the people who would be working in the offices on a regular basis—Cerami enabled their banking client to create an experience for employees that is equitable, profitable, and enjoyable.

Working with Cerami allowed us to design exactly the space we wanted, while not compromising on our needs for confidentiality and flexibility. They made the process painless and considered every little detail. – VICE PRESIDENT

About Trinity Consultants

Trinity Consultants, a leading global environmental consulting firm, provides services and solutions in the EHS Regulatory Compliance, Built Environment, Life Sciences, and Water & Ecology markets. Founded in 1974 Trinity has the technical expertise, industry depth, and capabilities to help clients achieve their goals across the natural and built environments.