

Photography: Offices, Ashok Charles

A better world for work

By Tom Kelly

Out of its concern for the environment, Hewitt Associates has chosen pre-owned furniture for its recent expansion



Hewitt Associates, a firm that supplies services for human resource and benefits management, has as its mission "making the world a better place to work," and that mission extends to the employees of its clients, its own associates, the communities around its offices and to a commitment to the environment. Because of the environmental commitment, it has chosen used furniture for the most recent build-out of three floors of its offices at 2 Sheppard East in Toronto.

Project designer Jennifer Cram with the design firm **Bullock Associates** told *Canadian Facility Management & Design* that the furniture was selected partly because much of the panel fabric could be reused and hence diverted from landfill.



Hewitt's Toronto office is 100 per cent open space for all levels of associates and managers. Says Geri Carson of the facilities department, "Our structure is often referred to as 'flat' in that we do not have titles per se and encourage an open door policy." Workstations are 6 by 7 feet.

The pre-owned furniture was supplemented with some new product to make up the 400 workstations required. The furniture is all the same brand and, despite the fact that it came from different original owners, it is all consistent in colour and finish. Much of the product was used in its "as is" condition, although the furniture supplier, Envirotech Office, reupholstered approximately 350 panels to match the inventory chosen by Hewitt and Bullock Associates.

The build out was necessitated by growth in the company in Canada from 500 to 1000 employees in the past two years, partially by joining forces with two other HR service firms. The latest three floors are occupied mainly by a call-centre operation where associates service client organizations for whom Hewitt administers and manages employee benefits plans.

100 per cent open workspace

Hewitt supports a "one-firm firm" approach," Geri Carson of the facilities department said. "Most of what you see in one office will be carried over to other Hewitt offices across North America. Our structure is often referred to as 'flat' in that we do not have titles per se and encourage an open door policy. This philosophy is supported by our workspace environment, which is 100 per cent open for everyone with no private offices.

"Workstations in the Toronto office vary according to business group needs. Business groups that primarily work in teams are supported by open quad workstations whereas the consulting groups whose functions are more individual-based work in privacy workstations. Our latest build supported some of both of these concepts in that the workstations are more private than the open quads yet provide the ability to have impromptu meetings within the immediate areas. Team huddle tables and adjustable stools placed sporadically around

Workstations are all situated at the perimeter of each floor to give every occupant the benefit of natural light. The base building lighting has been adapted with high quality parabolic lenses over individual workstations on all floors to reduce glare on computer screens.

the floors create this teaming ability. These initiatives promote discussions and information sharing. Also when we are designing the space we upgrade in areas such as sound masking and acoustic tile to also help with the level of noise and privacy."

Standardization of furniture has resulted in a degree of consistency in the design and a uniformity that ensures everyone is treated equally and fairly in their workspaces. Focus groups were used for previous build outs so that associates are aware their needs and what they see as important to them and their work have been taken into account.

The design makes efficient use of the floorplate area in terms of density of occupancy. The workstation size of 6 by 7 feet is larger than in many other call centres, and the arrangement in clusters with common areas between them gives spaciousness with room for meeting tables among workstations.

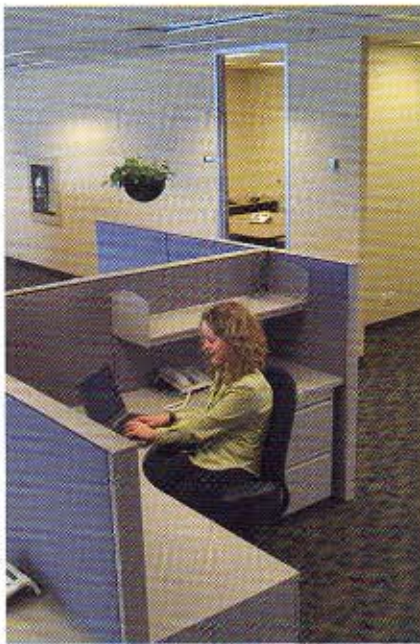
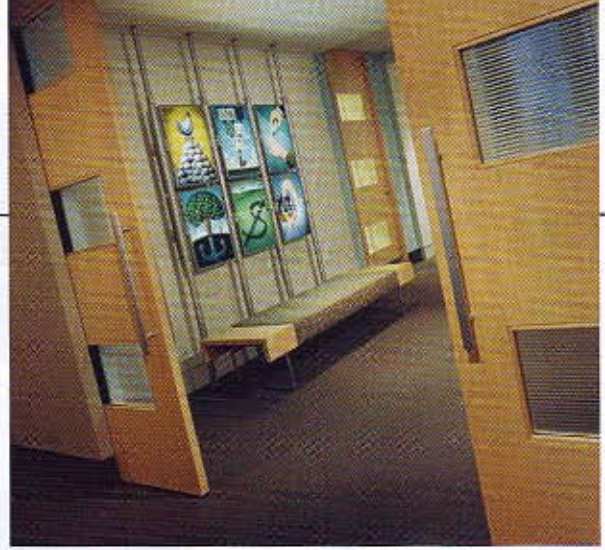
At the core of each floor is an area where beverages are available, as well as a copier and utility room, small one or two-person privacy rooms and a number of larger meeting rooms for up to eight people.

"One of our floors supports our Innovation Centre for internal information sharing meetings, which holds up to 100 people formally and bean bags chairs for those informal one on ones," Ms. Carson said.

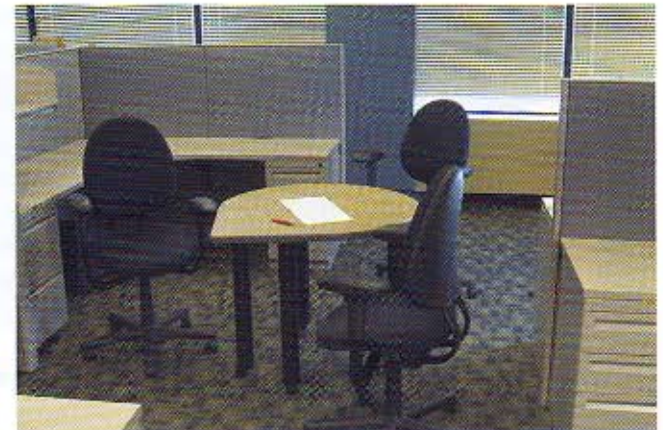
A cafeteria provides cooked food from breakfast time onwards (the food is free but a taxable benefit). On one wall of the cafeteria is a small gallery displaying paintings and other art bought for the firm from an Out of the Cold program operated in

Photography: Customer Experience Centre: David Whittaker

Visitors are introduced to Hewitt's services in a "customer experience centre" adjacent to the Toronto office's main reception. In the reception area (right), the various services are illustrated by graphics in an array of light boxes (graphics by BGM Imaging, light boxes by Fifty-One Design). Since the services are comprehensive and require extensive explanation, prospective clients are given presentations in a room furnished with soft seating and writing tablets (below right), often accompanied by lunch and a tour of the call-centre floor.



Privacy rooms (left) are situated at the core of each floorplate, as seen beyond this workstation. They have been designed for employees who need to make private phone calls, or for one-on-one discussions between two people.



Main suppliers

Workstations: Haworth Premise supplied by Envirotech Office

Seating, workstations, meeting & training rooms: Stoelcase Criterion, Jersey, Criterion

Teaming tables: Envirotech Office, Spec

Teaming mobile stools: Teknion Spinner

Training room tables: Teknion Expansion

Meeting room tables: Spec

Dealers: Mayhew Associates; SCI Interiors

Carpeting: Crossley Stamina; Shaw Kerala BL

Other flooring: equipment areas and

serveries: Parterre vinyl plank flooring

Sound masking: K.R. Moeller Associates

through Environmental Acoustics

The latest build supported the concept that the design of workstations in the Toronto office varies by business group needs. The three most recently built-out floors are occupied mainly by call-centre staff serving people calling in about health benefits. The workstations allow a degree of privacy and are equipped with tear-drop shaped tables for impromptu meetings, discussions and information sharing conveniently located among clusters of workstations.

downtown Toronto for the homeless, who have been encouraged to paint and draw as a means of helping them develop their interests and talents and gain self esteem. It's a part of the decor that reflects the firm's commitment to its community.