

FOCUS ON: *Alternative offices*

Call centre saves space, improves conditions

Better working conditions for call centre representatives was Gail Weininger's goal, as interior-design partner at **Julian Jacobs Architects**, in the design of the Wynford Call Centre for **Bell ExpressVu**, provider of direct-to-home satellite television.

The call centre was moved three years ago to one storey of a nondescript Toronto suburban office building with a low ceiling. The floor plate, giving 60,000 SF of usable space, accommodates 773 employees at 600 workstations, a real-estate savings of 30 per cent over the previous centre.

The existing T-bar ceiling was removed to give a 13-foot-height to the concrete slab, which has been sprayed on the underside with an acoustical material. Sound masking generators have been installed, carpet tile has been

laid on the floor to reduce noise, and headsets with highly-directional microphones block out extraneous noise.

Cabling to

A serpentine walkway, in which the concrete floor was stained to evoke the appearance of a villa, was designed to be more calming for workers than a straight path. Workstations depart from the conventional "ice-cube tray" design by being arranged at 120-degrees to each other. Although they are smaller than the previous call centre's workstations, the shape gives more usable space. Privacy screens are translucent.

workstations is accessible in overhead trusses. The workstations have been grouped to give open sightlines and a natural flow from one work area to another. Their adaptability has aided a number of reconfigurations.

The call centre has achieved a high employee retention: employee turnover has been 1.5 turnovers per seat per year, the industry standard being four.

The premises continue to be a site for tours by people from around the world seeking a new way to design call centres, Ms Weininger told *CFM&D*.

Vines hang over a main passageway and an area where lockers consist of L-shaped mirror-image pairs that halve the space usually needed for personal storage. A custom laminate surface of a rust-and-green leaf pattern on the locker doors compliments the vines. Ivy climbs trellises on the walls of the four main core areas that serve as orientation devices for the large floorplate.

Employee break-out and amenity areas are kept away from the windows to avoid obstructing light. The curved partitions echo the serpentine path and help to soften the design.



Main suppliers

Workstations: Resolve, by Herman Miller
Acoustic ceiling tiles: CGC
Sound masking: K.R. Moeller Associates Ltd. Scamp, Environmental Acoustics
Carpet tile: Interface
Ceramic tile: Dal Tile
Laminate: Formica
Lockers: Ideal Products
Partitions: Modernfold
Raised floor: SMED
Stained concrete: Surface Solution Ind.
Vinyl tile: Armstrong Industries, Octopus Products
Wallpaper: Levey Industries
Window blinds: Patry Products
Acoustic spray treatment: Monoglas
Specialty lighting: Nelson Garret

