

Herman Miller

AS CANADA'S LEADING AND FASTEST GROWING SATELLITE TV SERVICE PROVIDER AND THE NATION'S FIFTH LARGEST BROADCAST DISTRIBUTOR, BELL EXPRESSVU KNOWS HOW TO BUILD A TEAM OF PEOPLE WHO CAN DRIVE THEIR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES. CREATING A FUN, STIMULATING AND YET HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL WORK ENVIRONMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN PARAMOUNT. WITH EXPONENTIAL GROWTH SINCE THEIR INCEPTION IN 1997, THE COMPANY OUTGREW QUICKLY THEIR ORIGINAL 25,000 SQFT CALL CENTRE LOCATION, COMPLETE WITH HIGH CEILINGS, MULTIPLE LEVELS, GREENERY AND LOTS OF LIGHT. WHILE THE NEW SITE'S 60,000 SQFT FLOOR PLATE WOULD EASILY ACCOMMODATE THEIR 558 EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS GROWTH PROJECTIONS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, IT ALSO PRESENTED SOME SIZEABLE CHALLENGES. HERMAN MILLER JOINED THE TEAM THAT WOULD TRANSFORM THIS NON-DESCRIPT, SINGLE-LEVEL FLOOR PLATE (ROUGHLY THE 3 OF THREE FOOTBALL FIELDS) INTO ONE OF THE MOST INSPIRING AND FUNCTIONAL CALL CENTRE FACILITIES IN NORTH AMERICA.

CUSTOMER:
Bell ExpressVu
Toronto, Ontario

PRODUCT:
Resolve® systems furniture, Kiva® tables, Ethospace® systems furniture, Meridian® towers Aeron® chairs, Caper® chairs, Reaction® chairs and other classic Herman Miller pieces

PROJECT SIZE:
60,000 square feet
accommodation for over 550 employees
95 sqft per occupant

DESIGN FIRM:
Julian Jacobs Architects

For Bell ExpressVu, an inspiring and functional facility was paramount

In an industry plagued by churn, Bell ExpressVu's Toronto call centre facility has no problem with employee retention, and for good reason. They understood how critical a stimulating; pleasing work environment is to promoting teamwork, health and safety, effective work processes, productivity and overall employee satisfaction.

THE BIG PICTURE

"The role of our Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) is not an easy one. It's repetitive. It involves solving a lot of negative situations. It's a job largely tied to one workstation for 7.5 hours a day," explained Mark Knapton, Bell ExpressVu's Vice President of Call Centre Sales and Customer Services. "We wanted people to feel proud of their work space. Each station needed to adjust easily to the individual needs of many users. Natural light was important. Employees needed access to fellow team members for trouble shooting as well as the visual stimulation of seeing what's happening in and around their work areas. Overall, we wanted the new space to make people feel a part of something special, part of the big picture."

SETTING OBJECTIVES

With the move planned for early 2002, the company's big picture goals for the new space were also clear. While funky and light-filled, the old location was too small and teams were fragmented, tucked into any available space. Room was needed to resolve the operational issues of overcrowding and to accommodate their

CUSTOMER NEEDS:

Bell ExpressVu wanted their new Toronto call centre facility to:

- maintain, if not improve upon the youthful, creative, modern feel of their previous location
- easily accommodate their rapid growth rate over the next 5 years and the ongoing changes to CSR teams
- reflect the company's youthful, high-tech, innovative culture with an airy, expansive, non-rectilinear work environment
- ensure the highest standards of ergonomics, and health and safety
- enhance productivity and foster teamwork

impressive growth projections. Indeed, the call centre's headcount increased by 100 over the planning and installation phases of the project.

THE IDEAL SOLUTION

"We needed to find a furniture design that helped minimize real estate costs by decreasing square footage per workstation—all the while not making people feel crammed in. Ergonomics, light, sound privacy, flexibility to accommodate constant work team changes, and cost-effective power, voice and data tie-ins were all priorities," said Knapton. "Overall, we knew traditional cubicles just couldn't deliver the functionality, along with the fluid, organic lines we were looking for, particularly in this huge space. Herman Miller's Resolve system presented the ideal solution on a number of front."

FUNCTIONALITY IS KEY

"The idea of our 'Walk in the Park' theme was to break up this massive space with a non-rectilinear floor plan and help individual groups develop a sense of community," said Gail Weininger of Julian Jacobs Architects. Curved lines, lots of greenery, trellises, concrete stained to look like an old villa, works groups in clusters of four or five with open sightlines, as well as a natural flow from one work area to another—these are just a few of the attributes that helped bring excitement and a human scale to this large, traditional facility. "Of course, Resolve's organic lines and yet modern, high tech look were the perfect fit for what we were trying to achieve here," said Weininger. "But perhaps even more impressive was the functionality that Resolve brought to the space.

Resolve's translucent screens helped natural light carry through from periphery windows into interior work areas. While the system's unique 120-degree angle layout and honeycomb work clusters actually reduced square footage per workstation by almost thirty percent (over 50 square feet per occupant), employees commented repeatedly on how much more spacious their new Resolve stations felt.

Resolve's innovative pole and trough cable system allowed the designers to remove ceiling panels and raise the ceiling height for enhanced light penetration and create a greater sense of openness. Voice, data and power cables delivered through troughs and pole drops about every 1000 square feet not only looked great, but helped avoid the added expense of core drilling or creating a raised floor. Overall savings for IT cable distribution added up to an estimated 10%. The flexibility of this unfixed distribution system also anticipated the need for fast and easy floor plan reconfigurations as work teams changed or grew. Working with electrical contractors, the Herman Miller team helped maximize this adaptability by showing how various furniture layouts were linked to data/electrical needs.

Resolve's adaptability, design simplicity and high quality proved to be important assets to the project for a number of reasons. "We were all amazed at how small the staging area was for the product," said Weininger. "This space efficiency allowed trades people to work on the new space while installation began, helping everyone to meet tight deadlines. The client will be able to update the product look over time by just changing screen colours or logos. Over all, simplicity, quality and fewer components will mean less wear and tear, even with frequent reconfigurations."

Resolve's design flexibility was critical to maximizing our business efficiency as well," said Knapton. "Our CSR teams undergo

constant change. Sometimes, we're launching a new promotional campaign or we need to expand team numbers. Whatever the scenario, we need to reconfigure our floor plan and redeploy staff quickly. Resolve helps us do this."

Equally important, Resolve has helped to foster collaboration and communication among CSR team members. CSRs frequently refer to each other for troubleshooting suggestions. Experienced CSRs are often placed near to rookies to share their experience. It's also important that CSRs feel part of a team, particularly when responding to a competition or challenge. Resolve's sliding screens and 120 degree angle workspace provide the necessary privacy, while keeping CSRs connected to their colleagues.

WHAT THE CUSTOMER SEES

"This furniture is what Bell ExpressVu is all about. It reached out and grabbed us," said Knapton. "But beyond their products, we have been very pleased with the Herman Miller team. By bringing in Resolve mock-ups to our old site, they helped appease employee doubts and create buzz about the new space. They worked closely with our designer, using state-of-the-art software tools to make optimal use of resolve in the floor plan. They also accommodated customization requests with ease. Overall, the Herman Miller people were an integral part of the team that transformed this new Bell ExpressVu call centre into a world-class facility."

