

CREATIVE SPACES FOR THE CREATIVE MIND

Austin is full of interesting companies, but what's a successful business without an interesting space to accompany it? When it comes to creative offices, these companies don't mess around.

BY MACY MOORE

Studies have shown that the space a person works in affects his or her overall job performance. White walls, cubicles and dull atmospheres simply won't emit the highest level of creativity and efficiency from employees. Austin employers are beginning to realize that in order to gain and retain talent for their businesses, it will take more than high salaries. More and more companies are renovating their offices into creative spaces with fun designs and amenities to keep employees excited to come to work.

We spoke with PollyAnna Little, principal interior designer with architecture and design firm STG Design, who led the design of the following office spaces, and she truly believes in the power of a creative office.

"When we talk to companies about what they want for their office, so much of it is about recruitment," Little says. "They want their employees to want to work and stay with the business."

From businesses focused on shopping to those with a passion for technology, each of these local companies offers an office ideal for innovation and productivity.

SPREDFAST MEDIA

Originally known as Mass Relevance, Spredfast Media provides large businesses with a social-software platform to manage social-media accounts, campaigns and performance. Located in a historic building, the office space is both rustic and modern, and is full of life and character. The kitchen area has contemporary barstools and new-age lighting, but also has an exposed ceiling and concrete columns that give off an industrial vibe. The space was designed with clean lines and bright colors, so it's simple for employees to get their heads in the game while working with a creative mindset. Using oranges, blues, greens and grays, the design is bold and sophisticated.

"We used honest material when we designed the Spredfast Media office space," Little says. "Using honest material is recognizing that a column is made of concrete and letting it be just that. It's not clad in any other type of material; it just is what it is. The exposed mechanical system is also honest in that it isn't being hidden by something decorative."



Photos by Thomas McConnell.



RETAILMENOT

RetailMeNot first renovated its offices in 2011 with STG Design, and the company makes over the space about once every year. The international company serves as a marketplace to promote sales and engagement between retailers and shoppers.

Beginning with only 12,000 square feet, the business now has 100,000 square feet. As employees enter the building, they're greeted

with a red neon sign reading "Hello" before being given a complimentary drink from the bright-red coffee bar. No need to step outside the office for fresh air; RetailMeNot has a balcony with turf benches and tables for recharging. There's also the game floor, which features Monopoly flooring, a Scrabble ceiling and two truck beds that stick out of a wall and, when open, give way to ice-cold brews.

In August, STG Design completed another renovation for RetailMeNot in the company's original 12,000-square-foot space.

"We designed the office around the three-dimensional online-shopping experience," Little says. "It's based off of a home page or a hyperlink. The different themes you'll find on the websites are found throughout the office space."

ULTRA ELECTRONICS

With open ceilings, modern furniture and word-embedded walls, Ultra Electronics is a communications company serving the defence and aerospace, security and cyber, transport and energy markets. Several employees have military backgrounds, and the business directs a lot of attention to the military, so the design team added several subtle military icons, such as conference-room walls exhibiting the logos of different branches, and

integrated images of the globe and a compass throughout the office. The office has a modern vibe, with cool colors and geometric elements, as well as a warm atmosphere with comfortable seating and dark wood features. It feels like a homey office, but also includes industrial ceilings with pipes and interesting lighting features. The design allows for a comfortable office while simultaneously incorporating the electric aspect of the company.

“We always want to reflect the company, and Ultra Electronics was the first client that really got engaged in the design process,” Little says. “We delved into who they are as a company and researched the different military branches to incorporate into the design. ... A good design accommodates their employees. You can have a nice space, but you have to identify the wants and needs of the company for it to work.”



FROM THE AUSTIN WOMAN OFFICES

Austin Woman enlisted interior designer Monique Penner with Posh Interiors to repurpose an old picnic table to grace our brand-new office space. In the past, Penner reimagined picnic tables to use for conference meetings, dining and arts-and-crafts areas. She implemented the signature *AW* blue when creating this personalized DIY workspace for a cozy intern nook.

Below, we share Penner's step-by-step directions to achieve the perfect picnic table for an office or at-home space. Then all you need is to make it your own with uniquely you elements.

Directions:

1. Acquire a picnic table from a local hardware store (or Craigslist). Make sure it has a non-treated top (safe for foods) and treated legs to provide protection against wear and tear, mold, bugs, etc.

2. Choose a base color and paint the entire table. Be sure it's a color you like and that will complement the topcoat color you will apply later. For this table, we used a turquoise color for our base coat.

3. Apply the topcoat color. We used a medium gray.

4. Distress any areas on the table where you would like to see the base color come through. Start with light distressing and keep sanding until you get the look you desire. Medium to heavy paper works best.

5. Upholster the bench seats so they are more comfortable. Add 1 to 2 inches of foam and then choose the fabric. This bench has leather to provide more of an office feel, and it's easy to clean.