

a customer story

the environment

Creating an effective & socially-responsible workplace



Seventh Generation

Credits:

Business Interiors

William Maclay Architects
& Planners

Integrated Design Collaborative

Seventh Generation is committed to helping consumers make informed choices about the products they chose and the impact they have on the environment. So when it came time for the nation's leading marketer of non-toxic and environmentally safe household products to decide who they would work with to create their new corporate headquarters they made sure they did their homework.

Seventh Generation derives its name from the Iroquois belief that "In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations." Every time someone uses a Seventh Generation product they are making a difference by saving natural resources, reducing pollution, keeping toxic chemicals out of the environment and making the world a safer place for this and the next seven generations. In turn, Seventh Generation only considers doing business with organizations that are aligned with this philosophy.

"The furniture itself was secondary to the bigger process," explains Gregor Barnum, director of corporate consciousness. "We wanted to create a space that inherently had the essence of the company in it. We also wanted to involve the entire company in the design and the organization we chose to work with had to really get what Seventh Generation was all about."

Growing at a rate of 45% annually, Seventh Generation had made the decision to move into a new facility where all their employees could work under one roof. They had outgrown their existing space and employees were working from more than one location. "Through the design we wanted to increase dialogue and communication throughout the company – both within and without," explains Gregor. "The space had to create an environment where we could really encourage an increased level of communication with suppliers and other stakeholders."

Seventh Generation worked with William Maclay Architects and their design team to help them with a design solution that would capture the essence of the company as well as create a more collab-

orative and innovative environment. A two-day design charrette led by Integrated Design Collaborative involving employees from all areas of the company was conducted. "This exercise proved very helpful," explains Gregor. "From the onset we had debated whether the space should be designed with private offices or be a more open-plan environment. As a result of the charrette it was clear we should move towards the open plan."

But the question still remained who would help Seventh Generation create this new office environment? Seventh Generation asked three major office furniture manufacturers to submit proposals. "Through this process we wanted to identify what efforts these manufacturers were making in the areas of corporate and environmental stewardship. Also, based on the design criteria we submitted to them, we wanted to see the kinds of products and design solutions they would recommend for our space," explains Gregor.

Seventh Generation awarded Steelcase and Steelcase dealer Business Interiors (BI) the project. "It was clear to me that Steelcase really understood us," says



Left: Workstations have been designed using Answer systems furniture. 54-inch-high segmented panels provide sitting privacy and allow natural light to flow through-out the building.

Right: For work requiring additional privacy or to accommodate meetings, a number of conference and project rooms are available



Gregor. "It wasn't enough to just consider the environment, you have to consider the whole picture and corporate responsibility in general. As our relationship developed we learned about what Steelcase is doing in the world relative to this and we just knew they were aligned with us. And most importantly, they're evolving."

"Steelcase is working hard toward creating processes that will have positive impacts on the earth. It is clear to us that they share our environmental beliefs and understand what Seventh Generation is all about."

■ ■ ■ Gregor Barnum,
Director, Corporate Consciousness

William Maclay Architects & Planners (architects of the office interior) and Business Interiors collaborated with Seventh Generation in weekly sessions to design the interiors. They used input and information from Seventh Generation and its employee community. A blog wall was posted in the existing offices so current drawings could be pinned up to encourage employees to comment on the design. To accentuate the sense of community, promote interaction between employees and bring in needed daylight, a large hole was cut in the almost completed floorplates of the new LEED CS Lake

and College Building. A central unifying stair was installed tying together all the floors internally while providing daylight from a large bank of skylights overhead.

To ensure they were meeting all user needs, BI interviewed all employees to better understand the type of work they performed. Workstations were designed using Answer systems furniture. 54-inch-high segmented panels provide sitting privacy and allow natural light to flow throughout the building. Everyone in the facility has a view of the lake – a requirement of the design criteria. Bubble-jetty worksurfaces enable collaboration and information-sharing. All workstations include Think seating, a highly-environmentally conscience ergonomic chair. For work requiring additional privacy or to accommodate meetings, a number of conference and project rooms are in easy reach for every neighbourhood. As well, "Collision Spaces" have been designed into the space using Turnstone Jenny lounge seating, which provide employees with casual meeting places.

Sustainable DesignTex fabrics are used on all seating and panels. Almost every product in the facility has received Greenguard certification. Steelcase products helped to contribute to the Indoor Air Quality and recycling content categories for the building's LEED certification.

The end result surpassed the client's original goals to create a model working facility embodying company values and goals. Seventh Generation, William Maclay Architects & Planners, Steelcase and

Business Interiors created together a fully integrated and coordinated architectural design with freestanding and systems furniture, fixed and mobile office equipment. New possibilities and a new home for the Seventh Generation workplace community were created while serving as a model for generations to come.

The company currently employs 50 people and occupies 20,000 square feet on the third and fourth floors of their new facility, located on beautiful Lake Champlain. Based on current growth, Seventh Generation expects to require an additional 16,000 square feet in the next two years. "Steelcase is working hard toward creating processes that will have positive impacts on the earth. It is clear to us that they share our environmental beliefs and understand what Seventh Generation is all about.", say Gregor.

■ ■ ■ Steelcase products: Answer® Systems furniture, Think® seating, 730 storage cabinets, 8500 Series Tables.

Turnstone® products: Guest seating, Sweeper seating, Jenny lounge seating, mobile white boards, mobile pedestals, Payback™, MaxStacker® seating, Activity™ tables, Uno seating.

Details products: Workflo™ accessories, Height Adjustable Table.

Brayton: Ripple™ lounge seating, Soft Leaf table, Passerelle Table, Thoughtful Sofa.

PolyVision products: Markerboards, Room Wizard™, Interactive White Board.

DesignTex fabrics.

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