

Expanded Up, Not Out

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Image Courtesy of One Workplace



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By [Meghan Hall](#)

The price, cost and general hassle associated with expanding into a new property has left many companies over the course of the past few years taking a closer look at their own offices, and how to use them in a more effective manner. In 2017, when One Workplace, the largest workplace solutions company on the West Coast, needed to expand, it only seemed fitting to first evaluate the company's current headquarters space in Santa Clara, Calif., before looking for real estate elsewhere. The result was the company's new Orchard Loft: the first multi-story structural timber system to be approved and built in California.

"When this project began, we felt pretty fortunate. Real estate in the Bay Area is hard to come by. It's expensive, and we actually had a bunch of it, because we had a warehouse attached to our main headquarters space," explained One Workplace's Head of Design Christopher Good.

One Workplace began planning their expansion process by turning inward and evaluating how the team used its existing office space. Ultimately, One Workplace found that it was not using its office space very efficiently, and the way in which space was used—rather than the quantity of space—would become more paramount to how One Workplace decided to proceed with its expanding workforce.

"We already had about 38,000 square feet, but we were only occupying that space about 30 percent of the time, which is a pretty dramatic number to hear when you realize that 70 percent of our offices are vacant at any moment of the day," said Good, who attributed low usage numbers to the mobile nature of One Workplace's business.

One Workplace based the redesign of its space off of the concept of "urtonomy": defined by One Workplace as a new foundational way of working that channels the use of shared and diverse workspaces. This meant removing individual desks and replacing them with "neighborhoods." Each department would have their own specific workspace, and in between would be areas for collaboration, such as open booths, a quiet library space conference rooms, drop-in work areas and brainstorming walls.

"The first thing we knew was that taking away someone's individual ownership of a desk meant we had to give something back," emphasized Good, who also added that a huge part of the company's growth now includes the ability to work from home. "So, when we come to the office...we should be coming for a really great purpose and reason. We shouldn't sit in traffic just to sit at a desk. We should be coming because the spaces there are incredible for them to use and better than anything we might have at home or somewhere else."

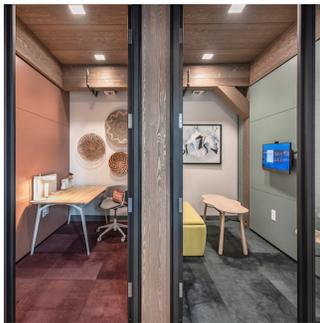


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One of those "incredible" spaces was the loft. The highlight of the project, it added square footage without having to expand the building's physical footprint. The structure features 30-foot timbers pieced together like a Lincoln Log set: they are delivered on site and fit together with traditional style joinery. The idea of the loft, and the materiality of it, was inspired by the history of the Silicon Valley, with its once vast orchards.

"It's an amazing timber structure, fabricated by machines," said Good. "It is a... beautiful story about how technology is rethinking a centuries old construction practice. So, we thought let's own that in concept."

One Workplace worked closely with Vantis, a commercial interior construction firm, and DIRTT, a modular interior firm, to make sure the space was also seismically sound. Focus rooms located below the loft space are meant to inspire refuge, while the loft space itself serves as a vantage point and "treehouse" for the office.

"I will admit readily, I had a few reservations about the process, but it is an iconic space," said Good. "Now stepping back, it turned out incredible; it is a beautiful space."

The loft, in term, complemented the rest of the office's new materials palette, which includes oxidizing steel, and soft colors in vegetable and jewel tones. The materials, stated Good, were pivotal, as One Workplace is in the business of furniture, and as such frequently rotates pieces throughout their space in an effort to show off what remains at the core of the company's business.

"The overall materiality story was one that was based on trying to own and appreciate the eclectic nature of the building we're in, and the industry we're in," said Good. "The finishes and the color story is very much about bringing together divergent materials... and balancing these things together."

That flexibility, whether it is regarding layout, or design, will remain key as One Workplace continues to grow.

"The space that we occupy is as much our home and work place as it is a space for us to tell an evolving story," said Good. "Every single day we're selling furniture and products. We had to have this eclectic, neutral shell that will allow those things to change and rotate monthly without looking out of place."