

# CHICAGO LAWYER®

SPACES

## OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Hall Prangle & Schoonveld serves up increased flexibility at its renovated office

By John McNally



**N**atalie McElligott knew the space intimately. She understood what was needed for the perfect renovation.

An associate architect with The Architects Partnership, McElligott had to deliver for an unusually familiar client. Her husband, Matt, has been with Hall Prangle & Schoonveld since 2008, and she was given the keys by her long-time friends to make the firm's office at 200 S. Wacker Drive look new again.

"(Matt's) a partner. We're at the same level-playing field with all these 'adults' that we grew up with," she said with a laugh. "It was more of the pressure of not disappointing them and just wanting to deliver on a space they needed. The office needed an overhaul. I thought that when I went in (to the firm) for anything.

"I was touched they wanted me to do it."

### SWEET MAHOGANY

McElligott worked closely with Jim Beavers, HPS's executive director, and firm partner Eric Schoonveld to liven up the look of the office and create more functional space. Beavers noted that when the firm first opened its office at 200

S. Wacker, there were around 35 employees. The firm now has 100 employees, and Beavers said work wasn't being done efficiently, particularly when meetings needed to work through lunchtime.

"What worked for us then didn't work for us now," he said.

McElligott knew she "couldn't erase the big elements," so she had to look for the uniting piece that could bridge the old office with the new. For HPS it was the existing gold mahogany wood that McElligott took and implemented throughout the office. It's now seen at the reception area in its backdrop and the color of the furniture, in the food service and kitchen areas, and large conference room desk.

"(From there) it's leaning in, versus basically saying 'here's the line of the old office and here's the line of the new office, and everyone just live with it,'" she said. "That's not successful."

McElligott said being able to make the old wood look "modern and sleek" was the toughest challenge. It was also the most rewarding payoff for her at the end of the project.



"It took a while to figure out the most successful way to do it," she said.

### READY TO SERVE

Beavers sat down with McElligott and gave her his vision for HPS's new office before offering her the job. He wanted functionality combined with flexibility, including a conference room with panels that could open and shut to fit the firm's needs.

"I wanted to turn a copy room, an old lunchroom, a hallway that wasn't used and our conference center into a multipurpose space," he said. "(So) we can close it off to make it half the size or (open it) to double, triple the size.

"Working with Natalie, we were able to come up with some unique design elements that allowed us to service our clients better in the conference area. Also, when we weren't using it for our clients, we can open up all the rooms together and have this free-flowing meeting space."

Beavers was especially focused on being able to serve food and refreshments within the con-

ference room so work meetings could continue in private. Before the renovation, the food was brought into the room and placed on a small credenza. Long lines of hungry attorneys formed along the wall waiting to decimate platters, creating an awkward scene in the small room.

Beavers and McElligott agreed on a service wall where the panels are easily moved in and out of position. There's also a food-service counter that features sliding panels on each side that could help enlarge the meeting area by about 30%, according to Beavers.

"We opened both ends of the conference up and put (in) double doors made of glass. Those can be opened up at anytime," Beavers said. "In the former hallway, we (installed) panels ... that could turn it into an extension of the conference room."

### LIGHTING THE WAY

Schoonveld, who has renovated his family's and his parents' home, nearly went into construction before deciding to commit to law. He says HPS's

culture has never been about keeping lawyers in the office all hours of the day and week. Still, the firm's renovated space will help its attorneys feel comfortable at the office.

"We've really tried to create this culture where we're all going to work hard and we're all rowing together," he said. "We've tried to accommodate that with our space.

"We spend so much time in our offices, at least before COVID. We knew we wanted to create an environment that was less tiresome and more energizing."

Schoonveld highlights the improved lighting throughout HPS and its connection to movement throughout the space. Beavers never realized how much darker the office was until the renovation was finished. The new design includes more direct-down lighting in the open areas and indirect lighting in the conference area. Beavers said that opened the look and comfort at HPS.

"Attorneys appreciate good lighting with their documents," he said. "We spent a lot of time looking at lighting to put throughout, including lighter carpets and wall coverings.

"It just invites a better mood. When you're in law, anytime you can try and lighten the mood around you, it helps with the in-depth discussions you're having with clients."

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