



HAWORTH®

SmithGroupJJR

Washington, DC

Client Space

When a company prides itself on great design and smart spaces, its office becomes more than just a place to work—it's a laboratory for ideas and a showroom for the solutions they bring to their clients. Renowned architecture firm SmithGroupJJR rose to this challenge by creating a thoughtful, sustainable space that is not only beautiful, but helps its employees work together more effectively.



SmithGroupJJR offices before renovation.

An Architecture Firm Designs for Itself

Nearing the end of a long lease, SmithGroupJJR saw great opportunity. Not only could they develop a new space that reflected their brand and current ways of working, they could also take advantage of up-to-date planning schemes that would help them reduce their real estate needs. While SmithGroupJJR had been guiding clients toward more collaborative, open workspaces, their own environment was dated and hierarchical. It was time for a change.

Because some of the most difficult projects are those a firm designs for itself, SmithGroupJJR began by assigning a “client” team and “design” team. The client team, made up of the firm’s future leadership, was entrusted to work with the design team as any outside client would.

Informed Planning through Objective Insight

SmithGroupJJR knew they were looking for a significant shift—from individual offices to a benching plan complemented by unassigned private and group spaces—to better support their collaborative culture and workstyle.

In addition, their wish list included:

- Transforming from an “office” to a “hub”
- Flattening the organization
- Encouraging mobile work
- Creating a laboratory for experimentation, testing, and mock-ups
- Making the space a showcase of their own capabilities

The team employed Haworth’s LENS™ assessment tools to identify workplace issues, gauge employee satisfaction with the previous space, diagnose organizational culture, and pinpoint opportunities to guide the culture in the desired direction. For example, even though overall satisfaction was high, employees expressed a desire for more team spaces, natural light, and acoustical privacy.

Putting Knowledge into Practice

Haworth’s leadership in workplace knowledge and assessment, combined with the ability to provide a fully integrated package, made it the perfect fit for SmithGroupJJR’s project. Throughout the process, the Haworth team provided workstation mock-ups and developed custom options and solutions for SmithGroupJJR in order to help them satisfy their goals.

What’s more, the Reside™ benching solution’s more generous dimensions, based on the North American standard, gave SmithGroupJJR confidence that their personnel would adapt to the new configuration. The new approach was not only more interactive, flexible and social, it significantly enhanced quality-of-life characteristics including daylight and views. There are no individual offices, so all employees are able to share equal access to the views.

Intended to impart an academic “studio” atmosphere, the vast majority of the finished space is devoted to open benching with flexible personal storage. There are only three large conference spaces and variously sized quiet rooms, huddle rooms and enclaves distributed throughout. Where possible, space is divided by X Series storage elements, to maximize the footprint and provide easy access to individual and team resources.

There’s also a family room (pictured on cover) and space set aside for experimentation, learning, and celebrating the design process to further encourage creativity and thinking about things in new ways. This area is accessible to visitors and clients so they can see how SmithGroupJJR works and become part of the process.

Square footage devoted to personal use has been reduced from 57 percent to just 25 percent of the total footprint, while collaborative areas have nearly quadrupled. And because technology access has been provided throughout, workers can be productive anywhere in the new offices.

Completing the Circle

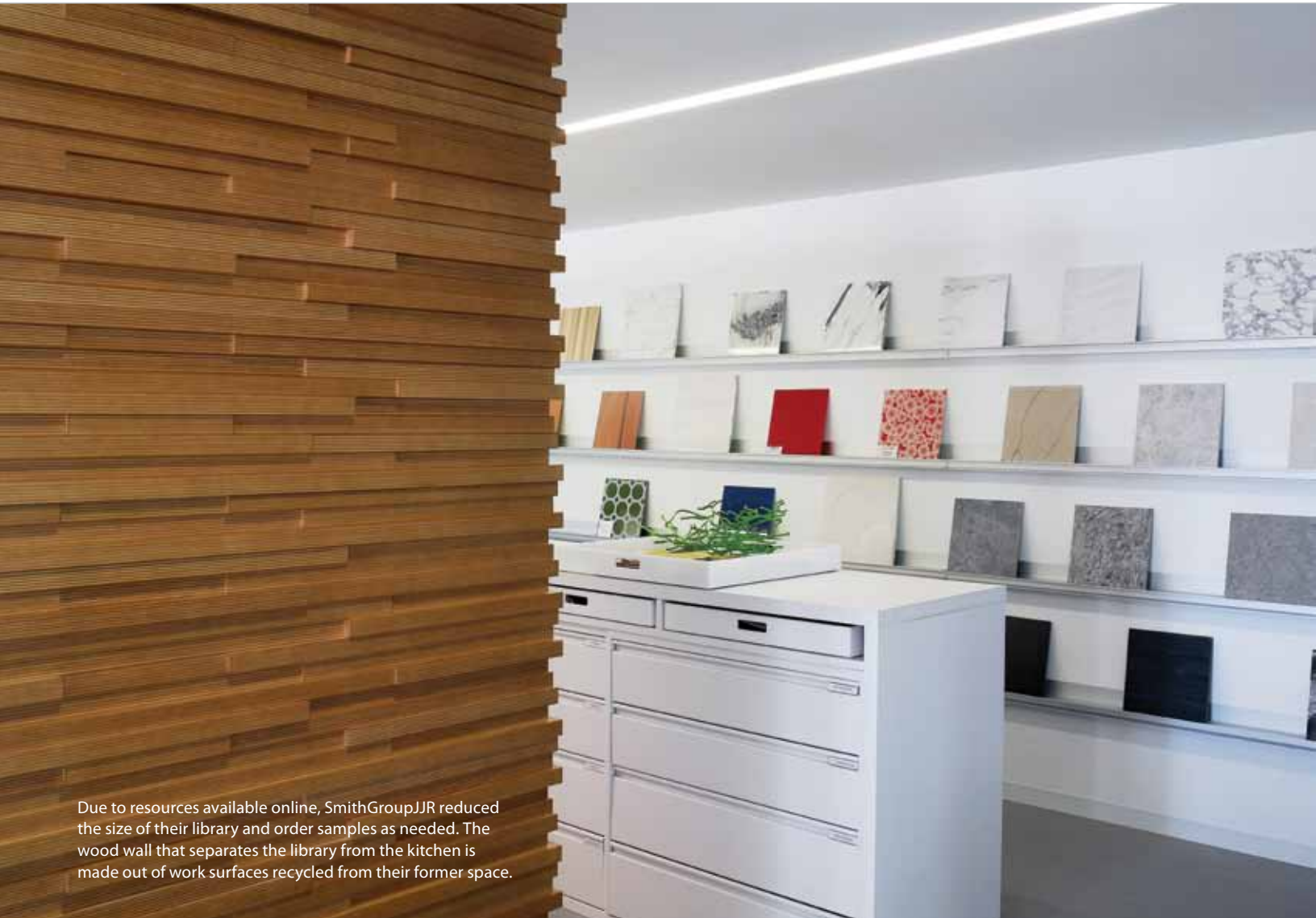
To ease the transition to the democratic new environment, SmithGroupJJR drew upon Haworth’s change management expertise. Fortunately, executives are setting the tone for the firm, with office and studio leaders working in the same types of spaces as interns.

In addition, the firm kept everyone in the loop through written updates, meetings throughout the process and tours through the space before it was complete, so they understood why changes were made and how spaces might be used. For example, while white boards and room sizes provide some clues, it isn’t just assumed that workers will recognize that unassigned, impromptu meeting areas are available on a first-come, first-served basis, or that management values casual, social interaction. Instead, these uses and activities are explicitly spelled out and encouraged.

The new, minimal-privacy, interactive space definitely takes some adjustment, but even those most hesitant at the beginning of the process are fully enjoying the new environment and all it has to offer.



SmithGroupJJR went from 280 sq. ft. to 180 sq. ft per person in order to increase the number of group spaces throughout their office. Additionally, all conference rooms are connected to the network, allowing all employees (even those without laptops) to utilize the technology available.



Due to resources available online, SmithGroupJJR reduced the size of their library and order samples as needed. The wood wall that separates the library from the kitchen is made out of work surfaces recycled from their former space.

Customer Profile

With ten offices throughout the country, SmithGroupJJR is one of the largest architecture and engineering firms in the U.S. and a leader in the science and technology, healthcare, higher education, and workplace markets. The firm ranked first for design quality and second overall in Architect magazine's 2011 annual best firms ranking.

Haworth Product

Desks, Files & Storage: Reside™ Desking, X Series®
Accessories: Belong™ Accessories, Kvadrat® Clouds
Walls: Enclose®
Seating: Very®
Tables: Planes®
Lighting: BRAZO®

Architectural & Design Firm: SmithGroup JJR – Washington, DC

General Contractor: HITT Contracting, Inc. – Falls Church, VA

Haworth Furniture Dealer: Price Modern – Washington, DC

Photographer: Eric Laignel



Haworth's Integrated Palette includes Compose, Enclose, Patterns, Planes, Reside, Beside, and Belong.

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