Culture + Talent

Quarles & Brady: New Innovative Office

A key design feature of this approximately 20,000-square-foot new workplace: It provides for flexibility in a way that also sends a clear message about the Quarles & Brady culture.

Read 8 mins



QUARLES & BRADY SHOWCASES THEIR BRAND IN NEW INDY OFFICE

Creating a new workplace for an organization with multiple locations should never be about rote duplication, say leaders at Quarles & Brady, a progressive 120+ year-old multidisciplinary legal services firm with offices in 10 U.S. cities. Instead, it should always be leveraged as an opportunity to push traditions forward, stay ahead of trends and support employees and clients in distinctive and innovative ways.

Their most recent case in point: a new Quarles & Brady office in the heart of downtown Indianapolis, occupying the 24th floor of the 28-story BMO Plaza, one of the city's tallest buildings. Stunning 360-degree views of the capital city skyline are a vibrant backdrop for a sophisticated, mostly monochromatic interior that was intentionally designed to be a people-focused space, with a range of zones and settings that effectively support the more than 30 professionals who work here.

“We’re excited to bring the strengths of our firm to Indy, where we see a lot of innovation going on. It’s a relatively young city with a young demographic, and exciting things are happening here,” says Kimberly L. Johnson, firm chair. “We’re starting out small, but we plan to grow, and we have room to grow. Having an innovative space that can respond to change quickly and take us into the future was a big objective for us.”

ANTICIPATING GROWTH, BOOSTING COLLABORATION

A key design feature of this approximately 20,000-square-foot new workplace: It provides for flexibility in a way that also sends a clear message about the Quarles & Brady culture. Offices for attorneys are all the same size, whether they’re partners or associates, all furnished with Steelcase high-performance, highly adjustable Leap chairs and Elective Elements freestanding office system, selected for its adaptable performance, simple technology interface and streamlined professional aesthetic. Without hierarchy-based distinctions, adding to the legal team or accommodating promotions becomes effortless: no office shuffling, no furniture change-outs, no hassles.

What’s more, no one on the Indianapolis team has a corner office. Instead, those best-view settings are collaborative areas that everyone can use and enjoy. Such a democratic approach to space planning is still uncommon in the legal profession, but it has been enthusiastically received by the Quarles & Brady team here, and firm leaders predict they will be extending the concept to other locations in the future.



“We’ve decided that the direction of the legal practice and the direction in which our clients are going really doesn’t dictate the more traditional style of C-suite offices,” says D. Linden Barber, managing partner of the Quarles & Brady Indianapolis office.

As important, luxurious C-suite offices also don’t fit well with the Quarles & Brady culture, he adds. “Our culture is different compared to that of many other firms. Having beautiful corner offices with the views and just one person utilizing that isn’t in line with our collaborative approach to the practice of law. Our workplace is where we meet with other people: our colleagues and our clients. We want our spaces to support collaboration instead of being a barrier to it.”

Cross-specialty collaboration carries huge benefits for clients, and combining expertise is also a plus for attorneys and staff because it means they can deliver higher value and build stronger relationships.

“Having others around gives you that synergy, that energy,” says Johnson. “Brainstorming and thinking together about how we can better serve the client means a lot. There’s real advantage in having a broad understanding of their businesses and being able to meet diverse needs.”

Conference room-based and mobile videoconferencing capabilities in the Indianapolis office make it easy to tap into the expertise of Quarles & Brady attorneys in other locations. In addition, to broaden the expertise available to clients, guest offices are available for visiting partners from other locations.

MORE THAN JUST WALLS

As in most professions, fast-paced change is a fact of life for how law is practiced today. To accommodate future needs, Steelcase’s Vertical Intelligent Architecture (V.I.A.) demountable walls are used extensively in the new Quarles & Brady space instead of typical drywall construction. V.I.A. defines areas for hospitality and socializing on both sides of the expansive reception area and also is used to create fully enclosed, acoustically sealed interior offices and “The Q,” a large central conference room. Thanks to V.I.A, the entire core area can morph and evolve as needed.



“We selected the Steelcase V.I.A. wall system because it is both flexible and beautiful,” says Patricia S. Algiers, president of Chemistry in Place and the lead designer on the project. “It works wonderfully with the building, Elective Elements and design elements – and it can be moved if the space needs to change.”

As important as collaboration is to the way Quarles & Brady practices law, having areas for focused work and confidential conversations is also essential. With its unique seal system, V.I.A. over-delivers on ensuring acoustical privacy. The paralegal team in Indianapolis, whose work requires many hours of deep concentration as they delve into research and write reports, especially appreciates V.I.A.’s superior noise-management properties.

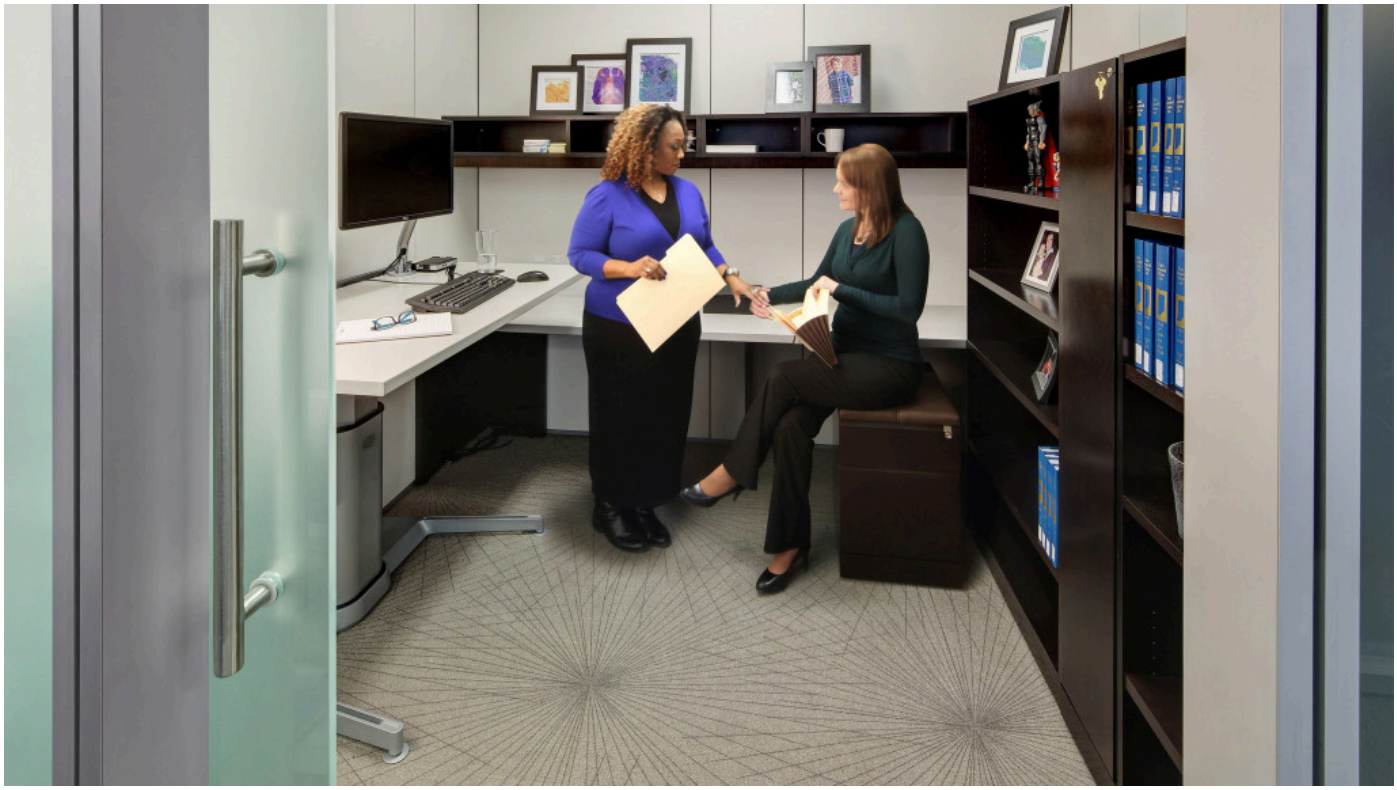


In many law offices, paralegals are assigned to high-panel workstations. In the new Quarles & Brady Indianapolis office, the paralegal team enjoys V.I.A.-enclosed inner offices that provide quiet and privacy. At the same time, translucent glass and slider doors give visibility to colleagues and sightlines to outside views.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Quarles & Brady knows that taking care of the people who comprise their firm improves their ability to provide top-tier services to clients. For precisely that reason, the new office in Indianapolis was intentionally designed to promote the wellbeing of everyone who works there.

Supporting the health benefits of movement throughout the workday, every office and workstation has an Airtouch height-adjustable worksurface that allows occupants to change their postures effortlessly from sitting to standing throughout the workday. A Walkstation treadmill desk is accessible to all employees, encouraging them to burn calories and become more energized while accomplishing the work they'd normally do seated. Attorneys and law firm staff notoriously work long hours at their desks, so the ability to move throughout the day is a big plus for physical health. Based on her firsthand experience, Johnson says it can also be a mind-clearing, de-stressing activity that can boost fresh thinking and problem-solving.



Promoting cognitive and emotional wellbeing, there is ample access to daylight and inspiring views of the city. Conference rooms where meetings with clients often occur offer stunning vistas and, thanks to their open, panel free workstations and no closed-off corner offices getting in the way, legal secretaries and assistants also enjoy some of the best views on the floor.

LOCAL, ON A NATIONAL SCALE

Optimizing the power of place is an important part of the Quarles & Brady success strategy. Within their offices, that translates into providing individuals and teams with what they need to do their best work. It also means celebrating the distinct qualities of each city where the firm has established an office, says John J. Peterburs, executive director for the firm.



In Indianapolis, in partnership with the Herron School of Art and Design, Quarles & Brady sponsored a photographic art competition and selected winning entries to showcase on the walls of their new office. The vibrant images add a distinct form of “local color” to the work environment that can be appreciated by guests as well as those who work here. The newly opened office in Indianapolis is intended to be a gathering place as well as a workplace, with luncheons and after-hours events for professional and community organizations hosted in the spacious lobby and adjoining “hub room.” Comfortable lounge seating in these areas makes it easy to congregate and share ideas.

“We like to have a presence in the heart of the city. We like to partner with the community and give back,” says Johnson. Clearly, as a progressive expression of the Quarles & Brady brand and culture, their new office in Indianapolis is already having a very positive impact.



“Personally, what I like best is the fact that I walk around and see people smiling because of the environment. The space makes everyone so happy,” says Barber. “It tells people that this is a different kind of law firm and our culture really does matter – it’s not just lip service. I think that the space we have created will contribute to our ability to hire the type of staff that wants to be part of our culture. They can see it reflected in our space.”

CREDITS

Designer: Chemistry in Place
Dealer: Forrer Business Interiors

PRODUCTS FROM STEELCASE

V.I.A. Demountable Walls
Elective Elements
Airtouch Tables
Leap Seating
Amia Seating
Walkstation

PRODUCTS FROM COALESSE

Bob Lounge & Table
Host Table
Akira Table
Enea Lottus Side Chair
Joel Lounge Chair
Together Bench
Exponents Moby
Mobile Credenza
Massaud Lounge & Ottoman

Featured Products