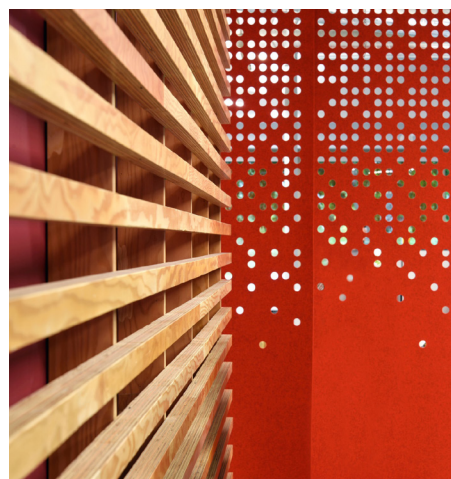


Space to grow

ROBERTSON MARTIN ARCHITECTS EMBRACES CHALLENGE TO MAKE 'ART MEET SCIENCE' IN YOU.I TV'S KANATA HEADQUARTERS

You.i TV, a growing Kanata tech company looking to prioritize workplace culture and employee happiness, turned to local firm Robertson Martin Architects (RMA) to help the firm create a space to grow in.

"Having been involved with You.i's earlier offices, we watched with admiration as the company flourished," says Robert Martin, principal architect at RMA. Given the company's rapid growth and evolving space needs, "working on this project felt like shooting at a moving target."



Martin says You.i TV invested significant effort with Meredith Thatcher of Thatcher Workplace Consulting, engaging its employees about their needs and vision for their workspace. They gave RMA a lot of trust to interpret its workplace culture and provide a space that would accommodate growth.

An example of that trust is front and centre in You.i TV's new space: Project architect Todd Headon convinced them to open up the second floor and allow for a large staircase connecting the two levels. It was a big move, he says, but one that connects employees in different departments and keeps the flow of people within You.i TV's space.

Jason Flick, founder and CEO of You.i TV, says he had a particular passion for the staircase. He credits the involved process between RMA and the client for the success of the project, as well as both sides' willingness to push boundaries.

"We did take a risk," says Flick. "That takes confidence and courage."

FLEXIBILITY

The playful, bright and airy space emphasizes view corridors and connectivity, in contrast to the disorienting, bland cubicle arrangement of the previous tenant. The workplace is creatively and purposefully designed, with small elements throughout that serve dual functions, such as the hanging red felt screen that separate the lobby from a ground-level work area. The red accent speaks to You.i TV's branding, while the retractable hanging screen serves to

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– ROBERT MARTIN, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT, ROBERTSON MARTIN ARCHITECTS

muffle sound.

There's an intentionality to the alignment of the exposed ductwork, explains Martin; the spare ceiling exposes some of the technology that goes into a building, representative of You.i TV's mantra "Art Meets Science."

"The building systems and technology, or the science, actually has an aesthetic quality to it," says Martin. "It's part of the story."

You.i TV's irregular hexagonal logo is subtly reflected throughout the building, from the soft upwards angle on the wood slats separating a meeting space from the office floor, to the bright red lines above the second-floor boardroom.

The small meeting rooms sprinkled throughout are intimate and cozy, perfect for the monthly employee check-ins held by You.i TV. Other, larger meetings rooms are tucked away on both floors, and on the second floor a row of private work pods – similar to those found in business-class

airport lounges – face a window overlooking the tech park.

Martin explains that a variety of meeting spaces is necessary for a mobile, agile, technology-enabled and highly collaborative workplace. "It's a lot of coverage for a lot of different teams," says Deborah Naczynski, design and outreach coordinator for You.i TV. "You need custom. You need thoughtfulness."

Headon says dealing with the multiple entrances of the previous space took careful planning in order to foster the flow of people throughout the office. Soft green and blue folded plane walls stand out among the grey, serving multiple purposes including community posting spaces and dividers.

Naczynski says the walls, while seemingly a small detail, make a big difference.

"It's just a little wall, but it does a hundred different things," she says.

One of the most important dual-purpose



elements is the showroom tucked behind the lobby wall. There, high-tech screens mounted on rolling cabinets are used not only for employees' needs, but also for product demonstrations. Trisha Cooke, vice-president of marketing, says it was important to You.i TV that the employees benefited from the new space just as much as clients and visitors.

"Every time you talk about the customer being satisfied, you can also talk about the employee being satisfied," she says. Before, setting up for demos was "like a circus," and now everything they need is in one compact, multi-functional room, saving time and energy.

RMA made sure that the entire design concept was based on a thorough consultation process with You.i employees, who described their ideal workspace as both "elegant and comfortable". The cost-effective design combines high-end design and down-to-earth materials such as felt and plywood to create a modern home atmosphere.

The cafeteria is next door to high-tech training rooms, shower rooms, bike storage, a meditation room and more. With Ottawa's ThinkLunch embedded in the bright, modern space, there's clear emphasis placed



on employee health. Bar lighting above the small, round tables continues the subtle branding, and the room can house almost everyone from the two floors.

"This functions as kind of a town hall," says Martin. Flick adds they have had more than 40 events here since the space opened, not to mention office-wide meetings and presentations. Around the corner on the first floor is another multi-purpose space with

couches and a few musical instruments, perfect for smaller community gatherings and events.

For You.i TV, one of the most important aspects of their new spaces is the flexibility of all the different elements. Robertson Martin Architects has given them a space to grow in, while still prioritizing workplace culture and community involvement.

"Things are always going to change," says Naczynski. "Versatility is key."

