

Much More Than A Place To Work

Publisher Philip H. Power's charge to the interior designers for the Observer Newspapers' new building was, "The most important key to our organization is our people, and I want our new building interior designed to be much more than a place to work - a pleasant environment where people will enjoy working and feel at home."

The Contract Division of the J.L. Hudson Company was selected to do the interior design for Observer Newspapers' new building, because of their professional expertise, their vast selection of fabrics, wallcoverings, carpeting and furniture, and their tremendous purchasing power.

NEAL CRANDALL, Diane Rehn and Pete Donaldson of Hudson's Contract Division faced three basic challenges in the space planning and interior design of Observer Newspapers.

- First, to gather together in one new central building six previously scattered old, run-down, overcrowded office facilities. This meant changing the "pack rat" atmosphere to a pleasant environment where people would enjoy working and feel at home.
- Second, to make the space planning totally flexible for a growing organization such as Observer Newspapers, allowing for maximum change at minimum cost, giving them room to grow, expand, adjust and adapt.
- Third, to make the new building efficient and yet unique, unlike any other printing facility in the world.

Hudson's answer to these challenges?

You'll see it on these pages, in the Observer building and in the end result - what this new building is really all about - better hometown newspapers for our readers and advertisers.

THE DESIGNERS began more than two years ago, spending many months talking to Observer department directors and individually to nearly all of the 160 employees, getting to know them, their part in the newspaper operation, learning their work station needs, studying the paper flow, and finding out what kinds of office equipment and accessories each employee needed to do his job efficiently.

Indeed, this process involved learning the entire operation of a newspaper from the time a reporter writes his story to the time that the carrier boy delivers the paper on the front porch of your home.

Slowly the design and the warm, earth color concept began to evolve and was presented to Observer department heads by scaled drawings, sample fabrics, carpeting and wallcoverings on color boards, and visual selection of furniture and accessories.

The designers specified and approved the selection of fine carpeting used in the offices in the Administration wing and all other private offices, which was supplied and installed by Manny Gorman's St. Clair Carpet Company of Livonia.

OBSERVER MANAGEMENT specified that the general core area - consisting of 15,000 sq. ft. and accommodating four separate departments and over 100 people - should have no partitions, thus allowing for flexibility and expansion, a radical departure from customary newspaper design.

Hudson's plans ignored the old "bull pen" type of desk placement. Instead, their concept resulted in groupings of two, three or four employees at work stations, planned so that each individual has adequate file space, desk and typewriter "L", and storage space at his finger tips. Verbal contact is maintained with those employees necessary to his work, and yet he has the privacy he needs.

Separation between Editorial, Advertising, Accounting and Composing Departments was accomplished by the positioning of files, wardrobe cabinets, decorative wood screening, color panels and live plants.

In an area this large and serving over 100 employees with 85 telephones ringing, eight perforating keyboards, 50 odd typewriters banging and general conversation, there was genuine concern over the potential noise level.

Hudson's acoustical answer to that was carpeting (wallscaping) on the walls, in addition to carpeting on the floor and draperies at the 10 foot wide windows. The result is minimum noise.

And the environment?

Ask Observer employees. They're surrounded by beautiful live plants. They have all the tools they need to work with. They have spacious, efficient work areas. They have attractive, quiet, rest areas. They have a music system. They have a beautiful, low cost - subsidized by the company - cafeteria. They can each see the woods from the windows.

It's quiet. Relaxing. A good place to think... and grow.

Much more than a place to work.

