

Sterling Bay

CLIENT STORY

Real Estate
Chicago, IL



50%

It takes 7 seconds to make a first impression, and 13% of consumers would pay up to 50% more for products or services if they had the impression that your business makes a positive impact.¹

Companies have a growing understanding that their brand is the complete set of touchpoints and emotional experiences it has with a customer or client. Because of this, companies and organizations are investing in physical space branding that can impact and influence perceptions of the brand and the company's capabilities.

For decades, Sterling Bay has been Chicago's premier real estate developer, changing the face of the West Loop and beyond. So when they had the opportunity to move their headquarters to their showpiece building on Green Street in the Fulton Market District, they wanted to ensure their office both spoke to who they were as a company and felt welcoming to every visitor that may walk in their door.

"When we met with Sterling Bay, there was a lot of discussion about how they have evolved as a company and how to capture that in the space," said Cara Rooney-Fields, Senior Designer at IA Interior Architects in Chicago.



"From small nooks to large conference rooms, there are a range of options for the Sterling Bay team to meet and work in."

MCKENZIE PARKER

PROJECT MANAGER,
STERLING BAY



Neil Schneider, Design Director and Principal at IA, elaborated, "It was important to cater to a wide variety [of users]. This diverse group of people would be walking into the space and it should be an inclusive environment where a tradesman who worked on the building feels just as part of the world of Sterling Bay as the Mayor of Chicago. We were trying to create a platform that allows people's personalities to shine within this environment."

In capturing the feel of Sterling Bay and how their team would best utilize the space, IA added decorative embellishments and one-of-a-kind crafted furniture pieces alongside Allsteel | Gunlocke kit-of-parts. Schneider explained, "When we looked at the product offerings and how we could customize, working with Michelle and her team, we dove into a lot of different solutions on how we could provide a solution that was clearly Sterling Bay, so that when someone looked at [customized furniture], it looked like it was part of the space and unique to Sterling Bay, even though we knew 90-percent of it was standard product."

"[Customization] gave this elevated feel to the products that was a true success," he continued.

Part of the success in specifying the right furniture for the company was because they work so closely with space--especially office spaces. Schneider said, "Sterling Bay builds so many buildings and sees so many space types across the city, so for them, they kept comparing different projects that they'd seen and successful kit-of-parts within those environments. When we were working with them, it was more of, as Cara describes it, a great landscape of variety and collection; they didn't want to feel like a cubicle farm within their open office."

Making sure the space didn't feel like a "cubicle farm" went beyond aesthetic and how the environment would feel: it was necessary to create breakout spaces and small group spots throughout the office to give Sterling Bay employees the best opportunity to thrive. As Rooney-Fields described it, Sterling Bay was looking for a landscape that would allow cross-pollination between teams and would encourage working together. They wanted small teams of people to be able to work together when needed rather than require reserving conference room space.

These brainstorming and small group spaces evolved in two main ways: first, bullpens were constructed for teams that often collaborate. In these bullpens, the perimeter of the room is lined with workstations and a table with a monitor and other collaborative tools sits in the center of the space, so that problems can be worked out together in real-time as needed. Second, the entire floorplan, especially the hallways, utilizes small group spaces so that breakout meetings are common and encouraged.

"None of our circulation paths feel like a hallway. We used the whole floorplate for breakout and impromptu meetings. Every hallway tells the story of the brand, and it has a variety of seating zones."

NEIL SCHNEIDER

PRINCIPAL,
IA INTERIOR ARCHITECTS



PROJECT DETAILS

Headquarters

Chicago, IL
80 Employees

Partnerships

Henricksen
IA Interior Architects
Clune Construction

Schneider explained, "We asked, 'How do we engage the entire facility through circulation?' None of our circulation paths feel like a hallway. We used the whole floorplate for breakout and impromptu meetings. Every hallway tells the story of the brand, and it has a variety of seating zones." Filtered water dispensers are also common in the hallways, encouraging employees to venture out of their workstations and mingle within the hallways and breakout spaces.

IA's hard work and innovation was recognized. In 2020, they were named a finalist in Interior Design's Best of Year Award for Small Corporate Office Interior Design.

But the excitement surrounding the space is personal as well. Employees and visitors alike have been incredibly positive about the space, describing the office as modern and sleek. During a time when corporations are developing return to work plans and understanding how to create value for their employees by providing functional spaces and amenities for efficiencies at the office, it is important to have a positive and enticing environment.

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¹ www.tailorbrands.com