


The Steelcase logo is positioned in the top left corner of the image. It consists of the word "Steelcase" in a white, sans-serif font against a dark background.A photograph of a modern office interior. The room features large windows on the right side, offering a view of a cityscape and a body of water. In the foreground, there is a dark wood desk with a black office chair. On the desk, there is a computer monitor, a printer, and some papers. The office is well-lit, and the overall atmosphere is professional and contemporary.

Damon Morey LLP, Attorneys at Law | Buffalo, NY

a customer story

Distinctive new offices balance a progressive legal practice with a tradition of excellence

Let's say your law firm has a long, successful history and a solid client base, but your offices are inefficient and outdated. It's not getting any easier to attract and retain top legal talent and new clients, and you want to balance the benefits of tradition with flexibility for the future. What do you do?

If you're Damon Morey LLP, of Buffalo, NY, you create smaller, more efficient law offices that function and feel bigger and better, adapt to the evolving practice of law, and present a confident, striking image that reestablishes your firm's presence in the region.

To say their new office literally "transforms the organization," as managing partner Peter Marlette expresses it, seems reasonable considering all the features of their new office:

- a more efficient two-floor layout (vs. 8 floors previously)
- an overall reduction in real estate of 10%
- wood systems furniture and casegoods that reflect both the firm's versatility and its roots
- more client meeting spaces for consultation and collaboration
- workspaces for attorneys, paralegals, and support staff that are more effective, ergonomic, and collegial
- more technology integration and less reliance on paper storage
- interiors that are progressive, professional, and client-centered

The firm invested over three years in planning their move, including tours of other law firm workplaces and a visit to the Steelcase Wood showroom. Steelcase also shared its research on the current state and future of the legal industry, as well as new strategies for private offices, with the firm's leadership. They worked closely with Buffalo-based designer Gina Mungovan-Stavisky. "We looked carefully at how Damon Morey was working, and how they wanted to work in the future, what they needed to be most productive," she says.

Their extensive study paid off. When the chief operating officer and two long-time partners "walked into Elective Elements 6 for the first time, it was astounding how the three of us immediately agreed this was what we needed," says Carol Snider, a partner and 23-year veteran of Damon Morey. "Its furniture that shows we're contemporary, strong, and moving forward."

Damon Morey wanted a workplace that could handle a changing legal industry. "Clients want a one-stop law firm, and attorneys often need to collaborate to provide specialized expertise," says Anthony Fedele, chief operating officer. Legal professionals are organized for more efficient work processes. Individual workspaces support both increased use of technology and the legal industry's continuing reliance on paper documents. Conference spaces are smaller but there are more of them, reflecting a shift to more collaborative meetings with clients.

"In the old space, there were times that a week or two would go by and you wouldn't see someone from the same floor," says Snider. "Now groups work together more, we see other people more often

and hear what's going on in other departments. This increases our ability to collaborate with other partners, to offer clients specific services that you may not have even known they needed."

Change is always accompanied by the unknown. "I was concerned about reducing office size," says Marlette, "and I was concerned about open workspaces being too loud for people to concentrate to get work done. Our experience has been just the opposite."

Attorney offices feature Steelcase Elective Elements 6 systems furniture or Garland

"When we walked into Elective Elements 6 for the first time, it was astounding how the three of us immediately agreed this was what we needed."

casegoods. "We didn't buy big, old fashioned wood pieces you see in some law firms. We selected furniture that's functional for our work processes," says Fedele. Elective Elements 6 is compatible with Privacy Wall Glass Selections that form interior conference room walls. This furthers the firm's progressive aesthetic and transmits daylight into the space.

Like custom millwork, Elective Elements 6 provides a substantial, architectural aesthetic, a broad range of material selections, and superb craftsmanship—with the additional advantages of flexible, modular components and full integration between private and open plan environments.

"I don't know how we could improve on Elective Elements 6, Garland, and the

other Steelcase furniture," says Fedele. "We looked at several lines, visited several factories. We could have spent more money, but we feel that Steelcase is the best value. It's tremendous quality at a reasonable price. When you talk about outfitting almost 52,000 square feet, it was pretty economical."

Ergonomic Think and Amia task chairs support the long hours of focused work common in the legal industry. Kick systems

more interesting to look at, and you still have access to light and HVAC," says Marlette. "Overall, people feel we have more space," adds Fedele.

Acoustical privacy in the open workspaces has proven to be a non-issue. The Details Confidante speech privacy system has made a "noticeable difference from our old office," says Marlette. "Someone can be on a telephone call and a couple of spaces



Damon Morey choose Garland (above) and EE6 (shown on front) casegoods instead of big, old fashioned wood pieces you normally see in law offices to create a more progressive aesthetic and enhance their image with clients.

furniture for administrative staff and paralegals features lower panel heights than the previous office, "so everyone has a sight line over the top, and our space feels more spacious," says Fedele. Wider hallways, brighter, more up-to-date surface materials, nearly full-height perimeter windows, and a centrally located café give the offices a more spacious feeling in a smaller footprint.

"We built staff workstations high enough for privacy but low enough for light and open space. It's not a flat architecture, it's much

over you don't hear them, and no one can hear what they're talking about."

Jan Malof, principal of Interior Solutions, assisted Mungovan-Stavisky, and points to the benefits of the firm's many collaborative spaces: 11 conference rooms, the central cafe space, and two small spaces off the lobby, give the firm a wide range of meeting spaces. "Just off the lobby, the small touchdown spaces are convenient for both clients and staff. Private phone calls, a quick conference with a colleague, or when



This is one of 11 conference rooms Damon Morey designed into the space to address the growing need for more collaborative spaces

a client stops in to sign some documents –those are all common, daily occurrences.”

The small rooms off the lobby are simple yet comfortable: a Turnstone Jenny or Lincoln lounge chair and table, engaging artwork on the wall, a landline phone. A small enclave on each floor is similarly equipped. “If a client’s cell phone dies or you need a private conversation with them, you can duck into one of these rooms instead of searching for an empty conference room. They’re a great use of small space,” says Snider.

Larger conference rooms are each designed for meetings of six to eight people, reflecting the typical meeting size today. Since legal work is more collaborative than ever, there are more meeting spaces in smaller foot-

prints, both formal and informal. “We were always running short of conference rooms in the old offices,” says Snider. “Not anymore.”

The new offices have garnered great attention. Events and meetings held at Damon Morey draw much larger attendance than before. Tours are regularly requested.

“You want to look professional and successful,” notes Marlette, “but you don’t want to look over the top. You want clients to think, these guys know what they’re doing. Client reaction has been tremendous. They feel we have a well-thought out, well-put together office space.”

As for potential new recruits for Damon Morey, “we’re seeing better and better can-

didates that perhaps weren’t considering us before. We were a cutting edge firm in the past, but our old space didn’t convey that. Now, the word on the street in the legal and business community is that Damon Morey is going great despite a down economy.”

“The furniture in the space really completes how our firm is perceived by clients and prospective clients,” adds Snider. “This has taken our firm to the next level.”

Credits:

Gina Mungovan Interior Design
Interior Solutions of WNY, LLC
Prentice Office Environments

Products

Steelcase® Privacy Wall Glass Selections, Elective Elements® 6 systems furniture, Garland™ casegoods
Amia® and Think® seating, and Convene™ tables
Turnstone Kick® systems furniture, Currency® casegoods, and Alight™, Jenny™, and Lincoln™ seating
Details work tools and Confidante™ speech privacy system