

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTIONS

THAT MEET BUDGET

CASE STUDY: ORIGEN FINANCIAL



Origen on the Move

Based in Southfield, Michigan, Origen Financial was recently awarded their second consecutive Manufactured Housing Institute's annual industry award for "National Lender of the Year." Specializing in retail financing for the manufactured housing market, Origen has earned a reputation for delivering superior service, consistent credit standards and flexible loan programs for their clients. With a non-renewable lease expiring in early 2005, their Fort Worth operation center began making plans to move to a new location. It is not surprising that Origen immediately sought to establish a project team with similar standards regarding service, consistency and flexibility.

Doug Williamson, Vice President of Operations for Origen in Fort Worth was charged with finding a new home for 300 people in his service center. "It was a great opportunity to create a space to better support job functions and accommodate our expected growth projections." Sean Goff, project manager with CB Richard/Ellis was instrumental in securing a good location, the right space, and one that met the time requirements for finish out and move in. CBRE also assisted Origen in the process of choosing furniture vendors.

BKM's Expertise

BKM Total Office of Texas considers real estate brokers and developers to be one of their primary audiences. BKM's Kimberly Durham provides real-time information to help these consultants manage interior budgets and expectations for their clients. Kimberly is engaged with all the top firms in town and recognizes the importance of building and maintaining these relationships. "These are very influential, busy

people. We work every day to earn their trust and establish a sense of value." BKM had worked with CBRE and Sean Goff in the past and was now given the chance to bid on the Origen project.

A shortlist of three manufacturers/dealers was given an RFP with specific parameters. A generic layout was established with footprints for various job descriptions. Key criteria included knowledge, service and



Turnstone's Payback laminate casegoods provide great design at a fraction of what you would expect to pay. With the money they saved, Origen invested in award winning Steelcase Leap seating.

products in that order. Cost was important, but not the sole motivator. “Good thing,” says Doug, “because there was a nominal price difference in the bids.” Like most companies, Origen wanted to evaluate “apples to apples.” But after the fact Doug is quick to point out that variety and preference both play a role... “there’s Macintosh and then there’s Granny Smith.”

A big part of the evaluation was touring installations to get an idea of product application. Each bidder arranged for Origen to see their showrooms, warehouses and a variety of client installations. Doug also attended Neocon to visit with the manufacturers being considered. “In retrospect, seeing the local installations was probably the single best opportunity to learn from others and get a feel for the product in action.”

BKM's Approach

Doug admits he didn't know what to expect from a furniture dealer because he was never involved in a project of this size. While he knew what he wanted to accomplish, he was not as familiar with all the steps necessary to execute his plan. Doug had to rely on the expertise of a dealer team. “I knew dealer capability was important, but equally important was a consultative approach.” With prices coming in virtually equal, that approach weighed heavily in the decision.



“Our goal was to create a functional space at a reasonable cost.”

DOUG WILLIAMSON
Origen Financial

The “hard sell” and pushing “new and improved” products were not Doug’s idea of responding to Origen’s needs. “BKM was awarded the job because they listened and showed us what we wanted to buy—not

Far from their former traditional reception space, Origen chose a blend of steel, wood and glass. Re-Creations designed and built the reception station and table. National Reno seating completes the lounge area.

The custom serpentine-shaped table contrasts the otherwise long, narrow space of the break-room. Individual seating and small tables dot the perimeter of the room. Turnstone Sweeper chairs and stools along with Turnstone Jenny lounge seating bring color and interest to a predominantly neutral palette.



what they wanted to sell. They understood our decision making process and made us comfortable.”

Carlene Wilson, Vice President and co-owner of BKM was integrally involved in the project from beginning to end. “It was apparent from the start that Origen was looking for a basic package with alternatives that would provide an image of ‘conservative innovation.’ During a trip to one of our clients, we exposed them to the combination of a conventional furniture plan in one area and 120-degree planning in another. This layout caught Doug’s attention.” When Origen learned they could achieve the perception of more space with only a nominal upcharge, they decided to proceed with 120-degree workstations.

Re-Creations

The project was not unique because of size or timing, but rather from the standpoint of value engineering, design and product application. While the block plan was straight forward, other areas required services that were truly custom. Origen in-

structed BKM to “take it to the next level” where all interiors would be integrated from a design and finish standpoint. Carlene knew she had the ammunition. “Origen was depending upon our creativity to arrive at a great looking facility that still met budget. Our secret weapon in this project was Re-Creations.”

A re-manufacturing division of BKM, Re-Creations offers creative, affordable and customized solutions for individual client needs. From

the mundane to the sublime, Re-Creations performed. File cabinets were repainted and Steelcase Criterion chairs were reupholstered. The reception area, millwork, breakroom café tables and information display/signage were built to suit Origen’s own specifications. A perfect match was achieved between the worksurfaces and the custom door stain. Doug was excited with the outcome. “All these areas and items undefined in the original bid were more significant than we originally

“Good design does not have to cost a lot.”

CARLENE WILSON
BKM Total Office of Texas

“Re-Creations is a true hybrid of product and service. It represents a clear point of differentiation between us and our competitors.”

CARLENE WILSON
BKM Total Office of Texas

anticipated. BKM really exceeded our expectations there.”

BKM’s Project Management

Doug wanted a collaborative development of the space. As a result, BKM was part of the construction team and sat in on all meetings. Interaction with the general contractor became even more critical when the building was delayed due to rain. All the time they counted on having had been eaten up. Installations ran around the clock. Carlene was quick to praise Mark Ansley and his team. “I am always so proud of our project managers’ commitment in making

sure the client’s last impression is a continuation of the professional treatment they have hopefully enjoyed all along.”

Improved Performance

Apart from the decision to go to 120-degree planning and custom finish out, Origen was committed to using the opportunity of a new space to satisfy their



Slatwall maximizes the available vertical space within the workstation. Employees are able to personalize their space by choosing from a broad menu of Details worktools. Tools are easily arranged for optimal workflow.



120-degree planning opens the space and fosters better visual and acoustical communication in this application of the Steelcase Answer system. Steelcase Criterion seating and Re-Creation’s laminate worksurfaces converge to provide form and function at a competitive price.

employees and make them feel great about where they worked. “I don’t need a Cadillac, give me a souped up Pontiac with power windows and doors and heated seats.” Doug purposefully put money in what directly impacted the employee. Focus on the user paid big dividends. Flat panels, indirect lighting, ergonomic tools and ability to personalize by choosing their own Details accessories was widely appreciated. Management has noticed a distinct difference in attitude since the move. Transition issues have been tolerated by even the most intolerant among their workers. An open house in celebration of their new office was absent of any “dignitaries.” Employees only, with their families—“just the way it should be.”

With the service center project behind him, Doug has had some time to reflect on all the activities surrounding the project. What advice would he give another in his position? “Make sure you hire experts that guide you, but do it your way. They’ll help negotiate the pitfalls that happen on any project. Try to learn from those who have already traveled this road. Look into turn-key service and recognize the efficiency of using a single dealer. And my recommendation on a dealer is BKM Total Office of Texas.” ■



Turnstone Payback, Steelcase Think seating and Details monitor arms were specified for the private offices. The design challenge was to accommodate heavy storage needs while supporting both individual and collaborative tasks. The “P” top encourages informal conferences while the flat panel arm allows for sharing on-screen information with ease.



Why reinvent the wheel? Origen finds exactly what they want at the BKM showroom. BKM’s training room is replicated at Origen’s facility. Brandrud seating, Versteel tables and Steelcase Jersey chairs provide a smart look with built-in mobility.

“I never had to say, ‘Why did they let us do that?’ BKM never let us make a mistake.”

DOUG WILLIAMSON
Origen Financial

Origen’s main conference room features a 10-foot wood table by National and Steelcase Jacket seating with leather “jackets.”



Contact:
BKM Total Office of Texas
www.bkmtexas.com
214.902.7200

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