

RESOLUTION: 4 ARCHITECTURE  
NEW SPACE 4 SIEGELGALE

by VICTORIA HALL

**Any way you look at it,** moving is a stressful and expensive business. First you have to find a space, second you have to pay for it and third you have to fit it out. Then, and only then, can you move everyone in, tell the U.S. Postal Service where you are, put up photos of your pets and water the plants.

In today's fast-paced economy, the basic logistics of this process, even when carried out at lightning speed, cannot be accomplished fast enough to satisfy many businesses' need for more space now. One such expanding business is Siegelgale, a New York-based marketing and branding company that works extensively with technology companies and the dot.com arms of traditional brick-and-mortar firms. As the dotty new economy lurches into the future, the more traditional businesses that service it have to keep pace, both in size and sensibility. So when Siegelgale needed more space, speed and making its e-clients feel at home were paramount concerns.

The company, which started life 30 years ago in the basement of the house of founder Alan Siegel, now employs more than 350 people – 250 in New York, with branch offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, London and Tel Aviv. From 40,000 square feet on the seventh and eighth floors of 1185 Sixth Avenue, it moved its New York headquarters in 1996 to 52,000 square feet on the third floor of 10 Rockefeller Plaza. Just two years later, the company took an additional 16,000 square feet on the 15th floor.

Last fall, the law of the jungle called for further expansion. Although housing all 250 New York employees in Rockefeller Center would have been ideal, Stuart Romanoff, an Executive Director of Cushman & Wakefield, the broker that has represented Siegelgale since 1986, says there just wasn't any space available. "Rockefeller Center has about a one percent vacancy rate," he explains. "It's the business center of the world." So the broker found them the next best thing: 40,000 square feet on the 39th floor of 1251 Sixth Avenue – part of Rockefeller Center itself before 1996, and conveniently accessible to 10 Rock by an underground walkway.

While Siegelgale used big guns Gensler and the Phillips Group to design its Rockefeller Center offices, for the redesign of its new digs it opted

for ten-person, ten-year-old Resolution: Architecture. Other designs by this relative newcomer include McCann Erickson's New York headquarters, a convention center in Nara, Japan, and the Premier Health and Fitness Club in Hallandale, Florida.

Siegelgale hoped this young, small firm would be more in tune with its need for a vibrant, cutting-edge environment. "We wanted something newer, younger and hipper," says Beth Brodeur, Vice President of Facilities and Office Services. "We wanted a company that was experienced with open planning, that could explore new ideas with us."

But price and speed were also factors in the company's choice. Resolution: 4 Architecture was able to keep the renovation costs to just \$50 per square foot. "It's really unheard-of to get 40,000 square feet of space done out for that price and in such good time," Brodeur says.

Construction started last December 18, with the first employees moving in on February 4. "A project like this usually has a schedule of at least 12 to 14 weeks," said Eric Serrilli, Project Manager with general contractor MKG Construction. "We did it in nine weeks, so it was a sprint from day one."

Joseph Tanney, the 39-year old Partner at Resolution: 4 Architecture who headed the project, says he was able to keep the price down and the turnaround time short by leaving in most of the existing infrastructure, particularly the under-floor wiring, a legacy of previous tenant Mitsui Trust and Banking. To take it out would have added at least three more weeks of work and \$100,000, according to Serrilli.

"It was a challenge to create an interesting environment working around the existing mechanical stuff," Tanney says. One of the biggest trade-offs was the loss of six inches of height to raised flooring in an already low-slung space, not to mention the odd little ramps that lead up to and down from it. Overcoming the "pancake" space to enable the company to compete for employees and clients with companies that have trendier offices in Soho and Tribeca was a high priority.

Resolution: 4 Architecture's solution has a retro Eighties feel due in large part to the decor: black floor, white walls. Though the ceilings are low, the floorplate is fairly large at 300 feet by



Photo: Peter Maris/1370

115 feet. To maximize light in such a thin, stretched-out space, Tanney did a lot of what he calls "layering" – for example, he installed translucent acrylic panels to separate the pods from the corridor. In addition to letting in light, the panels double as white boards for exchanging ideas and general doodling. The office currently houses 100 employees but can accommodate 150. To add visual interest to the open plan, Tanney made use of repetition, clustering the 120 Biomorph Interactive desks into 30 "pods," which resemble little spaceships thanks to the central lighting that comes from within. With a twinkle in his eye, Tanney exclaims, "They glow in the dark!"

The wooden, biomorphic desks were chosen for their ergonomic properties. "We're against straight lines and sharp corners," says the desk's designer, Stephen Barlow-Lawson, who sold them to Siegelgale for \$200,000. "You can't hurt yourself if you bump into them." They also have a lot of adjustable sections to make them customizable for each user's needs. Of the offices where his desks reside, Barlow-Lawson says, "We saw the space before people moved in. I like the space, but I think they could have done without all that black."

"I'm currently pre-occupied with this black-and-white thing," Tanney confesses. "But there is warmth with the wood. The concrete panels on the walls also give variety, and the structural acrylic between the pods that allows the light to come through provides depth."

Unlike most corporate offices – including Siegelgale's other New York offices – big executives do not get corner suites with power views of the city and outer boroughs. Though such views are here in abundance, they are best seen from what Tanney calls "democratic corners," areas



**When marketer Siegelgale needed additional space to keep up with its technology clients, it brought in Resolution: 4 Architecture to bring a little downtown feel to its new midtown office.**



Top  
"Pods" of Biomorph  
Interactive desks define  
the open plan.

Facing page  
The big, sleek kitchen area.

Above  
Translucent acrylic panels  
separate cubicles from the  
corridor.

Right  
"Democratic corners"  
provide views for the entire  
workforce.



twenty feet square in the west-facing corners of the office that are fitted out with comfortable mohair couches and wenge (a dark wood) coffee tables. The identical spaces in the east-facing corners are taken up by conference rooms with conference tables designed by Resolution: 4 Architecture. The office also has a 30-foot-by-42-foot kitchen area with a pool table and eight round wooden tables surrounded by chairs.

"It is a very democratic layout overall," Tanney opines. "The democratic corners were designed as spaces to hold informal meetings – come in, sit and talk over ideas. We were originally going to use frosted glass to partition them from the rest of the office, but the client didn't want that. They requested plain glass instead, and I'm glad now. I think the plain glass works well. It lets the light and the view flow through."

Siegelgale is also happy with the result. "We're young and innovative, and we wanted a space to match that," comments Siegelgale's Brodeur. "It's very functional and aesthetically pleasing. We had tight dollar and time constraints, so we were happy the work was done quickly and we all fit in. We work in teams, so we wanted something open-plan that would allow us to share information freely. Everyone has minimal personal space, but we're able to backdrop a lot of our work here. It's a showcase space." ■