

# Workplaces

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## EISNERAMPER AND FRANCIS CAUFFMAN ARCHITECTS TRANSFORM A HEADS- DOWN OFFICE INTO A COLLABORATIVE ONE

THE FCA TEAM KEPT ITS FOCUS ON AN OVERALL DESIGN TO ENABLE SUCCESS IN EISNERAMPER'S CULTURE SHIFT, WITH COLLABORATION AT THE FOREFRONT.

STORY BY EMILY CLINGMAN





**In an industry where most heads are down and focused on their screens, EisnerAmper — a full-service advisory and accounting firm — wanted a culture shift in its San Francisco headquarters office, so it hired Francis Cauffman Architects (FCA) to design a new office to facilitate rigorous collaboration within the company.**

John Williamson, partner-in-charge of EisnerAmper's San Francisco office, knew from the start he wanted FCA to design the ambitious office project.

"EisnerAmper and FCA have a similar culture and mindset," he said. "We're both mid-market firms that think outside the box and challenge the norm. FCA is an award-winning architectural firm that completed EisnerAmper's Philadelphia office, so that gave us a running start in terms of expectations. Together, we created a custom workplace that positions us well for the future."

The idea for the new space was to intentionally remove hierarchical barriers by way of design. For example, partners work at desks alongside employees of all levels in an open environment. Williamson explains this communicates the importance EisnerAmper places on openness and ensures its most senior leaders will have regular interactions with all team members and vice-versa.

"Accessibility and consistency help foster trust, which is needed for employees to feel comfortable contributing new ideas and motivated to do their best work," he said.

Anthony Colciaghi, of Francis Cauffman, and the lead project designer for EisnerAmper's new office, says the underlying idea was to create an "elastic design space." With the shift from heads-down, individual work to more face time with clients, the design needed to be highly flexible and easily adaptive. The FCA design team accomplished this by designing an open layout which hosts an intersection of office, residential and hospitality.



"We spend about 90 percent of our time indoors, so sculpting for interior uses — the whole experience is very exciting to me," Colciaghi said.

The FCA team kept its focus on an overall design to enable success in EisnerAmper's culture shift, with collaboration at the forefront.

**The office is designed for "casual collisions," Colciaghi likes to call them. In the previous office, the energy level was kind of flat. EisnerAmper wanted to create kind of a buzz, a good vibe.**

"One way to do that was make it easy for partners to be more accessible to the people they mentor," Colciaghi said. "Like five-packs, where the partners sit with their teams. And, when different sectors need to get together, like real estate and finance, for example, you can organize as a team in an unassigned seating environment."

In designing for optionality and choice, Colciaghi likes to try and plan for everything his clients tell him — initially. But they will probably also use the space for things they didn't tell him, which is why Colciaghi likes to build in opportunities for change.

"That's what gets me up in the morning — to work on these kinds of projects," he said.

One of the keys of EisnerAmper's new location is that it's right on The Embarcadero overlooking the ferry terminal and out at the Bay Bridge.

"It's a spectacular location," Colciaghi said. "We went out of our way to make sure all views would be enjoyed by everybody."

There's not one perimeter of the office with a dedicated office. All the seating is unassigned. The space encourages movement. All the common and public gathering areas are driven by the idea that workers need to get up and move around throughout the day — coffee and water peppered throughout the space, for example.

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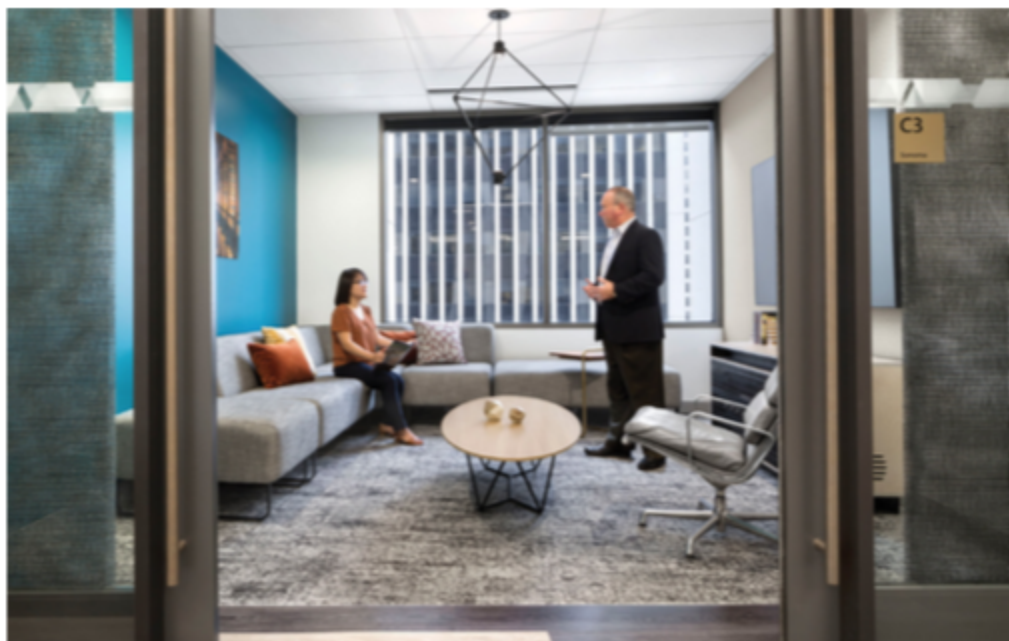
"The feedback we're getting tells us we've accomplished that," he said. "You have to have different settings for introverts, extroverts, big gatherings, small gatherings.











If you want to work through lunch, or need a quiet space overlooking the bay to work, you can do that. If you want to catch up with someone who just got back from leave, you can do that in a common area. If you need to pull furniture to assemble an entire team for a meeting, you can do that.

"We've seen the mistakes. You can't just deploy one type of landscape and hope it works. In a healthy ecosystem, everything has to be in balance. The more open and dense things become, we have to have more relief areas — this all ties into collaboration," Colciaghi said.

**FCA also brought in state-of-the-art decorative acoustical pendants and Rockfon ceiling tiles to absorb sound. The majority of the furniture is by Haworth.**

The modern blend of office, residential and hospitality and being in California, especially San Francisco, allowed Colciaghi's team to be a little more edgy or a little less restrained, he said. They brought in credenzas made of reclaimed leather belts. They used large-scale patterns in small spaces, contrary to the opposite, which is usually recommended. There's a light fixture that looks like a wave — a nod to the Pacific Ocean outside.

FCA also brought in state-of-the-art decorative acoustical pendants and Rockfon ceiling tiles to absorb sound. The majority of the furniture is by Haworth.

Throughout the space, subtle hints of bronze — EisnerAmper's primary brand color — can be seen in wall coverings or fabrics and on glass panels. Teals and a tertiary green — secondary brand colors — were also added as accents.

"So it has this nice layering of texture and materials," Colciaghi said. "We have a very curated palette, very unique."

Since its debut in December 2018, the new EisnerAmper office, which houses about 50-70 workers, has a renewed energy and enthusiasm throughout, according to Williamson.

"It's a space that supports and facilitates a sense of community and reinforces our collaborative culture," he said. **WPM**

