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Ebbrell Architecture + Design and VBA Construction Management complete 70,000 s/f HQ's for TraceLink

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Wilmington, MA In what may be considered a bold move, global supply chain software company TraceLink, began designing its new 70,000 s/f global corporate headquarters in December 2020 – a challenging design endeavor mid-pandemic, in needing to anticipate the unknowns of the future of the workplace while addressing the company's need to relocate. The new headquarters, designed by Ebbrell Architecture + Design, a certified Woman-owned Business Enterprise, opened to rave reviews from employees.

The design team at Ebbrell, led by interior designer Jessica Cargile, NDICQ, LEED AP, knew that TraceLink wanted a flexible/hybrid workspace that could accommodate 65-70% of their workforce at once.

“They didn’t want a sea of workstations,” said Cargile. “By creating five pods that each included breakout spaces, private telephone rooms, conference and copy areas, and a kitchen, each team has its own area, but no one feels left out or like they don’t have the same amenities as another group because it’s all equal, while still providing variety throughout the space.”

Miika Ebbrell, AIA, LEED AP, founder, and principal of Ebbrell Architecture + Design said, “Our goal was to foster employee engagement with design, and we accomplished that by creating flexible spaces that accommodate all work preferences.”

Phil Putnam, director, global, facilities & real estate at TraceLink, says the successful design includes important aspects to help employees, when in the office, be comfortable, while still being mindful of COVID-19 and health concerns. Cargile said, “We used an open ceiling concept with acoustical baffles throughout the space, with ample spacing for the workstations, which provide individual privacy for the staff. We ensured daylight was maximized throughout the office, incorporated fresh air design through the use of improved HVAC filtration and added room for live plants in the design.”

Jennifer Bozec, the facilities manager at TraceLink said the employees are really excited about the live plant wall in reception and the use of feature lighting and ceiling elements that make you feel like you’re outside under a trellis. She also pointed to the interior staircase as a great multi-purpose design element. “Not having to share elevators with other building occupants improves COVID safety and being in one contained space with one entrance improves security,” said Bozec. The staircase is also a favorite among employees. “The custom millwork, planters, and lounge space around it makes it welcoming and a wonderful gathering space for relaxing and small group work, it’s amazing,” Bozec said.

VBA Construction Management was the builder on the project. Bozec said the collaboration between the design and build teams and TraceLink’s staff was fantastic.

“The VBA team was candid and explained everything that was taking place during construction and why. That open communication helped with efficiency and budget management, as well as handling pandemic-related supply chain issues. We greatly appreciated that,” she added.

With room for just 285 of their 400 employees, TraceLink incorporated the use of a software-based desk reservation system to manage demand. Putnam said the system has other advantages as well, “For safety’s sake, in the event of an emergency, fire or disaster, we know who is in the building and where.”

Putnam said his favorite aspects of the design are the areas of interconnection throughout the open-concept and the flexible arrangement. “We believe we have given our employees all the office options to work comfortably, safely and productively,” Putnam added. “Retention is difficult in this market, so TraceLink committed to creating the best work environment for our employees that also reinforces our company values. The result was exactly what we wanted and exceeded our expectations.”

