

spaces

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Message From The President

When I sold my talent development company in 2018, my brother started asking me if I was ready to come work with him in the “furniture business.” At first, I smiled and politely declined. After the 7th or 8th time he brought it up, I agreed to have a discussion to consider it. Two years later, I find myself in the president role of a company that (as I have learned) does much more than provide office furniture. We build spaces employees love to work in. When you consider how important recruiting and retaining talent is to nearly every organization that exists, you can get a sense of the key role furniture can play in the process. In 2021, this key role has become even more important because now the office space is competing with the home remote-work experience. As many of us executives have seen, some employees like and even prefer working from home. The problem is, it’s really hard to build and grow a positive and lasting company culture while staring at your employees and coworkers through a webcam. I’m a firm believer that company culture isn’t built over zoom calls. But rather, great culture is built with intentional effort in the time between zoom calls—when employees have time to work and solve problems together, make friends, struggle, succeed, and have shared human experiences together in spaces that are built for the purpose.

Scott Galloway

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Featured Photos



Washington Federal Bank
Boise Headquarters
Ancillary Space



Washington Federal Bank
Boise Headquarters
Kitchen & Break Room



Cole Valley Christian School
Meridian, Idaho
Library



Children's Therapy Place
Boise Location
Lobby



Spokane Teachers Credit Union
Coeur D' Alene, Idaho
Reception & Private Offices

Improving The Community Through Architecture

"We feel it is critical to be stewards of society, to leave things better than we found them, and to create places that improve the built environment for all." - Cole Architects Design Process Values



Ronald McDonald House

With this strong statement, Cole Architects has accepted a great deal of responsibility and set a vision for the work it will do in the years to come. To learn more about this ambitious and commendable mission and how it is playing out in Idaho, we sat down with the president and managing partner of Cole Architects, Matt Huffield.

Huffield came to Cole Architects in a roundabout way, but the detour made him the perfect leader for the 10-person architecture firm. After working on projects in Houston, Los Angeles, and New York City, Huffield wanted to create a strong foundation in Boise and diversify his design offerings. That is when he met with Stan Cole and bought the now 25-year-old firm while allowing Stan to continue designing on a semi-retired basis.

Cole founded Cole Architects with the motivation to not only create functional and beautiful spaces but also pursue philanthropy. This altruistic mindset has guided the firm through projects for government buildings, education, offices, light industrial,

medical, retail hospitality, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use developments.

One such philanthropic project Cole Architects recently finished is the Ronald McDonald House in downtown Boise. For years, the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Idaho have been giving families of sick children a place to rest and refresh close to their hospitalized children. After raising 15 million dollars from the community in just 18 months, the charity brought in Cole Architects to design the new space. Working closely with the contractor, Cole Architects was able to take the building from the start of design to doors open in 15 short months. "It was a very fast-paced [project]; we all signed up for it ahead of time and said we're going to get this done."

The charity was previously functioning in an old house, so making the building feel like a home was very important to the owner. "We had to work with the east and north end neighborhood districts to make sure that we were going to put something in

their neighborhoods that fit the urban fabric.”

Another unique project Cole Architects is currently working on is the new 55,000 s.f. headquarters for PetIQ in Eagle. Like the Ronald McDonald House, this building also has an aggressive timeline and will be unique for the area. It will wrap up in June of this year. However, working in Eagle has been challenging. Between its contemporary style, large overhangs, and three stories with a rooftop deck, the new building has undergone heavy negotiations to comply with local zoning ordinances and codes.

Cole Architects embraced the challenge by clinging to their core principles. “As architects, it’s our ethical responsibility to improve the community, improve the built environment, and do what’s right environmentally, etc. Our responsibility is not necessarily to the owner or to the architect but to the project and to society as a whole.” From the very beginning of the project, the owners have kept the Eagle community in mind. They grew up in the city

and are very involved in the community. Creating something that would enhance the area they love was very important to them.

“Our responsibility is not necessarily to the owner or to the architect but to the project and to society as a whole.”

The reason Cole Architects were perfect for this particular project comes down to their problem-solving and creative skills. As Huffield says, “I think the important part is learning how to design, how to problem solve, and be creative. As we automate our world, creativity is going to be one of the last things that is automated. It’s the one thing that a computer can’t do.” That is why they have worked hard to build such a talented and dedicated, detail-oriented, and civic-minded staff. Cole Architects continues to be successful because they understand the fundamental principle...

“We are only as good as the people who work with us.”

Rendering of the PETIQ Headquarters underway in Eagle, ID



How To Work From Home...Without Going Crazy

Over the last several months, millions of Americans have been forced to adapt to many changes. For many, working from home has been among those changes. With this shift happening overnight, some were faced with the sudden need to stay productive for work and balance the responsibility of educating children. Parents have found themselves tucking into closets, spare rooms, garages, and even the backs of cars, all to find a quiet place to work in peace. Many have embraced their ingenuity and made desks out of buffet tables, small vanities, and laughably, the plethora of Amazon boxes accumulated in just a few short weeks of quarantine.

While quick thinking and imagination helped with the transition, few were prepared for the toll that working from home, often in isolation, would take on employees. After almost a year of this drastic shift in our workforce, OEC asked how so many employees work from home without going crazy? Here is what we discovered.

Before coming to OEC, our new digital marketing

manager, Nicole Horton, worked from home for eight months. She worked in a small, spare bedroom with her husband to be close to the internet. Talk about going crazy! However, what Nicole and her husband did was unique. They started a weight loss competition with friends to see who could get the most steps. Weight loss and steps earned points and whoever got the most points won. The contest encouraged them to spend time outside during breaks and after work.

Looking to add variety to their walks, they eventually explored the entire Boise greenbelt. “Normally we would be traveling whenever possible, so being stuck in the state forced us to become tourists in our own city. Discovering the greenbelt one 3-mile section at a time was exciting and made us deeply appreciate where we live so much more.” Spending so much time outside not only helped their mental state



Nicole Horton
Digital Marketing
Manager at OEC

but was also kind to their waistline. Additionally, the competition helped them feel connected to their friends despite being hundreds of miles apart.

Similarly, OEC's workplace consultant of over four years, Michelle Giudice, also turned to exercise. When Michelle was sent home in March, she and her husband had to balance work and raising their two-year-old daughter. Not wanting to send her back to daycare with so much uncertainty, they had to adjust quickly to this new dynamic. With only one height adjustable desk upstairs, the couple had to debate who had the more important work that day. Whoever won would work at the desk while the other got the kitchen table and baby duty. Needless to say, getting outside for an hour each day was a welcome change.

During the two hours her daughter was napping, Michelle would step out of her house and onto the greenbelt. For the next 55 minutes she would run a total of five miles. When she returned, her husband would trade places and run as well. The time outdoors and away from work did wonders to keep her sane. In other moments, Michelle would take her two large dogs outside for some exercise.



Michelle Giudice
Workplace
Consultant
at OEC

"I needed to get air. Being here [in the office] is nice because you can get up and talk to friends and mess around a little bit. But when you're stuck at home, working on Teams, it's so different. So, I needed to get

outside, and that's when I picked up running."

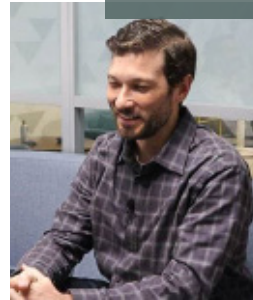
Mark Heazle from Lombard Conrad had a different approach. When he sent his employees home, Mark and his partners found that the most significant thing they could do was simply to check in with them.

"I feel like we have all lost our minds at some point during this year. Being locked inside with kids while you are trying to teach them and work is not the easiest thing." That is why their team made a quick decision to implement programs like Zoom, GoToMeeting, and Teams to talk to and collaborate with their employees. In this way, they could shift and react to the changing environment while maintaining a meaningful connection with everyone in their firm.

"What this has shown us is we don't need to keep our finger on the pulse of where everyone is in the office. They are self-motivated, and it is incredibly impressive how professional everyone is."

The same is true at OEC. Our employees understand that life goes on and jobs need to get done, and they step up to the challenge every day. All they need is a strong connection to their team. [oec](#)

Mark Heazle
Partner at
Lombard Conrad



Poised For Growth Again

ICCU
Member Service
Center West
Meridian, Idaho

When ICCU began serving its community in Boise, Idaho, as a small, state-chartered credit union, it had only 22 members and \$300 in assets. Since then, ICCU boasts more than 400,000 members, holds over \$6 billion in assets throughout Washington and Idaho, and advertises, "Your nearest branch is in your pocket." It is safe to say that the company has had to deal with growth more than once. With a data center in Chubbuck, a Member Service Center North in Coeur D Alene, and employees scattered throughout the Treasure Valley, it was time for ICCU to grow again. This time, it would plant roots in Meridian.

CEO Kent Oram had been keeping an eye out for the right property for years. When the property became available, Oram walked the land with stakes in hand and marked out where he

wanted the building to go. Working very closely with Ball Ventures Ahlquist (BVA) and Tommy Ahlquist, ICCU turned the building into a reality. In 24-26 short months, ICCU went from purchasing the property to opening its doors. Between BVA's work to expedite the entitlement process and Okland Construction's exceptional speed, they completed the Member Service Center West a year sooner than anticipated.

For a bank dedicated to taking care of its client's banking needs, the project's speed will be instrumental in its future growth. The building stands today at five stories tall and is in the Eagle View Landing development. It sits prominently next to the freeway and has an excellent view of the Boise foothills. While ICCU built the entirety of the space, it will share the building with other tenants.

That is where the architects of the project, Lombard Conrad, really made this new building special. Their goal all along was to represent the owner [ICCU] through the architecture. They also knew that ICCU would only be taking over about half of the building, so they needed to represent ICCU and future tenants. One such space is the plaza area outside the building. It provides a place for tenants to gather outdoors and relax. The Plaza is also the perfect example of what it looks like to build a financial institution that not only values its community but is here for the long term.



"What I really like about working with ICCU is that they value the community that they go into. They are building financial institutions that are there for the long term and it shows."

- Mark Heazle, partner at Lombard Conrad



There are also many exciting spaces within the ICCU offices that were designed and installed by OEC. Floor to ceiling glass walls and doors are used extensively throughout the executive offices and beyond to provide natural light and incredible views. Soundproof wall systems create privacy for tele-banking operators who interact with clients virtually. Meanwhile, training rooms help employees grow their knowledge while various break rooms and ancillary spaces provide opportunities to interact. The building that was once on the horizon for ICCU now brings together teams from around the Treasure

Valley specializing in mortgage and commercial lending, private client accounts, investments, business, and deposits.

In the past, the executive team used to joke that they were poised for growth. After years of steady growth throughout Idaho and surrounding states, ICCU had nearly run out of room. However, after walking through the new Member Service Center West, CEO Kent Oram can confidently say, "We're poised for growth again." [oec](#)

4 Tips To Make Your Workplace Safe For Employees

At OEC, we are in the business of creating amazing spaces that help companies attract and retain talent. That looks different for each business with whom we work. Throw in the unexpected changes brought in by COVID and those differences become even more pronounced. Now employers have to work harder to create a place where their employees can not only be in-person safely but also flourish. To get some quick tips for creating safer spaces, we sat down with OEC's Director of Design, Jenn Galloway, to learn how OEC has been able to create such spaces.



1. SANITATION

OEC's initial response when COVID hit was to send a lot of people home. However, we quickly realized that we work better when we can collaborate as a team, so we needed to get our employees back to the office. One of the first significant changes we made was to set up sanitation stations throughout the office with Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, and thermometers.

We focused on placing these stations in highly trafficked areas first. One such place we wanted them to be readily available was in our conference

rooms. We discovered early on that if it is not easy and accessible, then as the user exits a room, they often will not take the time to find cleaning supplies and come back to clean the space. So, making those supplies readily available was important. We also asked our employees to keep a closer tab on how they were feeling. If they are not feeling well, even if it is not necessarily COVID symptoms, or they think they may have already had it, stay home until you feel better.



2. RECONFIGURE SPACES

For those who can, there are options to turn people around and put screens between them. We recently did an exercise for a client who has 50 offices throughout the US. They asked us to create a design for their offices moving forward that is COVID. It was an enjoyable design to do. We had a lot of creative and unique ideas to have space division and dividers, including how to face people in the office.

There is a delicate balance because people still do not love the idea of really high panels and enclosed spaces. As much of a reality that COVID is, it is not a look that offices are embracing. So, the Open Office is still very relevant with a couple of changes. The goal is to place people so that they are not breathing on each other all day. We want to keep that open field but be healthy.

One of the ways we do that is by facing desks

in different directions. For some, this is not always an easy fix to turn someone around. In some cases, they may suddenly be facing a walkway. There are only so many parts of a room you can direct people where they may not have someone walking by them. However, if possible it is a great option.



3. SCREENS & PANELS

There are all sorts of ways you can do screens. It does not have to be the Plexiglas that you see at the grocery store. We have some fabric screens that are magnetic that you can move around, and they are about 70 inches tall. Glass screens are nice because they still allow light to filter. That way, you can keep that open feel, without it being the dark cubicle farm that you see in call centers. You can also bring in various fabrics and do fun colors to reflect your culture by picking splashes and pops of color. You can even create division with plant walls.

Additionally, you can put retrofit screens on top of your existing panels to bring up the height. Recently, there has been such a push for open offices that now, all of a sudden, people do not feel safe with all the open office. Using screens can help mitigate that anxiety.



4. LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

While we all would love to utilize our real estate differently, face out, and have room to move around, the reality is that spreading out is often not an option. You can try to create space for everyone to have their designated workspace so that there is always a minimum of six feet around them. When that space is not available, you can look into using screens.

The occupancy of conference rooms, for example, is something to consider. If you have a conference room that could fit 10, reduce that number to five, or even three. That is an easy thing to fix, especially if you can video conference. It is not uncommon to have a meeting where someone is video conferencing so that you can keep the number in your conference room smaller. If you ultimately do not have the space available, you might consider having some of your workforce work from home. Using a rotating schedule where employees are in the office some days and at home on others can be extremely helpful.



At OEC, we are optimistic about the future. While we expect working from home is here to stay, we believe people will truly appreciate bringing a team together and emphasize the importance of doing so in a physically and mentally healthy space. [oec](#)



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An exciting new
product from SteelCase to
help you create safe work
environments for your
employees



Home Office
Featuring
Steelcase
Leap Taskchair &
Height Adjustable Desk

OEC Showroom
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