

BUILDING BRIEFS

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Petra Know-how Provides Schick With New Corporate Image

Schick, one of the country's leading brands, recently set out to recreate and enhance the image and function of the main lobby at its Milford, Connecticut facility. To work through the many details of the lobby's redesign, Schick retained architect Andrew Robinson of Pelizza-Robinson Architects.

The project began with asbestos abatement. Once abatement was complete, Petra Construction Corporation was called in to carry the project forward, beginning with the demolition phase.

The lobby reconstruction presented formidable difficulties. The immediate realization was that reworking the lobby would present traffic problems, since vendors, customers, employees and a host of others would need to use an auxiliary entrance during the renovation period. That turned out to be just the first challenge. The second challenge was Schick's desire to create not only a new lobby, but a space that would provide an "experience;" one that would convey a sense of Schick's history through a unique exhibit design, including construction of see-through walls. The re-work also called for relocation of the mail room, as well as addressing security concerns, including limiting vendor access to the rest of the facility.

The issue of logistics required careful thought. Due to the fact that visitors entered through a vestibule, the existing layout created visitor confusion as to the location of the main lobby area.

The general consensus was to utilize an axial design that relocated the reception desk to the front, and resolved the directional issue with an overhead canopy concept to lead visitors to their destination. Final prospective sketches were produced and submitted. Once architectural assessments were completed, Schick's Facility Director, Jon Beckmann, requested dimensional models to accurately present the "big idea" for the new lobby to Joe Lynch, Schick's President. "Although the lobby was

being recreated, we wanted to maintain some of the existing design elements of the original, especially the international flair. This included a creative use of mixed materials such as glass and metal," commented Robinson. It was one thing to create a new design, update old styling and face a number of detail challenges. It was entirely another issue to actually get it done with minimized down-time and on a tight deadline.

It was that level of concern that led Schick to select Petra Construction. Ideas are wonderful things, but unless they can be implemented, they are merely concepts. Petra joined the project team and began a careful and methodical approach to the wide array

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Main Lobby, walnut desk with stainless steel and glass detail.

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of issues. Many of the design elements were strong but difficult to implement. There was limited space to house both the reception area and the display area. Petra brought to life that sense of "experience" by constructing an interchangeable wall system display, which incorporated "floating" video monitors within the glass shelving. The result is an extremely interactive experience.

The combination of design, function and construction were all critical factors. Adding to the complexity was safety, since employees and others were still walking near the construction site. Teaming up with Pelizza-Robinson Architects, and Dean Sakamoto for exhibit design, Petra welcomed the challenge.

There was particular concern over the mixing of materials, namely glass, stainless steel and wood. Petra brought together the skilled talent necessary to ensure that the architect's design concepts would indeed come to life. In most cases, the glass was frosted white and enhanced by backlighting, to create a wonderful feeling of diffused light.

In order to complete the exhibit, Petra had to erect ten foot high structural see-through walls that served as display cases. The walls were entirely custom fabricated, using stainless steel and various types of glass to reflect the feeling of the

original building. The area was further defined by a suspended walnut ceiling that defined the main egress. Schick's corporate logo was rendered on a large piece of specialized glass using a controlled blasting process. The logo unit was then mounted into a light box. The end result created a logo effect that appears to float.

The team addressed the continuity of design. The existing entrance was



Exterior view of the renovated main lobby area.

completely replaced to match the second floor design. The use of similar materials from the building's exterior facade also kept the continuity intact. Through all the complexities of this special project, Petra also faced continued pressure to minimize impact to Schick's operations and keep the area accessible and safe to people entering and exiting the facility throughout the day.

Petra's Project Manager, Dave Hall noted, "The timing and nature of nearly every component used in this

project required detailed pre-planning and construction strategy. We had to determine how to manufacture, integrate and secure many non-traditional materials. It included not only construction; the work actually became a form of artwork." Petra's production team, led by Marc Mongillo, Project Foreman, and Charlie Grova, Shop Foreman, kept the project running smoothly and ensured that the many detailed requirements were fulfilled.

Schick personnel also provided valuable assistance, including Jon Beckmann, Bob Witkewicz, Andrew Pennella and crews from Schick's mechanical and electrical maintenance teams.

Jon Beckmann noted, "It was a true pleasure having Petra Construction work with Schick on this extremely complicated project. Knowing that Petra has a history in museum quality work was a factor in my selection process."

Feedback from Schick's visitors and vendors has been extremely positive. "It's not just a lobby, it's a museum experience," seems to state it all.

To confirm that opinion, the display design, prepared by Dean Sakamoto, recently won an AIA Connecticut 2003 Design Award!

If you are considering a new project, contact Guido Petra, President, or Terry Wooding, Executive Vice President, at 203-865-6043, or log on to www.petraconstruction.com. Take advantage of the art, skill, craftsmanship and technology that Petra brings to every project.

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