



# DESIGNING A COMPETITIVE OFFICE

Remiger Design and Paric Corporation recently completed the renovation of the facility housing the global headquarters for Cass Information Systems' transportation information services in Bridgeton, MO.

"We were after a certain image," said Mark Campbell, president of the Transportation Information Services division of Cass Information Systems. "We were after an image for younger workers, for attracting the types who might want to work at Express Scripts, Emerson, or Edward Jones. We're all competing for same type of worker."

"With this project, we have created a unique and inviting space designed to increase the productivity and job satisfaction of employees," said Vern Remiger, president of Remiger Design. "By implementing functional layouts and contemporary interiors, I believe we have created a truly exceptional office environment for Cass."

"We also were looking for more collaboration," Campbell added. "When you start to lower walls, the first thing most people think of is it will be a major intrusion on a person's workspace. That did not happen. Instead, we're seeing more collaboration, better results on the clerical side, and more productivity."

Remiger has worked with Cass Information Services since 1992, first while he was with Arcturis and continuing to work with them after he went out on his own.

Until recently, the building in Bridgeton was home not just to Transportation Information Services, but also to Cass Commercial Bank and to the corporate headquarters of Cass Information Systems. For years, Cass had focused on how to use their existing space more efficiently and fit more people into the building as they grew.

In 2011, however, they also began to look at renovating, "because the building hadn't been updated since the 1980s," Remiger said.

When Cass moved to the Bridgeton building in 1993, "it looked new," Remiger said, but by 2012, "it needed updating."

"The office finishes and furniture had not been updated since we moved in," Campbell said. The antiquated electrical, plumbing, and information cabling infrastructure were in dire need of upgrading to modern energy and performance standards.

The resulting renovation was to be phased over a two-year period to accommodate the need for continuous company operations in the building.

## Freeing space

The first step was the realization that if Cass were to continue growing, they had to move some people out.

"We made the decision that the transportation group would be only occupiers. With our growth plans for the next five-to-ten years, we would have more bodies," Campbell said.

Cass Information Systems looked in the market for space suitable for the commercial bank and the corporate headquarters. Remiger Design helped them examine spaces and do some test fits.

In September 2012, Cass signed a 10-year lease for two spaces in the Manchester/270 Office Center, one for the corporate headquarters and one for the bank headquarters. Interior construction on those spaces began in October 2012, and people moved into them in 2013. That was year one of the phased renovations.

The moves freed almost 20,000-square-feet of space in the 60,000-square-foot Bridgeton building, which provided the opportunity for renovating that building in stages so that Transportation Information

## Cass Information Systems Project Team

**Owner:**  
Cass Information Systems

**Architect:**  
Remiger Design

**Acoustical consultant:**  
John Paulauskis

**Office Furniture:**  
POE

**General Contractor:**  
Paric Corporation

**Major Subcontractors:**  
BAM Contracting  
BO Graham Plumbing & Heating Co.  
Friend Acoustical  
Johnson Controls  
Negwer  
Paintsmiths  
RJP Electric  
St. Louis Automatic Sprinkler Co.  
STL Glazing  
Shades, Shades & More  
StoneTree Fabrications  
StoneTrends  
Vogel Heating & Cooling  
Zickel Flooring

Services could continue to operate without interruption.

Cass's roots go back to 1906 to Cass Avenue Bank, a bank established by a group of St. Louis businesses that included Briner Electric Company. The company's commitment to local business remains strong. So, when it came time to hire contractors, the company determined that requests for proposals should go out only to contractors who were customers of the bank.

### Updating technology

"Before we even started, we got proposals for pre-construction and construction services from the bank's customers and selected Paric to work with us on a phasing plan, cost estimating, HVAC and plumbing, and on ordering long lead items early," Remiger said.

One part of renovating the building into a modern workplace involved updating the technological guts of the building. Data cabling was updated from Category 3 cable to Category 7. A new, energy-efficient HVAC system was installed. All of the restrooms received an extensive remodel, including new fixtures and finishes. Even the underground pipes were torn out and replaced.

Electrical power was upgraded, too. "It is not just new power, but the demand for electricity in offices is different from what it used to be. All the power that runs through work stations now can set up harmonics that disrupt printers and other equipment. It was important to deal with that," Remiger said.

Remiger, Paric, and electrical contractor RJP also introduced new LED lighting that both reduces electric bills and produces the right kind of light for people working on computers.

One way to improve productivity certainly is with newer, more functional and reliable technology, such as power that doesn't disrupt equipment and lighting suited for work. Another way is to design the office to enable and encourage better collaboration.

### Improving the layout and encouraging collaboration

"One of the problems in the building was that it was all carved up into little spaces," Remiger said. "It was vintage 1980s. There were a lot of people in private offices and there was a maze of cubicles of varying sizes with high walls so that people couldn't see one another."

"Today's work spaces are more collaborative and have more natural light," he said. So, the other part of renovating the building involved opening up the office interior and implementing new standards for work stations. "We went to 10-foot-by-12-foot offices

where we kept offices and seven-foot-by-seven-foot work stations."

"We lowered the walls and introduced collaborative areas and now everyone gets the benefit of natural light and windows. Studies show people are more productive when they can see outside," he said. "The architectural and design updates that we introduced to the facility will increase its relevance and appeal for years to come."

Construction began in October, 2013.

It was a major overhaul to do while the business continued to operate in the building. Wallcoverings, carpet, paint, light fixtures, work stations (and the electrical and data service to them), the mail room, the cafeteria, the restrooms, the plumbing, floor layouts, all of it had to be overhauled.

"We would complete one area and move people in to vacate another area to work on," said Beth Cerrone, project manager, Paric. They completed the work in four phases. "By keeping to the plan, we were able to work quickly and keep things moving and get out of their hair two months early. We shaved two months off the production schedule," she said.

The condition of the plumbing was such that the project team had to shut down all of the restrooms, three sets of them, in order for B O Graham Plumbing to replace the underground pipes and put in modern restrooms. Temporary restrooms were placed in the parking lot. Paric scheduled that work for summer months so that people in the office building didn't get cold crossing to the temporary facilities.

Cerrone said she had never worked with B O Graham before, "but I was impressed with them."

Cass worked a deal with food trucks to serve lunches while the cafeteria was getting renovated. That proved so popular with employees that the company has continued the service with "food truck Fridays."

It was a very good project, Cerrone said. "This project had a great client and a great

design team. They made decisions, they were pleasant to work with, understanding, and everyone worked well together."

Campbell said the credit goes to Remiger. "We've worked with Vern a long time. We trusted his group to work through a significant project with the added challenge of keeping the business going while the renovation was going on. Vern's expertise in that, and in selecting the general contractor, which was Paric, was instrumental to the success," he said.

"We're very pleased to get through the year long project and not miss a beat working, when it could have been major disruption."

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