

Sonex™ Contour Ceiling Tiles Provide the Acoustical Solution for Time Warner Cable's Open Office Environment

A worker friendly call center was a priority – and a challenge – when Time Warner Cable consolidated its telemarketing operation from separate locations into one office at the Albany, New York headquarters. Customer service and sales representatives (CSSRs) were concerned about the move from familiar, decentralized quarters to a single, wide open room with few windows, busy office traffic, and a distracting noise level for CSSRs who needed to concentrate on each phone call. Thus, the architects of the renovation, C.T. Male Associates, P.C., Latham NY, went beyond the usual steps to create a call center that was both welcoming and efficient.

“We are moving employees from a variety of environments into a single location that seemed smaller than their current locations,” explained Jeff King, Albany Division President. “It became easy to ‘sell’ to our employees on the new facility once they were able to see we were using new and specialized materials, and were working to develop an environment that would be comfortable as well as productive.”

Containing the noise level was a priority in the renovation. “When Time Warner Cable retained us to develop a renovation plan, they had a number of requirements for improving their CSSR call center,”

said Rosemarie Carangelo, project architect, C.T. Male Associates. “But number one among them was to reduce the noise level.”

The problem was how to control noise in an open 30' x 50' space arranged in four rows of ten workstations separated by only 42" high partitions. The solution included installing Sonex™ Contour Ceiling Tiles directly above the CSSR cubicles where the ceiling was dropped from 10'6" down to 9'. The reduced height of the ceiling helped to create a feeling of intimacy at each workstation, as well as to control noise in the large, open room. The result was pleasing to both the ears and the eyes.



Sonex™ Contour Ceiling Tiles have an excellent NRC rating of 1.0. They are available in 10 different patterns and 4 different colors and can be

mixed and matched to create a myriad of patterns.

“When developing a workspace for people, it is important to consider the psychology, as well as the mechanics of their work” explained Carangelo. “I interviewed and observed a number of CSSRs for this project and I literally put myself in their place. There you are on the phone working with a customer. What do you do? You lean back in your chair, tip your head upward and look for a visual diversion as your mind races through all of the responses you’ve been taught for resolving customer concerns.”

Thus Carangelo paid special attention to the ceiling characteristics. She had specified an acoustical ceiling over the CSSRs cubicles, but finding tiles that provided visual interest was more difficult than she anticipated.

“Ceilings tend to be flat, white and thicker when trying to achieve a higher NRC (Noise Reduction Co-Efficient),” she said. “The design required relief as well as performance.”

With the choices that were offered, Carangelo put together three different patterns, Panorama, Vision and Basix, to create a tile-by-tile pattern. “The pattern I created with these tiles is complex, because I did not want people to figure it out right away. But it is open and non-obtrusive, too. I wanted the ceiling to be interesting, not distracting. The mix of basic and patterned tiles

make it easy on the eyes,” said Carangelo.

Time Warner Cable CSSRs are pleased with the new space. “I never would have believed you could make a 30’ by 50’ room feel like anything but an airplane hangar,” said Mary Beth Bobitt, manager of the call center. “Because of the close attention paid to things that we all take for granted, like ceiling height, texture and lighting, the room was successfully transformed into a very warm and comfortable, yet very professional place to work.”

An ergonomically friendly workspace encompasses the entire environment – from ceiling to floor. By taking on the challenge of creating such a center for its customer sales and service representatives, Time Warner Cable created a visually interesting space that also contributes to employee productivity and comfort.