



## Turnstyle Seattle, Washington, US



**Turnstyle began in 2004 as a classic start-up story: Three partners, working out of a spare room in one of their homes. Even in these early days, however, the principals of this Seattle-based graphic design firm had a notion of how a well-designed space could enhance their business.**

As a multidisciplinary graphic design firm, with expertise in both digital and print, Turnstyle uses design to help clients in its hometown of Seattle and beyond to better connect with their customers.

Since its founding in 2004, the firm has also experienced the benefits of good design as a business development and recruiting tool.

Before starting Turnstyle, the three principals—business director Matt Diefenbach and creative directors Ben Graham and Steve Watson—all previously worked together at a large brand consultancy in downtown Seattle. According to Graham and

## Case Study



Classic designs by Charles and Ray Eames can be found throughout the Turnstyle space. "We just really like this stuff, and we want to surround ourselves with it because it is inspiring to us," says Steve Watson, principal.

Watson, it was the type of corporate environment where decision-making was very pragmatic—an occasional source of frustration for creative people like themselves.

"When we started thinking about the type of firm we wanted to create, we actually talked a lot about furniture and the aesthetics of the space itself," Graham said. "We wanted our space to be very different than where we came from. There, the thinking was, 'We will use a decent quality chair that isn't going to break, but not the Cadillac of office chairs.' But when you look at images of design firms that really take pride in how their interiors represent their brand, those are the types of places where you want to work and be."

After three months in Diefenbach's condo, Turnstyle moved into its first official office. The limitations of a start-up budget delayed the full execution of the principals' aesthetic vision, however, prompting an exercise in prioritization.

"Day One after moving out of the condo, our first decision was to go out and buy a nice, new printer and a bunch of Herman

Miller chairs," Graham said. The shopping list included Aeron® chairs for the workspaces and Eames® Molded Plywood Chairs for the conference room. "For everything else, at least for a while, we had to get by as cheaply as possible."

The decision to prioritize Herman Miller seating was two-fold.

"One was emotional," Watson said. "We just really like this stuff, and we want to surround ourselves with it because it is inspiring to us. But the other part of it was practical, because we know that people who have an affinity for well-designed interiors and furniture will come in, see it, and appreciate it."

That appreciation, according to Graham, is shared by prospective clients and potential hires alike.

"Recruiting is easy for us," he said. "I can't chalk that all up to our interior design choices, but the space where we work has a big part to play. I don't know that we had that insight when we started the company, but in many ways it played out that way."

## Case Study



As Ballard becomes more of a destination, Turnstyle's meeting space has seen an increase in use. Clients with dinner reservations in the neighborhood prefer to schedule meetings toward the end of the day.

Of course, getting people to experience Turnstyle's space starts with physically getting them to the space, which has gotten easier in recent years.

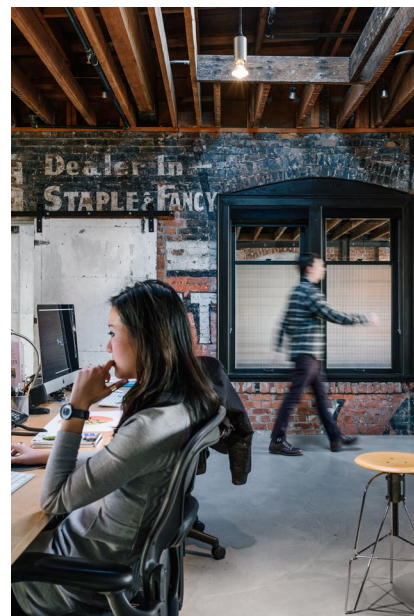
The three principals all live in the same neighborhood, Ballard, a geographically isolated corner of northwest Seattle. They located their office there to avoid a commute, even though at the time, the neighborhood had a reputation for being—in Watson's words—a "sleepy retiree community." With an influx of trendy new restaurants and nightlife options over the past few years, however, Ballard has experienced a stunning neighborhood renaissance. By 2010, when Turnstyle moved into its current location above one of Seattle's most popular oyster bars on the second floor of a renovated marine supply warehouse, a Ballard address had become an asset.

"Graphic design is a service industry," Watson said. "So part of (what clients pay for) is the product we deliver—and at the end of the day, hopefully the product is phenomenal—but the other component is the experience clients have working and collaborating with us. We hope that the space adds to that experience, and that they enjoy coming here."

Added Graham: "Since the move, we've had a lot of people wanting to come to meet with us at our office at the end of the work day because they have dinner reservations in Ballard that evening."

A mix of old and new architecture, the firm's renovated warehouse space provides a fitting backdrop to the classic Eames-designed seating that has served Turnstyle well for a decade.

"Our design chops come from being firmly rooted in the academics of design, and the basic core principles that make for timeless design," Graham explained. "I think our work is both innovative and rooted in those basic principles—that is what makes for good design. A lot of Herman Miller's furniture strikes that balance perfectly as well. It still feels appropriate and current. That is the beauty of the Herman Miller aesthetic, and of Eames furniture in particular. The mid-century modern work is timeless."



Turnstyle designers spend most of their time in the production area. The Aeron chairs at each workspace were among the principals' first purchases when they moved into their first office.

# Case Study

## Industry

Advertising-Public Relations

## Topics

Brand  
Collaboration  
Small and Medium Business

## Applications

Collaboration  
Conference  
Open Office

## Project Scope

4,500 square feet

## Herman Miller Products

Aeron Chair  
Eames Molded Plywood  
Dining Chair Metal Base  
Eames Molded Plywood  
Lounge Chair  
Eames Molded Plastic  
Side Chair Wire Base

## Alliance Product

Magis® Air-Chair

## Year Completed

2010

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According to Turnstyle principals/creative directors Ben Graham (left) and Steve Watson, the mix of old and new architecture in their space is emblematic of the type of design work the firm strives to do: innovative, yet rooted in basic principles.