



Oak Studios

Brooklyn, New York, US



A desire to network with other creative people led Oak Studios founder Skylar Challand to Studiomates, a celebrated coworking space in Brooklyn, New York. The location has been an excellent fit, made even better after a recent renovation and the investment in performance work chairs.

The benefits of a coworking space can stack up quickly for a small business. There's the relatively low overhead, the opportunity to leverage shared amenities, a diverse mix of people connecting and sharing ideas, an overall sense of community that goes beyond the size of the team. For New York City-based website and application developers Oak Studios, there was an additional benefit: built-in product testers.

"It's a pretty varied group—there are designers, illustrators, programmers, app developers—but mostly everyone is doing something with the Web," says Oak Studios founder Skylar Challand about his neighbors at Studiomates, a collaborative workspace in Brooklyn shared by approximately 60 tenants.

Case Study



Oak Studios outfitted their Haven with classic Eames chairs. The setting is a favorite hangout for Pinky, the studio dog.

“The people in the studio are making really cool stuff, and we all use each other’s products,” he continues, offering the example of Editorially, a short-lived collaborative writing tool that was built at Studiomates and used Oak Studios’ Siteleaf content management product for its blog. The Siteleaf project actually began with the Oak team using its own cloud-based collaboration tool, Dropmark, to gather and organize inspiration.

Challand moved to New York in 2008 from his native Canada, where he led development on an award-winning learning management system used by companies such as Adobe, Getty Images, and Virgin Mobile. He had been the first employee hired by that start-up, and after 10 years there he was ready to go into business for himself. Within a year Oak was born, with Challand building web applications for clients as a one-person shop.

Like many creative people, Challand began seeking out other like-minded individuals with whom to network. He had been working out of a business incubator space in Manhattan when his networking efforts introduced him to Studiomates.

“(My space in Manhattan) was all right, but it never really felt like home,” Challand says. “I came here to meet people, and instantly got to feel the creative energy here, and the community has been wonderful.”



Oak Studios founder Skylar Challand enjoys the built-in support system that coworking at Studiomates provides his team.

Within a month, Challand moved into an open space at Studiomates. Five years and three hires later, Oak Studios still calls Studiomates home.

“We’ve kind of grown organically, and right now, as a company of four people, it is nice to be in a space like this,” Challand says. “I feel like it gives us a lot more energy and creates opportunities for collaborations with other people—even if it’s just a chance to have lunch with the people next door to get out of our own little bubble. If we were a bigger company then maybe that wouldn’t matter as much, but for us it’s really nice.”

A 2013 renovation allowed Challand to outfit Oak’s space inside Studiomates to better support his team—and gave them another chance to test their Dropmark tool.

Challand and his team started a Dropmark collection into which each person was able to drag and drop their office chair research files to share with the rest of the team. The Dropmark collection yielded three favorites—two of which were Herman Miller chairs (Embody® and Sayl®).

“When we first started, we were in a little area and we were very scrappy with our cheap tables and chairs,” Challand says. “That was a good place to start for us, but sitting in those chairs for a couple of years was really the trigger. We needed to get something better.”

Case Study

After trying out all three chairs in their space, the Oak team settled on Sayl. “Going from a \$50 chair to a \$500 chair, there is a big difference,” Challand says. “They’re not the most expensive chairs in the world, but that’s still a big investment for a small company, so we wanted to make sure they were perfect.”

The minimalist, dematerialized design of the Sayl Chair, with its 3D Intelligent® suspension back, offers an interesting contrast to the firm’s custom-designed, 16-foot-long oak table. “Our company is called ‘Oak,’ so obviously we needed an oak table,” Challand says.

A trio of White Eames® Shell Chairs—two Molded Plastic Side Chairs with Wood Dowel Bases and a Molded Plastic Armchair with Rocker Base—were purchased for Oak’s lounge area, which also is shared by other Studiomates tenants. The chairs help the area integrate well with the adjacent spaces, some of which use Red Orange Shell Chairs as side chairs.

Like the designs of these Eames classics, Oak Studios isn’t going anywhere.

“I don’t think we have any real urgency to grow our business to the point where we might outgrow Studiomates,” Challand says. “With the new chairs, we feel very comfortable where we are right now in this space.”

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Topics
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Applications
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Herman Miller Products
Sayl Chair
Eames Molded Plastic
Armchair Rocker Base
Eames Molded Plastic
Side Chair

Year Completed
2013

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