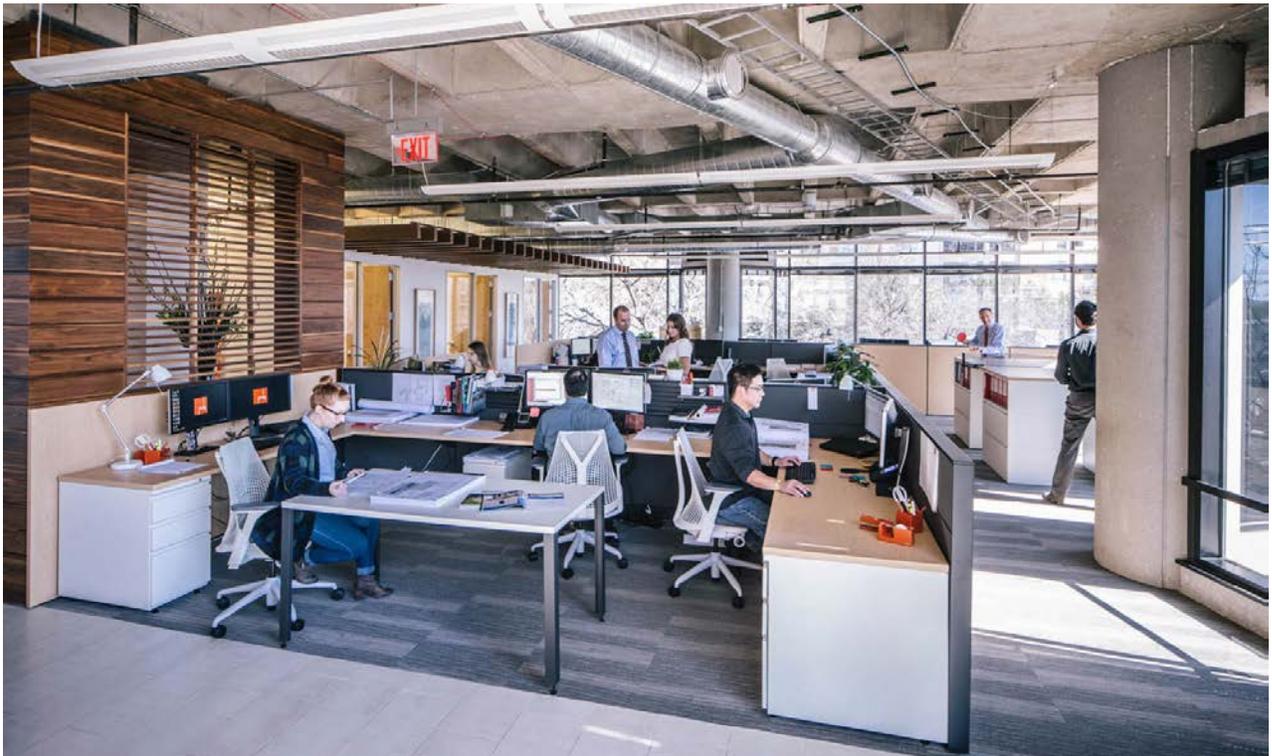




PRDG Dallas, Texas, USA



The founders of architecture firm PRDG wanted to imbue their new firm with a healthy corporate culture. As business growth quickly outpaced their expectations—and their office space—maintaining that culture remained a priority.

When the architecture firm that had employed Paul Donaldson and Ryan Robinson for a number of years decided it no longer wanted to be in the business of designing senior housing, the two saw a window of opportunity and (to paraphrase business guru Tom Peters) they weren't about to pull down the shade on it.

Architects Donaldson and Robinson had run the numbers for senior housing and knew the market opportunity was strong. "This market is known for its depth and demographics," Donaldson says, "and the population is growing."

Case Study

The two—along with Alice Donaldson, the *de facto* facility manager and HR lead (and Paul’s wife), and Leah Robinson, who leads marketing efforts for the firm (and is Ryan’s wife)—decided to form an architecture firm exclusively for the senior housing industry. They named it PRDG, an acronym for “Paul Ryan Design Group,” and launched the business in 2013.

“It was an opportunity to really control our destiny, make decisions, establish the culture we wanted, and do things at a lot faster pace (than at large companies),” Paul Donaldson says.

Separating from their old firm and setting up a new business was a months-long, amicable process. The PRDG principals worked with the partners of their old firm to ensure a smooth transition for clients—all of whom ended up electing to use PRDG’s services. “Not having a gap in service was the hallmark of our breaking away,” Paul Donaldson says. “Everybody was in agreement, so that was a big part of our success.”

The Donaldsons and Robinson felt strongly that, after launch, their long-term success would depend on “the culture you establish, how you treat each other, and the relationships you have with your staff, your partners, and your clients,” Paul Donaldson says.

“We try to prioritize those things,” he adds. “We’re architects, so it’s about the design, but these other things are essential. This is not architecture despite all those things. This is architecture in combination with those things.”

PRDG has been intentional about nurturing its culture through things like flexible hours, company outings, tournaments on its office Ping-Pong table, and Fitness Fridays, during which there’s a group activity outside (like Frisbee), followed by a group breakfast.

When it came to office space, the principals wanted to make sure their workplace reflected and reinforced their culture. Alice Donaldson found the perfect location: an office building right off the Katy Trail, a popular biking and jogging path in Dallas. She had a vision of employees stepping out to get fresh air and a fresh perspective during work hours.



The market opportunity in senior housing was growing when Paul Donaldson and Ryan Robinson founded PRDG, but the focus was also one the architects connected with on a personal level. “Anyone who has gone through that situation is in tune with how architecture relates to care,” Donaldson says.



PRDG leveraged the building’s large windows by using a glass wall in private offices to share the natural light and scenic views with the whole team.

Case Study

The space also had large windows and an open floorplan; PRDG opened it up further by keeping dividing walls low as a way of increasing communication and teamwork and creating community.

Robinson was a proponent of adding an element of fun. He had his heart set on an office Ping-Pong table, and they settled on a makeshift one made from a laminate top that rests on a pair of Meridian® lateral files. It's become a gathering spot that brings people together—even people who may rarely be assigned to the same projects.

Beyond fun, everyone also wanted furnishings that were comfortable, practical, and stylish. Alice Donaldson scoured magazines and the Internet for ideas, and just kept coming back to the idea of Herman Miller. Ergonomic seating seemed a foregone conclusion, given their people-first culture, and the flexibility that the Canvas Office Landscape® offered seemed wise. Although she wasn't sure they'd be able to buy Herman Miller products, their local Herman Miller Small and Medium Business Program consultant, Taffie Poston, helped her create a solution that was within PRDG's budget.



Creating a space that people wanted to come to, one that helped people work effectively was a foregone conclusion. So was ergonomic seating. "We put our people first," Alice Donaldson says.



Large windows, a lively color palette, and natural accents give this conference room a warm, friendly feel, reinforcing PRDG's corporate culture.

It wasn't long before the company had to tweak the space. PRDG grew as much in the first 18 months as the firm's principals had anticipated it would grow in three years. The number of workspaces they needed grew from 10 to 25 in just six months.

Fortunately, the space planning work Alice Donaldson and Poston had done included contingencies for future growth, and they were able to quickly make some small adjustments to the Canvas system, disassembling part of it and adding legs to create three workspaces where there had been only two. "The furniture was a lot more adaptable than we had imagined," Paul Donaldson says.

Even so, adaptability could only take them so far. For PRDG's next phase of growth, they needed to expand the size of the office. Business was ramping up and they needed enough space to accommodate even more new hires. They leased the office space that adjoined PRDG and worked with Workplace Resource Group, their local Herman Miller dealer, to furnish the expansion space to match their existing Herman Miller furniture.

Case Study

Throughout this period of rapid growth, PRDG's corporate culture has remained solid, a testament to the work the principals have done to prioritize the attributes of their space and to make the office a place people want to be. That includes the Ping-Pong table, which has become so central to PRDG's employee experience that Robinson believes the company will never part with it.

"It was important to create a space that we all wanted to come to and that was inspiring and stylish and fun and hip," Alice Donaldson says. And that, the founders agree, is exactly what they got.

"It was important to create a space that we all wanted to come to and that was inspiring and stylish and fun and hip."

— Alice Donaldson



Furnished with Geiger Scissor™ chairs and Loophole™ coffee table, the PRDG lobby sends a clear message to clients that they are in good hands.

Case Study

Industries

Architecture-Interior Design

Topics

Brand

Scalability

Small and Medium Business

Applications

Collaboration

Open Office

Project Scope

Original 2013 space:

4,500 square feet

2014 expansion:

1,015 square feet

2015 expansion:

1,450 square feet

Total: 6,965 square feet

Herman Miller Products

Canvas Office Landscape

Eames® Molded Fiberglass

Armchair Wire Base

Embody® Chair

Sayl® Chair

Scissor Chair

Loophole Table

Meridian Storage

Programs/Services

Small and Medium Business

Program

Year Completed

Original space: 2013

Expansions: 2014 and 2015

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Paul Donaldson, Alice Donaldson, Leah Robinson, and Ryan Robinson founded PRDG in 2013.

