

# For financial trading firm, live-work environment balances intensity with serenity

When an energetic young trading and technology firm was ready to create a space of its own, a generic engineered solution was not the best solution. Based in Chicago's West Loop, this client sought a carefully executed balance, one as informed by creativity as it was by form and function.

The finished space effectively blurs the distinction between work and home. In a unique Live-Work environment, the stage is set for the rigors of financial trading while offering an interlude in refined, serene areas. Today, this workplace is a popular weekend destination for employees who go there not to work – but to recharge.

## Creating a live-work environment

Located in a new commercial property in Chicago's hot Fulton Market area, this client challenged Lamar Johnson Collaborative (LJC) to bring its singularly creative vision to life. The new space would be both a place to work and a place to thrive, not so much an office as an integral strand of the firm's DNA.

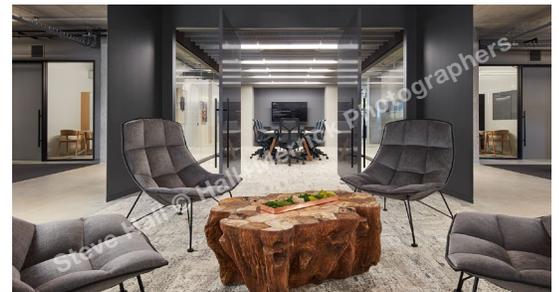
"Our goal was to create a space that's an extension of our life," says Josh Mateffy, BlackEdge Capital Founder and Managing Partner. "We take our work seriously, but not ourselves."

A partnership between BlackEdge Capital and a local art gallery enhances the tone of the space. Rotating exhibitions in the workplace inject an aesthetic that both underscores the client's seriousness of purpose and invites restorative reflection.

## Duality of purpose reflects singular culture

Through close collaboration with the company founders, LJC designed a workplace that places equal emphasis on functionality, technology and a calm environment. Large portions of the floor plate dedicated to communal areas – a fitness center/shower, café and gaming area – offer relief from the relentless pace of financial work.

Those communal areas are supported by quiet spaces throughout, ranging from an enclosed nap room to semi-private areas adjacent to the café. Mirroring the balance of work-driven intensity with areas of tranquility, the interior architecture and finishes create a dialogue between refined detailing and the industrial context of the West Loop property.



## The Challenge

Creation of an environment that balances the intensity of financial trading with serenity & respite, allowing employees to recharge.

## LJC Solution

- Carefully structured use of space creates areas suited to specific needs
- Communal spaces and quiet spaces offer peaceful, refined escape

## Fast Facts

- **CLIENT:** BlackEdge Capital
- **AREA:** 9,635 RSF
- **PHASE:** Complete, February 2019
- **SERVICES:** Interior architecture, FFE
- **LJC TEAM:** Charlie Cunov & Lance Yeary

The architectural expression at BlackEdge Capital is sculptural form, creating a visual and tactile experience; this is most evident in the central entry conference hub. Visitors and staff are greeted by a serene rhythm of vertical white oak inviting visitors to explore the gallery and café beyond. Reflecting the intensity of trading team activities, the main conference room expresses sharp precision.

These two distinct sculptural expressions embody the BlackEdge Capital culture, one that embraces the excitement and intensity of work while placing high importance on respite and recharge – creating true work life balance even while in the office.

The ultimate vision was creation of an environment that is an extension of the lives of BlackEdge Capital employees, rather than a separate compartment. It's a simple space, one that conveys a calming repose through hues in neutral tones. The overall feeling is polished and refined rather than stuffy and corporate, effectively complementing the industrial feel of the neighborhood and building.

## **Design expertise with a personalized connection**

LJC is an architecture and design firm committed to creating and delivering design solutions that improve and enhance the built environment. LJC provides clients the knowledge and expertise of a large practice with the personalized connection of a smaller, client-forward design firm.

Youthful in outlook, seasoned in experience, LJC offers clients a diverse portfolio of expertise. We believe this knowledge lays a solid framework for what is truly important: people.

Seamless integration of space into our client's culture is the bedrock of the LJC philosophy, a philosophy that drives the aesthetic while protecting functionality and efficiency. "Not everyone operates this way," says Charlie Cunov, principal emeritus at LJC. "But we believe that our clients are best served when we fully understand their vision and collaborate with them to see it become reality."

Motivated by each client's unique culture, we create environments for the people who live in them. We believe our work is a fundamental expression of optimism in the future, and that design is a means to effect positive, enduring change.

## **About Lamar Johnson Collaborative**

Lamar Johnson Collaborative (LJC) is a full-service design and architecture firm committed to enhancing the quality of the human experience and to improving how design and architecture can impact each individual's emotional being. By harnessing the power of integrated design, including architecture, workplace strategy, interior design, landscape architecture, urban planning and engineering, the company achieves its clients' goals and aspirations. To learn more, visit [www.theljc.com](http://www.theljc.com)

## **Project Partners, Subcontractors & Manufacturers**

Other firms involved in the project include: BIG Construction (General Contractor); IMEG (MEP Engineer); Corporate Concepts and Interior Investments (Furniture Dealers); Parenti & Raffaelli (Millwork); KSA Lighting (Lighting); Knoll (Systems Furniture); Herman Miller (Task and Conference Chairs); Knoll, Muuto, Scandinavian Spaces, Herman Miller, CB2, MENU, Arhaus (Ancillary Furniture); TURF Design (Acoustic Baffles); Interface and Shaw Contract (Carpet); Pliteq (Rubber Floor); LG Hausys (Solid Surface); Carnegie Fabrics (Drapery).