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Contact: Mandy Zerr / Editorial associate
610.894.9660, ext. 18 / mandy@sposto.com

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Sposto Interactive's office design a ripe environment for creativity

Co-founder designs office with creative process in mind

KUTZTOWN, Pa. – When James Sposto, co-founder of Sposto Interactive (SI), was looking for a new company office, he wanted more than just workspace. He wanted an environment completely immersed in creativity.

He found himself inspired by the second floor of a dirty and neglected old shoe factory.

“It was a blank slate,” Sposto said. “It was a space we could do anything with. And I got to try my hand at interior architecture.”

It took two years of heavy renovating, but the result is an urban and bright environment designed by Sposto to take advantage of his interactive communication agency's every creative whim. An in-house photo studio and sound and editing facility means “there is never an excuse not to just do it,” Sposto said. “The means of production are at our fingertips. Our palette is unlimited.”

The building might be a 117-year-old former shoe factory in a small Pennsylvania Dutch town, but only the historic photos in SI's reception area recall that. The clean lines and low-slung modern feel of the office speaks to Sposto's own personal preference for uncluttered space, but it also “emphasizes the importance of design.”

“All the details – the wood used around the doors, the modern craftsman-style windows, all the latest lighting – speak to what we do as a company. We create environments online, and

the environment we work in has to inspire that,” Sposto said. “[The office] reminds the folks here that they are talking to a world far wider and broader than the bucolic setting we’re in. When they step into this office, they are stepping into the future.”

Sposto used plenty of windows and natural light to keep his employees connected to that wider, broader world, making sure all workspaces, aside from the photo studio, have at least some natural light coming in.

The main conference room has large windows both on outside and interior walls to allow light to flood into workspaces where no light would normally reach, while windows on the tops and sides of office doorways also let sunlight into the interior.

“I think natural light and being able to see outside are incredibly important,” Sposto said. “Not feeling closed in means you have more options.”

The windows and light also help create the office’s open feel, emphasized by the heightened ceilings, the pendant lights that brighten them, and the spacious workspaces afforded employees.

The large workspaces are in part due to the fact that when SI moved into the 7,000-square-foot office in January 2006, there were only eight employees. But by October that same year, Sposto filled the space to its original envisioned capacity with 20 employees. And there is still plenty of room for more.

“I think people need to be comfortable,” Sposto said. “You have to imagine how people are going to use the space and do everything you can so that they like to be there and find it pleasant in general. They’ll be more productive.”

The openness also allows for impromptu collaboration. For example, the main production floor’s open configuration and low walls allow employees to easily talk to each other, while allowing enough privacy so they can tune each other out if they want to.

The office is also heavily equipped with white boards for spontaneous, break-out collaborations. Every small office, work area and conference room has a white board for employees to quickly jot notes or sketch ideas. Even the poolroom, a small conference room dubbed the “Corner Pocket” by staff, has a white board for meetings held over a game of pool.

“I like having white boards,” Sposto said. “I’m not very good with papers. I lose them. I don’t tend to lose white boards.”

Sposto’s office plan puts design in function, showing his appreciation not only for how something looks, but also for how it works.

“Everything we have here – from the clean lines to the [Charles and Ray Eames] designer furniture in the lobby – all speak to our philosophy and expectations, to the level of work we are going to put out from here,” he said. “When a client comes into our offices, they see that we take what we do seriously, down to our own environment.”

Sposto Interactive is an interactive communications firm specializing in the creation of unique and powerful online user experiences. Since 1996, SI has provided select national and global organizations with interactive marketing and branding solutions.

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