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Something to call their own

New offices at 320 S. Canal St. put final touches on Faegre Drinker merger



By [Melissa Rubalcaba Riske](#)

It was about more than new offices for Faegre Drinker when it moved into its brand new digs in downtown Chicago. It was to create a fresh chapter for the firm, formed through an early 2020 merger and ushering in the post-pandemic era by coming together under one roof.

Faegre Drinker sprung from Drinker Biddle & Reath and Faegre Baker Daniels. The merger made a firm with more than 1,300 attorneys and consultants across 22 locations throughout the United States, China and the United Kingdom. On paper, the merger was completed in February 2020, but due to the pandemic and remote work, most of the staff based in Chicago didn't connect in person

until the new offices opened in January 2022.

“Now that the masks are off, the office is new, it’s really wonderful to get connected,” said Faegre Drinker partner James Sawyer. The Chicago office is home to more than 125 attorneys and over 100 staff, with room for continued growth in the facility.



Shine bright like a diamond

Faegre Drinker is one of the first tenants to move

into the new 52-story office building at 320 S. Canal St., dubbed Union Station Tower because of its easy access to Union Station. Award-winning architecture firm Goettsch Partners designed the building. Faegre Drinker signed its lease for the property while it was still a hole in the ground and with hard hats and patience, the relocation team watched the property develop from a skeletal building into interior spaces carved to meet the needs of the newly unified firm.

Sawyer was a part of Faegre Drinker’s design team, created to assist with the development of the new office space, working through plans, design concepts and furnishings. When it came to final choices for furnishings, firm members were invited to see the office set up and give the chairs and desks a trial run.

“We wanted people to feel included and we offered this hands-on experience,” said Michelle Howe, regional director of administration for Faegre Drinker and a member of the design team.

The new office space presents airy, bright and open spaces.

“You feel relaxed, comfortable,” Sawyer said.

In-house talent

Interior Architects served as architects and designers for Faegre Drinker. Additionally, one of the firm’s own partners Laurie Holmes shared her passion for design as a member of the design committee and assisted with some of the decorating. Holmes even found some great antiques to help decorate space, providing interesting pieces and decorative touches to the office space. Working with a blank space allowed the firm to lend its input into how it wanted to use its space. That started with the insistence on universal-size offices throughout the multi-floor space. The decision to create single-size offices allowed for the floor plan to accommodate its office for visiting staff. “It creates opportunity for equality, and it says everyone is welcome,” Howe said.



Each office is equipped with desks offering options to sit or stand. Staff was issued new laptops to accommodate the flexibility of remote work, while each office has two screens to plug into when staff is in the office. Additionally, with the laptops, colleagues can meet in the collaborative space to work together.

“The space allows us to be flexible and to pivot when we need to pivot,” Sawyer said. And with the building’s curves and shapes, there are still plenty of beautiful office views of the lake and city.



Flexible spaces

The new space also includes an inviting living room area, which again can be used for small group meetings as well as more casual functions. With such a new building to call home, staff awaits the final construction phases of the new building project at 320 S. Canal St., which includes an outdoor plaza and space for events and entertaining. Upon completion, the outdoor space will be the largest outdoor park space in the West Loop.

Like many businesses post-pandemic, returning to an office following extended remote work requires flexibility. People have recognized work doesn't always require a desk. A meeting can take place around a small conference table or during an extended lunch break in the café.

Conference room spaces offer flexible spaces. The largest conference room can accommodate bigger meetings or be set up with room dividers to create a more intimate space for smaller groups. Additional conference space is ideal for small group meetings or working in pairs. Those conference rooms also are equipped for video conferencing.

"Each meeting room has all the cords so it's easy to plug and play," Howe said. "It's nice for people to show something up on a screen and it's practical because everyone has the ability to do it."

This flexible space can also serve for an after-work happy hour gathering or other social events. The café space features an array of seating from booths, tables and couches.

"People here gravitate to the less formal space," Howe said.

