Belden Customer Innovation Center

Case Study

Location: Chicago, IL

Product: MetalWorks™ Torsion Spring, Axiom® Vector Trim, Custom Non-perforated Aluminum Discs – Silverlume, Calla®, ProjectWorks Design and Pre-Construction Service

Architect: Whitney Architects

The Challenge

When it was time for Belden — a leading global supplier of network infrastructure and digitization solutions — to open its fourth Customer Innovation Center (CIC), 2Heads, the company's experiential marketing agency in the UK, had a clear vision of every element defining the 8,500 square-foot space. The ceiling design would play an integral role in the customer's experience, supporting the CIC's functionality as a place for learning and creating and validating solutions, as well as showcasing Belden's leadership in networking and connectivity innovation.

For Whitney, architect of record, the process was unconventional because the design vision didn't start with them. Nonetheless, the Whitney team embraced it as their own, dedicated to making 2Heads' vision come to fruition.

The 2Heads renderings specified a ceiling design distinguished by metal discs "floating" within a frame of curved trim with lighting. Requirements also included that the large central space needed to be conducive to conversation and education and be cohesive with back rooms designated for offices and learning.

"The ceiling concept was initially developed and presented by 2Heads, but they turned to us to source materials, detail the construction, and bring their vision to life," said Laura Grodoski, Senior Project Manager at Whitney. "On a scale of one to 10, the complexity was at least a nine, considering the need to integrate custom lighting and ceiling mechanics seamlessly. Knowing Armstrong's expertise in customization, we engaged them early in the process."

The Solution

Realizing the complexity of the design, Armstrong brought in the team from its ProjectWorks Design and Pre-Construction Service to help ensure the high attention to detail and coordination of vast amounts of "parts and pieces" required for a successful ceiling design and installation. In addition to determining standard products available to bring the renderings to life, Armstrong manufacturers pursued a fully custom solution to create the discs that would set the space apart.

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The Solution (continued)

Armstrong provided Whitney with samples of multiple options for the custom discs, ultimately using 8" and 12" non-perforated aluminum discs with a Silverlume finish. Custom 18" black Axiom Vector Trim framed the design along a series of straight and curved lines, and black MetalWorks™ Torsion Spring ceiling panels were chosen to provide a sleek background that showcased the aluminum discs. These panels were backed with an acoustical fleece to facilitate sound absorption in the vast space. Factory-drilled holes in the MetalWorks panels allowed the discs to be attached with a stud, washer, and nut. By attaching the discs in this way, the torsion spring functionality remained intact, allowing access to the plenum. In backroom offices and learning spaces, Calla® Total Acoustics mineral fiber ceiling panels provided critical sound absorption and blocking, as well as a bright, clean look.

With these critical elements in place, Armstrong turned Whitney's reflected ceiling plan into detailed shop drawings, with the two companies working together on some initial revisions before finalizing a set of comprehensive specifications all parties felt would best bring the design vision to reality. Preliminary CAD drawings were then submitted to the ceiling contractor for installation.

"The floating discs depicted in the rendering looked interesting, the question was, was this design do-able," said Ivan Meiring of Integrated Specialty Contractors. "It was highly complex with 42 different panels — everything custom and with a very specific placement. We received everything correctly and on time for the install, and the project was a definite success."

The ProjectWorks and Whitney teams agree that coming together early and engaging in ongoing communications was key to achieving the customization and level of detail necessary to complete the ceiling on time and on budget. Also important was both teams' commitment to understanding, and providing solutions that remained true to, the design vision. The proof that everything came together successfully lies in observations that there is no visible difference between the initial ceiling rendering and the final product.

"The Belden team is thrilled with the space, and the CIC is already proving to be a valuable tool," shared Grodoski. "It's a showplace that truly resonates with their customers, highlighting Belden's services in a way that's authentic to their brand."

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