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Fabric Wall Panels and a "Extreme Makeover"

Workstation Edition

By Ted Weidman

Aright, so it's not all that "extreme" but I am told that the change to this work station is incredible. The work station shown below was built out of all hard surfaces, and before the acoustical treatment was applied, every conversation, no matter how soft and private, could be heard multiple offices away.

My wife's office moved from a location in the west side of the twin cities to a building in downtown Minneapolis. The layout of the new office is fairly similar to others that I have seen downtown. The executive offices are built along the windows on the outside of the building and the support staff work stations are located through the inside. These two are separated by a walkway making its way all the way around the floor. Unfortunately, both the hallway as well as the support staff work stations are almost exclusively hard surfaces – hence the acoustical problem. Unfortunately because the only "soft" surface in the stations is the carpet, it was like working in a small racquetball court.

I didn't believe it, so I made the trip to the new office to see it for myself. The acoustics in the office was truly amazing. No matter how soft you spoke, your conversa-

tion could be heard amazingly well up to 30-40 feet away. Typically in a "cubicle" type office set up, the work stations are made by covering some kind of acoustically absorptive substrate with a decorative fabric. I'm sure you have seen, or are currently in one of those types of environments. This situation was much different.

Because my wife knows someone in the acoustics business, she was able to get some acoustical panels fabricated to meet her needs specifically. I decided to set her up with some of our tackable fabric wrapped fiberglass panels in the 1-1/8" thickness. I chose this option for a few reasons. The largest deciding factors were that I could have these panels made to fit her work station exactly, but more so because I could have them wrapped with a "pretty" fabric that would work well with the existing décor of the office. These panels are not only aesthetically pleasing, but they are also some of the most absorptive panels that we have to offer. Their NRC (Noise Reduction Coefficient) rating is .95, which is excellent for a one-inch thick panel. She also wanted to be able to use the panel as a tackboard, so before the fabric was applied, we

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Before Photos



The work stations in this office were constructed almost exclusively out of sheetrock which did not offer anywhere for the sound from a normal conversation to be absorbed.



The sound pressure level in each work station reflected so badly that even soft spoken word could be heard by co-workers thirty-to-forty feet away.

Photos continued on next page...



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laminated an 1/8" thick, highly compressed fiberglass layer to the standard 6-7 lb. density fiberglass core. This layer gives a thumb tack much more fiberglass around it so that it will stay tacked. She chose the half-beveled edge option and I had the edges chemically hardened simply for abuse resistance.

After a few men from the building put the panels up, I received an E-mail that said "They are up!! It was weird walking in the first time. like it was a dead zone or something. She reported that it was a MUCH more comfortable space to be in because it "felt cozy" as she

put it. A few co workers walked into the space to check it out, and they could not believe the difference.

It is my hope that the rest of the staff wants these panels put in their workspace as well so I can retire to Mexico. The overall cost for the panels, including the upgrade to the Guilford Anchorage facing, the tackable 1/8" layer, and the two-part clips for installation was around \$500.00. In order to draft a quote, I will need the measurements of the panels that will work in your workspace.

Install Photos



These panels were installed with our two-part E.C. Clip. One part of the clip is epoxied and screwed into the back of the panel, the other part of the clip is screwed to the wall.



The longer panel on the back wall was split into two separate panels simply because it was cheaper to currier from the factory to downtown Minneapolis.



I had the outer edges of each panel chemically hardened so that the fiberglass core would not break down and dent in case someone hit the panel with their shoulder when they turned the corner to her work station.

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Install
Complete



My wife provided me with some accurate measurements which allowed me to have panels fabricated that fit her work space specifically. The nice part about the layout of the office, is that most of the work stations are the same, so the fabrication of additional panels will be quite easy.



The color that was chosen for the fabric facing was the Guilford of Maine, Anchorage acoustical panel fabric, Color: 2130 Vanilla.

If you have any questions about this situation, or if you would like these panels in your office, please feel free to call 1-800-448-5300.

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