

CASE STUDY:

Sound Masking and Modern Architecture at a Professional Liability Insurance Company



Challenge

Reducing Distractions and Protecting Speech Privacy while Maintaining an Architectural Vision

When Oklahoma City-based professional liability insurer PLICO hired Elliott + Associates Architects to design their new office, they wanted a space that would let in lots of natural light and provide a modern design aesthetic while simultaneously preserving the history of one of the city's most unique buildings. Vacant for 27 years, PLICO would inherit Oklahoma City's own version of the "flatiron" building. The renovation would include the entire two-level building and the construction of a modern, yet complementary, rooftop addition, boardroom and outdoor deck.

Although the building would not include cubicles and every employee would get a private workspace, walls were made of a blue and clear polycarbonate material that helped protect visual privacy while letting in lots of natural light. To let in further light and give the space an open feel, there would also be a two-foot space between the top of the walls and the open ceiling, and none of the private offices would have doors. Only conference rooms would have closed ceilings and doors.

Elliott + Associates Architects worked with Rob Rogers from technology integrator Audio\Visual Design (AVD) to ensure acoustical privacy in offices. Rob recommended that a sound masking system be installed before completion of the construction work to help mitigate these issues. Sound masking is the process of adding an unobtrusive background noise to an environment through speakers installed in the ceiling to cover up excess speech noise. PLICO agreed and decided to incorporate the QtPro sound masking system into the office renovation.

“ The sound masking system makes it so speech noise just kind of fades into the background and you don't notice it. We love our new office! ”

Brook Barnett
Office Manager
PLICO

Solution

Qt® 300 Sound Masking System

AVD installed small, barely visible emitters (loudspeakers) throughout the open ceiling areas of the space. The emitters were connected by cables to an intuitive Qt 300 control module mounted in the server room. The emitters were small enough that they were easy to put in similar enclosures to the ones that held some of the light fixtures. "Incorporating the emitters into the design was easy," says Bill Yen from Elliott + Associates. "I've worked with Rob Rogers from AVD for a long time, and he knows how to incorporate technology, including sound masking technology, into our designs seamlessly."

Result

A Pleasant, Comfortable, and Beautiful Work Environment

PLICO's new office is everything they hoped it would be, excelling in both form and function. Employees can concentrate with minimal speech noise distractions and can hold meetings in their private offices and conference rooms without fear of being overheard. Additionally, the small size of the emitters ensured that the sleek, industrial interior design wasn't compromised. Sound masking even helped cover up some of the nearby road noise. "The sound masking system makes it so speech noise just kind of fades into the background and you don't notice it," says Brook Barnett, office manager at PLICO. "We love our new office!"



About PLICO

PLICO, a MedPro/Berkshire Hathaway company, is Oklahoma's premier partner for healthcare professional liability products and services. Endorsed by the Oklahoma State Medical Association, Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and Oklahoma Hospital Association, PLICO is trusted by more Oklahoma healthcare professionals than any other carrier for its superior defense and risk management services.

About Elliott + Associates

Elliott + Associates display both a unique depth and breadth of quality in their practice of architecture. The firm's work has been described as "architectural portraits" of the clients they serve. Each project is a direct result of the project location, climate, the owner's personality, business goals and project budgets. The projects are specifically designed to fit each place. Their success in working with modest and tight budgets is notable, because they believe limitations often lead to the best solutions. Six of the firm's ten National AIA Honor Award winning projects were considered "low budget."

About AudioVideo Designs, Inc.

AudioVideo Designs, Inc. (AVD) is a multi-faceted firm dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in all forms of communications. Our goal as consultants in architectural acoustics is to control sound as a positive and creative consideration in the design or rehabilitation of buildings. We strive to provide a balanced and concerned consulting service in terms of design integrity, functional requirements, and construction techniques, as well as time and budgetary constraints.

About Cambridge Sound Management, Inc.

Cambridge Sound Management, the world's largest provider of sound masking solutions, manufactures QtPro and DynasoundPro sound masking systems to help organizations across multiple industries protect speech privacy, reduce noise distractions, and increase workplace productivity. Cambridge Sound Management's proprietary sound masking technology works by emitting a uniform, barely perceptible background sound at the frequencies of human speech. Cost effective and easy to install, their sound masking, office paging, and background music systems are deployed in hundreds of millions of square feet of space throughout the world including commercial organizations, healthcare facilities, financial services, government agencies, and educational institutions.

Case Study Overview

SPACE

Approximately 20,000 square feet of space across three floors of a busy, modern office environment.

CHALLENGE

Sound transmission issues in the new space would lead to increased noise distractions and decreased speech privacy.

SOLUTION

Qt® 300 Sound Masking System



RESULT

An office environment where it's easy to concentrate and conversations held in private offices and meeting rooms aren't overheard.