

SLACK VANCOUVER HEADQUARTERS

LOCATION
Vancouver, British Columbia

SIZE
1,208 m²

COMPLETION
June 2016

ARCHITECT
Leckie Studio
Architecture + Design Inc.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Glotman Simpson
Consulting Engineers

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Powers Construction and
CDC Construction

PROJECT OWNER
Slack

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Slack, a fast-growing global technology company, develops software designed to help clients 'get more done.' So, it stands to reason that Slack's new headquarters in Vancouver would be designed to improve collaboration among their own team members. Architects repurposed an existing industrial warehouse building in Vancouver's historic Yaletown district, creating a variety of gathering spaces for Slack's staff and guests throughout the three-level space. The heavy-timber structure, which features both original and new wood members, was left exposed to form a warm, natural office space designed to spur creativity and teamwork.

Architects took their inspiration from the industrial character of the 1911 warehouse. Exposed wood beams reflect the building's history, but the office has numerous contemporary

features. Employees and visitors are greeted by a double-height atrium with bleacher-style seating that is used for town-hall-style, company-wide meetings. The dramatic, open space fosters interconnectedness across the multiple floors of the space.

To fit with the Slack business culture, there are no private offices, so architects were challenged to create flexible workspaces throughout. Typical static meeting rooms are supplemented by custom-designed mobile meeting boxes. These plywood-framed cubic 'rooms on wheels' provide private, portable breakout and informal meeting spaces. The plywood cubes are just one wood-based element of a uniquely appealing office environment that matches the distinct business culture of its tenant.



Photo courtesy of Ema Peter

“Representations of nature are placed throughout the space as reference to the larger context of the city of Vancouver and the local Pacific Northwest climate.”

Cristina Belmonte, Leckie Studio Architecture + Design Inc.

WOOD USE

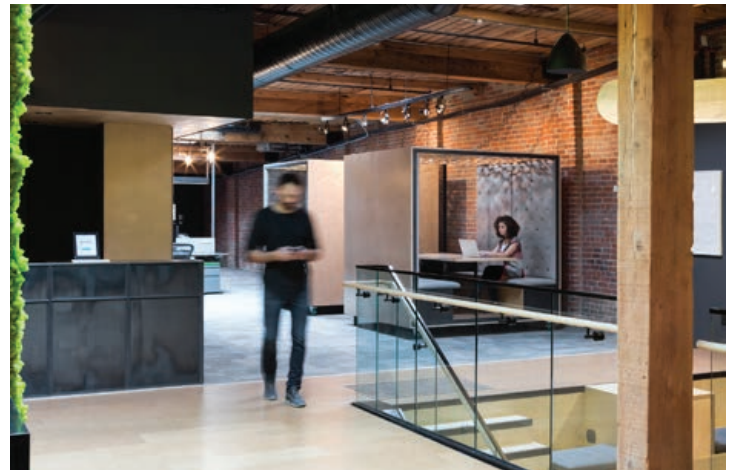
Slack’s Vancouver headquarters was intentionally designed to reflect their company culture, with inspiring, creative workspaces. Architects also worked purposefully to help employees in this urban tech workforce feel at home by surrounding them with natural materials. The retro-industrial space, typical of Vancouver’s Yaletown and Gastown neighborhoods, features a unique blend of time-worn wood structural beams and red-brown brick.

The sustainability of wood is pronounced in this repurposed warehouse. Architects worked to integrate the existing exposed heavy timber beams into the design with a minimalist palette of new yet utilitarian building materials, including plywood, raw steel and cork. The intention was to use a Japanese ‘wabi-sabi’ approach, an ancient Buddhist philosophy which celebrates imperfection.

The goal was to complement the building’s original industrial character by featuring a durable wooden structure that will age gracefully over time.

During construction, materials removed from one area were used in another to minimize waste. For example, a large structural wood beam that was removed to create the double-height atrium space was repurposed as a 4.9-metre-long communal coffee table at the second-floor lounge.

New wood materials played an important role as well. Custom-made mobile meeting rooms framed with plywood provide creative space for spontaneous meetings. Designers added circular cut-outs in the wood ceiling to bring in light, resulting in dramatically-shadowed spaces. All materials used in the renovations were locally sourced.



Photos courtesy of Ema Peter

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This profile is published by Forestry Innovation Investment, the Government of British Columbia’s market development agency for forest products.

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