

Portland company has flourished by expanding focus, keeping things light

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Like many businesses, Bainbridge has had its ups and downs. Just after Sept. 11, 2001, the interior design company faced a dilemma when both its corporate and government work decreased significantly.



"After 9/11, I had to reinvent the company," said firm owner Andrea Bainbridge. "We began doing more health care and higher education work."

These days, Bainbridge has diversified her company's portfolio to include project management, tenant improvement and space planning for corporate, institutional and government clients. At the moment,

her firm is working on church projects, retail and banks.

In 25 years of doing business, she has opted to not sell her business or merge with a larger architectural firm. Staying small, with eight employees, allows Bainbridge to pursue the clients she wants and vary her design style.

The Oregon State Lottery recently hired Bainbridge to study how to best use the space it has in a 60,000-square-foot building in Salem.

"At the Lottery, we are busting at the seams," said Keri Stocks, materials manager for the Lottery. "We're at a point where we can no longer add full-time employees, so we have to make sure we've made the best use of our space."

Bainbridge performed a space analysis to determine, in part, how to move more employees into 8-foot by 8-foot cubicles.

At the same time, Poticha Architects of Eugene performed a feasibility analysis to decide whether the lottery will need to expand. The firm determined that the lottery will need a 30,000-square-foot addition to its current building. Stocks said the lottery will issue a request for qualifications from architecture firms once the Lottery Commission approves the expansion. The commission is scheduled to make that vote on Friday.

If the commission gives the green light for the expansion, Stocks said Bainbridge will be called upon again for space planning, working in concert with the selected architect. "Bainbridge is going to know our business and what our departments need,"

she said.

Stocks said the Bainbridge team is "funny and keeps things very light."

Bainbridge said her "corporate philosophy" is to keep a sense of humor when dealing directly with clients or advertising the firm. A recent flier marking the company's 25th anniversary said "We don't live with our parents but, yes, we are 25 years old and still young at heart." Her firm's glossy fliers are a stark contrast to the one-page memos she sent out in 1983, which nevertheless won her clients such as Nike.

She said the firm's design style is always influenced by the clients' needs. In 2004, Bainbridge redesigned three floors in the Wells Fargo Center for Wells' Wealth Management Group. "They wanted a very refined, elegant, high-end corporate look and we don't get that in Portland very often," she said. "All of the space is extremely classic. I'm proud of its longevity." She said another design she is proud of is the Port of Portland's office space redesign in 2000, in which she used old growth fir from a marine terminal.

For a Wells Fargo branch in the Pearl District, Bainbridge called for a check-writing stand made from recycled U.S. dollars.

"We're really flexible in our design decision and we keep our egos out of it," she said.

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