

# Game-maker Electronic Arts picks technology-friendly Ethospace® system

If you're into interactive sports- and movie-based games, you're probably familiar with Electronic Arts (EA), the world's leading interactive entertainment software company.

At EA, groups of developers, designers, producers, engineers, game artists, and programmers team up and create games and then form new groups and create more new games.

"It's almost like making a movie," says Global Account Team Strategic Business Consultant Rick Golden, except that instead of video cameras and movie sets, EA's studios, located throughout the world, are filled with workstations, and much more.



The company's studio in Burnaby, British Columbia.

## Comfortable campus

Take EA's studio in Burnaby, British Columbia, as an example. This campus (which the EA Canada website calls "one of the most welcoming, innovative, and comfortable workplace environments in the world. Period.") has a soccer field, basketball court, gym, spa, multiple video game arcades, a 3,000-square-foot theater, coffee bars, and a cafeteria.

Customer Electronics Arts  
Burnaby, British Columbia

Product Ethospace® system, Avive® tables, and  
Aeron® and Mirra® chairs

Issues Technology, attraction/retention, churn,  
ease of change

The reason for the great amenities, Herman Miller Corporate Business Manager Carla Maruyama explains, is that "they are drawing top talent from all over the world. The attraction and retention factor is a major player in

the design of the building—both interior and exterior."

Jennifer Druehl of Herman Miller Workplace Resource Vancouver says that "it's the most amazing facility I've ever seen. It's a really fun, cool place."

Herman Miller Technology Consultant Tom Swihart agrees. "They're pretty laid back. They even bring their dogs to work."

Yet to Swihart, it's not the easygoing attitude, nor the amenities, that really differentiates EA's campus. It's the technology. ▶

“It’s one of the most intensive technology uses I’ve ever seen,” he says.

“Their sheer power needs are huge because they support a number of electronics at the worktop, their monitors are extremely powerful, and their technology is networked. Even if their technology wasn’t networked, their technology needs would be extraordinary.”

**A lot to support**

As spelled out in the RFP, technology at each workstation had to support:

- Four game consoles (Xbox/PlayStation 1 & 2)
- Two 17-inch monitors
- One 17-inch television
- One telephone
- One task light

“We understood, first and foremost, that an IT solution would be the focus for this client,” Golden remembers thinking when he, Druehl, and Lyle Mills (also at Herman Miller Workplace Resource Vancouver) saw Electronic Arts’ RFP for 585 workstations.

The RFP also stated that power and data be routed “from raised floor to workstation,” and that lay-in cabling was “critical.”

The Herman Miller team decided to lead with Ethospace. “Ethospace is typically the best choice for a company with high-tech needs,” Swihart explains. Plus, Ethospace could accommodate EA’s rapid growth and frequent moves.

“We’re constantly moving,” Frank Bassett, EA Canada senior director of Facilities and Corporate Services, explains. “As a game goes from preproduction to production and then finals, some people will go on to other game teams.”

**Furniture couldn’t keep up**

When people switch teams, the furniture gets switched around, too. But EA’s existing furniture—a competitor’s system that the company had standardized on some seven years earlier—just couldn’t keep up with the number of reconfigurations.

But, even with EA’s existing furniture supplier more or less out of the running, Herman Miller wasn’t a shoo-in.

Sure, EA and Herman Miller had a history—EA UK had picked the Resolve® system, EA corporate had standardized on Aeron and Mirra chairs for all its facilities, and EA Black Box Vancouver had chosen Ethospace three years earlier. ▶



One of 585 Ethospace stations.



Mirra chairs in the theater.

But the Herman Miller sales team members still had to go up against one other serious competitor for their biggest Canadian win to date.

So they chose a two-pronged approach: Strengthen relationships between the two companies, both locally and corporately, and use a mock-up to showcase Ethospace technology support, flexibility, and aesthetics.

### Two-stage mock-up

A + D firm MCM Interiors Ltd. asked that the mock-ups be presented in two stages—the first stage to demonstrate how the frames go up and the wires go in.

“In phase one,” Druehl says, “we put the frames up, and then the electrical and data cabling folks came in and wired it up so EA’s electricians and IT people could see that it was all lay-in. It took 15 to 20 minutes. If they’d come in late they would have missed it.”

During the second phase of the mock-up—held two weeks later—the Herman Miller team showcased Ethospace aesthetics.

For the people who brought in the competitive product (which is fish-through), the demo didn’t go so well. “I heard we had so dazzled them that our competitor didn’t know what to do,” Swihart says.

As it turned out, the presentation was the tie-breaker. “We narrowed it down to the two finalists,” says EA’s Frank Bassett. “After they presented to us, it was apparent that Ethospace was the best choice for us. The onsite demonstration sealed it.

### Future proofing

“We planned for the future,” Bassett says of the company’s furniture buy. “We’ll be able to handle our data requirements in the future without having to buy new furniture.”

Still, looks matter. And EA’s workstations, Druehl says, “look great! Some of the workstations are fairly conservative, with muted colors that don’t distract from the building’s architectural details,” while others have 3Form resin panels that will soon be painted by EA’s resident artists. 🎨



A floor-to-ceiling spiral inspired by EA's SSX game.



3Form resin panels will become canvases for artwork.