

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Client: FIXER.COM

Location: CHICAGO, IL

Space: 14,000 SQ. FT.



How Vertical Interior Design brought Fixer.com's new headquarters to life, from design through construction, for under \$40 a square foot.

“Getting a beautiful office completed for under \$40 a square foot is extraordinarily challenging and was only possible because of the design team's expertise and ability to source high-quality, reasonably-priced fixtures and furniture.”

—Mike Evans, Founder & CEO, Fixer.com



THE COMPANY

Fixer.com is a handyman service available on site and by video. Their team specializes in common household repairs and can knock out a long, varied To-Do list in a single visit. The men and women of Fixer have a combined 180 years of home repair experience and deliver best-in-class service from start to finish.

THE CHALLENGE

“We used Vertical Interior Design to design and execute a mixed-use headquarters office for our startup, Fixer.com,” said Evans. “From soup to nuts, the team helped us develop our vision, capture a tone, and create useful spaces that work well for our team. The project itself was very challenging as we are a construction startup with an embedded trade school. So, the space needed to work for accomplished professionals, function for heavy use construction storage, and also be welcoming to students in our training center spaces.”



The 14,000 square foot, two-story space had physical challenges to overcome in addition to the design. It had been a gym with an interior exposed brick wall in one section and a fish tank under the main floor that ran from the front to the back of the space. Although they considered bringing the fish tank back to life, in the end, they decided installing flooring over it was the best option.

“There were also some very odd things about the space,” noted Jamie Leonard, senior interior designer for Vertical Interior Design (VID). “There were a lot of electrical panels and outlets that we had to address. As we walked through, the client talked to us about what they were looking to get out of the space, what they wanted to use it for, and how they wanted to use it.” VID had to determine how to make this a reality, even with the imperfect facility.



THE SOLUTION

The solution was unique for both VID and Fixer as they collaborated on the project. Fixer, unlike most clients, did all of the construction work themselves. They built, installed, and painted the walls, and installed the tile, glass, and concrete elements. VID chose a wallpaper that looks like stacked newspapers from all over the world, and the client put that up as well.

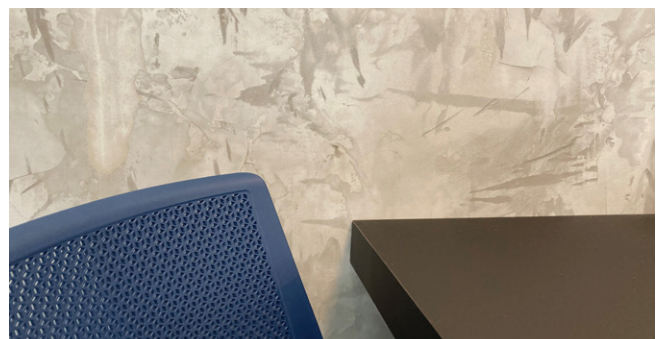
“It was fun because they did all the contracting work themselves,” Leonard explained. “That let me be a little more creative with the construction side of things. I wanted to showcase what they do within the design. The front area is actually meant for the Fixers. It’s like a study area for them. In between jobs, they can come hang out and either study to get certifications or have their lunch, or whatever they need to do.”

Many of the elements are exposed or appear to be under construction, an acknowledgment of what it is they do at Fixer. There is nothing truly left to be finished, just a very creative appearance of what it could look like.

The elements that were incorporated into the design include a few walls. Leonard said, “I wanted the studs to be exposed and show the innards of a wall through acrylic that was installed instead of drywall. In the center of the walls, to create some privacy, I wanted to use concrete. Because of the nature of their business, they came up with the idea to use tile thinset, the product that you put under tile when you’re laying it, and it gave it a really cool kind of look.”

There are other surprising details throughout the space as well, such as the kitchen backsplash in the break room. It has a bit of an unfinished look, as though someone started tiling and didn’t finish, but it was a creative choice, done on purpose.

Finishes were chosen that had a natural finish to them, with black and white accents along with the company colors of blue and a golden yellow for branding. “As far as their design direction, that was the point, to showcase the materials that they use on a daily basis and the natural, raw side of those things,” Leonard said.



THE RESULTS

This exciting project was done in two phases over a six-month period. The space is not only used for administrative purposes, collaboration areas, and meeting space, but includes other areas for the Fixers to relax between jobs, to work on certifications in the trade school, to have lunch, and to learn or practice different parts of the trade.

“I love seeing my designs come to life,” Leonard said, adding, “The clients are super happy about it, which is most important to me. The owner wasn’t sure about the yellow fabric on the serpentine sectional at first, but I asked him to trust me, and it turned out that he loved it. As a designer, there is always something in each project that you hope for. As long as the clients are thrilled with the end results, and they have a new space they can thrive in, then that’s awesome!”

Evans praised VID, saying, “Even with such varied requirements, the Vertical Interior Design team pulled off an amazing job, using a combination of third-party furniture bids, as well as their in-house custom furniture creation capability. In aggregate, the design, construction, and furniture for a highly polished office, including the construction of glass conference rooms, was accomplished for a total price of under \$40 per square foot on a large, 14,000 square foot office.”

