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# Next generation of movable walls have arrived



**Stuart Hodas**  
 Spaceworks

substantially greater than drywall construction, even though the promise of flexibility offered savings over the lifecycle of the product, as walls were reconfigured over time.



For corporate interiors, movable walls have long been one of those products that are great in concept, but never quite live up to their potential in reality.

The first generations of movable walls were notoriously unattractive and difficult to move, due to the weight of materials used. As the years passed, a second generation of movable walls emerged with more attractive surface options such as glass, wood, vinyl, and fabric. Unfortunately, while they looked good, these wall solutions were often parts-intensive, making them difficult to move and susceptible to damage. Additionally, they could not achieve acoustic ratings comparable to traditional drywall construction, which made them unsuitable for private office or conference room applications. These issues left architects and designers wary of recommending moveable walls to their clients. Clients were reluctant to invest in these products, as the "first cost" was

The next generation of moveable wall products offers improved sound transmission reduction, increased flexibility, improved aesthetics, as well as shorter lead times and greater accuracy in specifying. Costs become competitive with traditional construction as the level of finish increases. Glass and millwork options compete very favorably with the cost of construction, for those clients concerned about delivering a high end space within a constrained budget. And clients who reconfigure walls regularly will benefit from the comparative lack of disruption in constructing offices within occupied space, and the lower lifetime costs of reconfiguring space.

When considering the purchase of a moveable wall product, clients should also consider the advantages of complimentary components, such as raised floors with access for Data/Voice/Power cabling, sound masking, the increased comfort of underfloor air, and increased

functionality and reduced cost of structured cabling and electrical installation in an underfloor application.

While products have continued to improve in quality, clients still need to be concerned about the process of constructing a space using moveable walls. The process of traditional construction needs to be reversed. In a traditional construction project, the walls go in first, then the ceilings, then the space is painted, and then the finished flooring is installed, leaving the space ready for furniture.

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When constructing using moveable walls, the ceiling goes in first, then the flooring, and finally the walls are set into place. This process requires a knowledgeable contractor or at least one who is willing to act collaboratively in a team with the movable wall provider. Coordination early on is critical, as the intersection between the built elements and walls, produced hundreds of miles away in a factory instead of on site, is essential to a seamless, quality installation. Thus, the process of producing shop drawings, careful review, and layout in the field, becomes even more important.

Companies like Infinium Architectural Walls have learned from the mistakes of past generations, and engineered a wall solution using the latest materials and manufacturing processes, resulting in a flexible solution that looks great and performs as promised. The manufacturing process pioneered by Infinium allows the company to offer a unique combination of aesthetic quality, unmatched sound transmission coefficient (STC) rat-



ings, real moveability, quick and on-time delivery, and an accessible price point.

Infinium Architectural Walls was founded by a mechanical engineer with more than 23 years experience in the interior architectural product industry. It was this experience that led to the idea for a new and improved approach to movable wall systems.

Infinium is constructed using an aluminum frame, unlike some other products. Aluminum is both light and strong, is the perfect material for precision machining, and is easily recyclable. The anodized finish preserves the natural luster, texture, and beauty of aluminum by imparting a surface that is much harder than

untreated aluminum. Anodizing also leaves the aluminum surface nonconductive, which minimizes air pollutant accumulation and static build-up.

Infinium also developed the first movable solid panel to achieve a 50 STC rating. Paired with a STC of 42 for their glass panels, Infinium has the highest ratings in the movable wall industry.

Infinium offers inspiration, ingenuity, and innovation in architectural movable wall systems. The full range of Infinium products, including a carefully researched suite of solutions, such as raised access flooring, sound masking, flooring, and furniture, are featured at the new Spaceworks Architectural Interiors showroom at 225 Wyman Street in Waltham. SpaceworksAI will provide a single source for the schematic design, pricing, project management, and installation of their suite of product solutions.

**Stuart Hodas is president of Spaceworks Architectural Interiors, Waltham, Mass.**

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