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A Welcoming Place to Build Wealth



Marilyn K. Yee/The New York Times

Bruce E. Teitelbaum used lots of glass along with traditional elements like built-in bookcases in designing the new Manhattan space of GenSpring Family Offices, which specializes in managing family wealth.

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Published: March 9, 2008

GENSPRING FAMILY OFFICES, a financial company that specializes in managing family wealth, rechristened itself last fall after doing business as Asset Management Advisors for 18 years. With a new name came a fresh new logo and sleek corporate identity. When it opened a new New York office on Oct. 1, the company wanted to make sure that its look and feel communicated the message behind the brand: welcoming, family-oriented and focused on building wealth.

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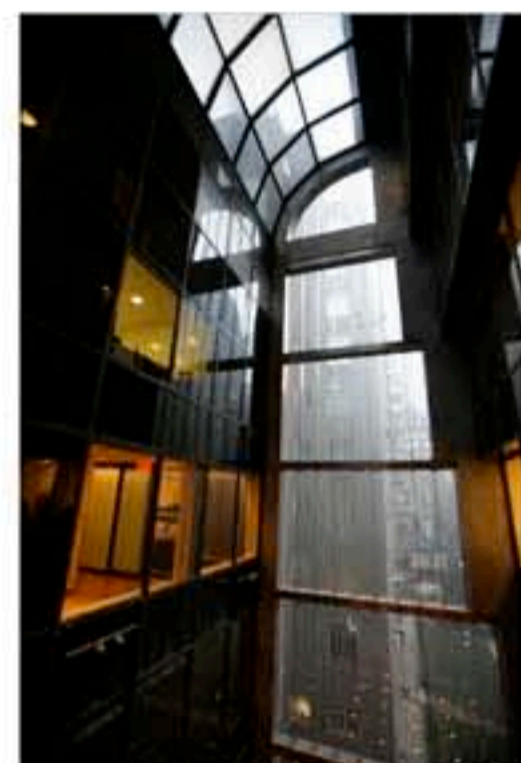
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Instead of choosing a conventional architect to create the new space, at 13-15 West 54th Street, GenSpring hired the Royal Promotion Group, a company that specializes in commercial interior and retail design, as well as branding for a variety of clients, including many in the fashion and beauty industries. The result was a bright, sleek interior that feels more like a spa than headquarters for a financial company that manages \$15 billion in assets for 600 families, each with assets of \$25 million or more.



Marilyn K. Yee/The New York Times



The unusual space, divided among three buildings, includes an atrium and a footbridge.

“We wanted a space that was intimate and didn’t feel like a big company,” said Michael Zeuner, the chief strategy and client experience officer at GenSpring, which has its headquarters in [Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.](#), and has 13 offices nationwide. “It’s modern but comfortable, not cutting-edge and not over-designed,” Mr. Zeuner said.

The unusual space measures 10,000 square feet and is all on the third floor, divided among three buildings — two on West 54th Street that have been joined and one on West 55th Street that is separated from the other two by an atrium and linked by a footbridge.

The 54th Street buildings are four-story neo-Renaissance structures known as the Rockefeller town houses, which were built in 1897. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the Standard Oil Company, bought No. 15 in 1901 and gave it to his son, [John D. Rockefeller Jr.](#), shortly after his wedding to Abby Aldrich in 1901. [Nelson A. Rockefeller](#), the former vice president and New York governor, bought No. 13 in 1955. The two units, which were declared landmarks, were sold upon Nelson Rockefeller’s death in 1979. The building at the rear, at 20 West 55th Street, is a more modern structure with 12 stories and a penthouse. UBS, the financial services company, was the tenant for the third-floor space in the three linked buildings before GenSpring renovated and moved from temporary quarters it occupied for about a year at 711 Fifth Avenue, between 55th and 56th Streets. A majority of tenants in the complex are financial services companies, and there is a high-end restaurant, Grayz, operated by the chef [Gray Kunz](#), on the ground floor.

GenSpring executives liked the juxtaposition of modern with original details like those on the exterior of the town houses. An interior oak staircase and herringbone parquet floor, both also original, are visible through a glass panel in the reception area.

Bruce E. Teitelbaum, the president of the Royal Promotion Group and the designer of the space, complemented the original details by adding other traditional elements like dark wood built-in bookcases and a pressed tin ceiling panel in a meeting area known within GenSpring as the library. On desks are ivory ceramic gourd-shaped table lamps with warm incandescent bulbs; seating in the reception area has wicker accents.

The wood in the offices is bamboo, which is used on work stations, in flooring and for all the furniture, which was designed and manufactured by Royal Promotion. Bamboo was chosen because of its sustainability, and because GenSpring incorporated it into its logo to represent longevity, strength and prolific growth.

The generous use of glass in the design is a literal way to illustrate transparency in how the company does business. Gradient glass that is textured to be nearly opaque at the bottom of a panel and transparent at the top is used to partition the elevator foyer from the main reception area.

All offices have sliding doors with pale blue-green frosted glass panels framed in dark-tinted bamboo, and the library is equipped with a series of sliding door panels that mimic a Chinese screen. These can be moved to divide the largest room of the complex in half and isolate it from the public reception area.

The use of glass also keeps the space bright, particularly in the client area, which has impressive views of the Museum of Modern Art sculpture garden.

“It’s all about letting light in,” said Mr. Teitelbaum, whose clients also include the designers Vera Wang and [Marc Jacobs](#) and the cosmetics giant L’Oréal.

There are also glass inserts in desks and occasional tables throughout the space, he said. The company logo looms over the reception area on a panel of striated pale green glass that shimmers with a water effect.

GLASS links all parts of the offices and keeps sight lines clear. On the 55th Street side of the floor plan, where all offices except that of the chief executive, Maria Elena Lagomasino, are located, 65-inch-high work stations include horizontal glass panels at the top to ensure unobstructed views for all workers. Floor-to-ceiling windows on either side of the atrium unify the client meeting area in the 54th Street wing with the executive area.

“We never want anyone to feel he can’t see what’s going on,” Mr. Teitelbaum said.

The watery green of the glass is part of a serene color palette. It ranges from neutrals like ivory and wheat to subtle tones of blue, and is used on pale woven upholstery fabrics to slate blue Japanese grass cloth wallcovering in the 55th Street side of the office and patterned marine blue area rugs in conference and reception areas.

“It’s a place you feel comfortable coming back to,” Mr. Teitelbaum said.