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**IN8
DESIGN
INC.**

**A
Meeting
Of The
Minds**

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Design Engineering



IN8 Design Inc. inspires through creative passion and colour

by NATALIE BRUCKNER-MENCHELLI

The Advocates Society

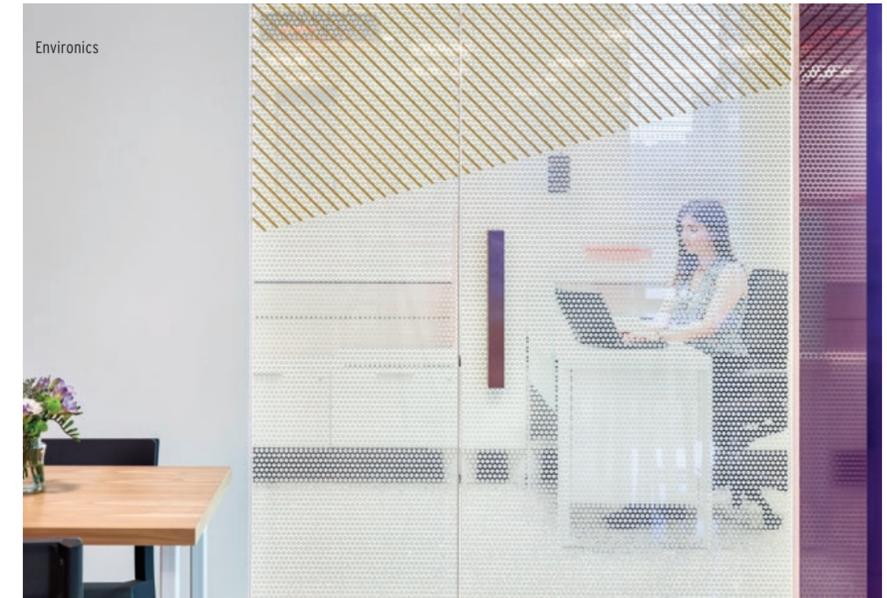


And this way of working has paid off, resulting in them landing some major design projects in Toronto. One example that perfectly exemplifies IN8 Design is the Entro project. IN8 was tasked by the brand communications/environmental graphics leader (and a returning client) to transform a lakeside condo complex's drab retail mall into an invigorating workspace that would encourage teamwork and nurture the newly combined creative energies.

"This renovation of a non-traditional office space was possibly the most complicated and stressful project so far," says Arcand. "Don and I visited and analyzed a number of buildings that Entro Communications were looking at. They eventually bought a space that we hadn't necessarily recommended."

The space was in a mini plaza between two condo towers and below a parking garage that featured a public corridor with a right of way issue. Despite the project raising some red flags, IN8 Design was up for the challenge. "It was a depressing space, so we poked our heads through the ceilings and realized just how grand volume wise the space could be. This formed our planning and everything else just fell into place," says Arcand.

IN8 Design created an open, democratic and inspiring work setting that reflects and enhances Entro's creativity, and, as a cherry on the design cake, the project ended up winning an ARIDO Award of Excellence in 2013.



Environics

Order. Beauty. Detailing. These three concepts lie at the very heart of Ontario-based IN8 Design. When Michel Arcand and his business partner Don Parker founded the interior design company back in 2010 their philosophy was simple; to share their wealth of experience and take clients on an innovative, creative and playful journey that would result in designs that inspire.

Their passion for the business is unmistakable. Chatting with Arcand and Parker, it is impossible not to get wrapped up in their love of contemporary design and their enthusiasm for tackling a project head on.

It could be said that fate had a hand in bringing together this incredible duo who are both Ryerson University graduates but actually met back in 1998 when working for Rice Brydone Limited (RBL). Three years later, in 2001, Arcand decided to jump ship and became a project manager for the facilities department for a client of RBL where they continued working together.

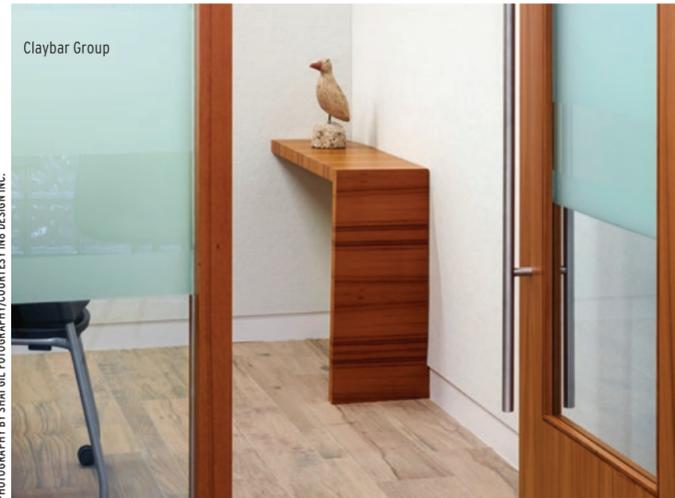
Skip forward a few years to 2007 and Arcand realized he missed design and decided to join Parker at Cannon Design. "We always joke because in 2009 Don was forced to lay me off due to a company restructuring... he hates it when I remind him of that," laughs Arcand. But this turn of events is what eventually led to the creation on IN8 Design.

"I knew I was done with the red tape at larger corporations so I incorporated by myself as Arcand Design Inc. but quickly realized that I didn't want to, or knew how to operate a business as a sole practitioner. So I took Don out for lunch in May 2010 to discuss the possibility of forming a partnership and three months later we changed the corporation's name to IN8 Design Inc.," says Arcand. The new name speaks to their experience and the fact that they are both well seasoned in the business.

Working from the third floor of Arcand's house in downtown Toronto, the duo quickly picked up clients due to their reputation for delivering projects on time, on budget, and with a unique flair. After hiring their first star designer in 2012, IN8 Design moved to a bright post, beam and brick loft in Toronto where you can now find the team of five.

Despite being exceptionally organized and process driven, there is a certain relaxed vibe that is evidenced throughout the firm, and one that shines through in the staff IN8 hires and the projects they work on.

"Unlike most design companies, we don't do timesheets. We did that with larger firms and at the end of the day we want to do good work and have fun. Timesheets are a guilt trip and there are so many ways to fudge the numbers. Sometimes, it can take us a lot of time. We focus, perhaps to our detriment, on the details, and will pull things apart until it is right," explains Parker.



Claybar Group

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHAH GIL PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY IN8 DESIGN INC.

IN8 Design Inc.



Entro



Another great example of IN8's versatility is The Advocates' Society (TAS) project in downtown Toronto. With increasing demands on its education centre and issues with its previous location, TAS decided it was time to relocate. Over several months, IN8 helped them search for the right space to become a highly functional 14,000-square-foot meeting and learning place, member resource and office.

Arcand admits that presenting in front of a board that consisted of senior lawyers was quite daunting, but now hails the presentation as one of his best yet: "When we stood in front of them during the design presentation, we thought it might be tricky to get them to agree to the design as it was quite a departure for them. But the board was really supportive."

Over the next five months IN8 worked closely with the client and a real estate broker to find the right space. IN8 was able to establish a strong presence for TAS, the first tenant on the floor, by taking advantage of the recent public area modernization. Extending the elevator lobby's black and white stone flooring into the reception area and aligning the desk with the lobby's white oak suspended canopy visually expanded the TAS space.

However, Arcand says the project didn't go completely smoothly: "We decided to use a crazy aqua colour on the doors. When it first went on we got a call from the client because everyone wondered what we were doing. Even I questioned myself at one point, but we've come to realize that there is always a feature on a job that is a nail biter until it all comes together... then you stop biting your nails!"

As it turned out, the client loved the colour so much so that they changed their branding colour to align with the new bright space.

"We always joke we should stop being so bold," says Arcand. "I love colour and graphic design has helped people stop being afraid of it. Most corporate companies know that we do modern contemporary design and so they trust in what we do. When we chat with potential clients and find out they are after a more traditional style, we have no issues in recommending someone else as that's not our strength. We find most clients who come our way are on the same wavelength."

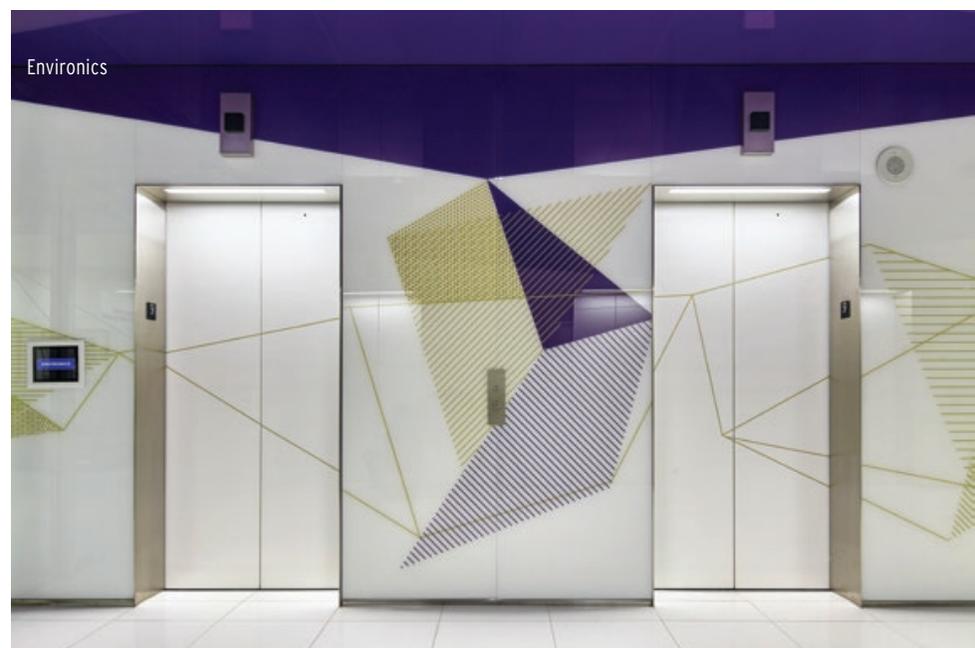
One project that really stands out still to Arcand and Parker is the Urbacon headquarters, which the duo completed while working for Canon Design. Urbacon had purchased a 50,000-square-foot derelict warehouse and the duo was tasked with designing the structure from the inside out. "We took a 10,000-square-foot office bay that was added to the front of the warehouse, knocked it down and renovated the 40,000-square-foot area to create a work environment with 22-foot ceilings. It was a fun project," says Parker.

Reflecting on the project, Arcand recalls a site visit where he ran into a contractor who was about to paint the post and beam the wrong colour. "I have never had to work so hard at convincing someone on the spot that they should trust us! Fortunately the client has never looked back since," he says. That was back in 2007/2008 and since that time the project has become an inspiration for other design teams and clients, and been replicated in other areas of Ontario.

Inspirational designs is what makes IN8 Design really stand-out. That and their ability to see what works for a client and come to a solution that has the clients' best interest at heart. "There is nothing more rewarding than turning up to a meeting with a client, being seen as a bad guy because of budgets, but then getting over that first hurdle, receiving client buy-in and being able to deliver a project they can be proud of," says Parker.

And it is their complementary personalities that really shine through when you chat with them. While both share a common desire and drive to have very stringent and thorough documentation and are unafraid to question the status quo, Arcand is the creative force while Parker brings a dedication to budgets and timing that ensures the success of each and every project.

"While we're very process driven, we're also determined to get to a strong design solution before presenting a concept to a client. It's hard and exciting work at the



same time. Not just the partners, we all get into it and it makes it that much more interesting when one of us comes up with an out-of-the-box suggestion. We hear each other grinding away and we're not shy to voice our two cents worth during a concept development," explains Arcand.

Looking ahead, IN8 plans to grow; constantly improving the level of design from the last project. "We're always open to questioning if our solution really is the best we think it can be. We love paring something down from what we thought it needed in its initial stages. It's more than value engineering at this point, it's more about clearing the space of clutter. We love engineering our projects, in a design sense," says Parker.

For IN8, it is all about the people, both outside and inside the business. "We are very much about enjoying our careers, our staff and mentoring. We were fortunate to be mentored by individuals and we want to pass that along," says Parker.

And when it comes to downtime, where can we find the dynamic duo? "I love to get my hands dirty when I'm not working. I have a summer house on the lake and I like putting in the garden as it is so completely different from our work and it helps clear the head."

Arcand adds: "For me, my happy hour is with my personal trainer where I can become a complete goofball at times. I think it's because you get so exerted, you can go a little cooky and the Jim Carrey comes out of me!" **A**