

# Do better offices bring better employees?

## Growing New Berlin firm aims to provide inspiring surroundings

By **BROOKE KNUDSON**  
Freeman Staff

**NEW BERLIN** - Inside Scott Gierhahn's office at Schroeder Solutions in New Berlin, clients won't find the typical gray-speckled carpet or standard cubicle. Instead, Gierhahn has accented his office with vivid reds and durable, intricately designed carpet.

As president of the office design and furnishings dealership, Gierhahn believes an aesthetically pleasing, functional office space can affect work performance.

Gierhahn's business is a prime example that there is truth behind what he believes.

Since Schroeder Solutions launched in 2002, annual sales have more than doubled and the business expanded its office and warehouse space to accommodate the boost in business.

On Nov. 15, the business relocated into a new, 45,000-square-foot facility on Calhoun Road in New Berlin.

The location is one that Gierhahn enjoys because of the proximity to Wisconsin's major metropolitan areas.

Gierhahn's office is one of several integrated into the company's new Idea Center, a space that showcases innovative and state-of-the-art office furnishings and floor and wall coverings for the business' commercial clients.

Throughout the facility, clients can view how the latest office designs and products can help improve a business. The center displays products from modular cubicles and moveable walls to light fixtures that cast softer light.

The center also features a resource library where clients can get ideas on upholstery fabrics and wall coverings.

Sales coordinator Mary McKillip joined the Schroeder team about nine months ago after leaving the residential design business to specialize in larger, more detail oriented commercial projects.

"Our Idea Center is one of the best," McKillip said, referring to the wide variety of products and office concepts on display.

McKillip is one of several new employees the business hired to keep up with growing sales. The business employs about 80 people and intends to hire more as it takes on additional clientele.



Brooke Knudson/Freeman Staff

Nikki Couillard, (left) works on an interior design concept with Shane Blackman at Schroeder Solutions, 1902 S. Calhoun Road in New Berlin on Tuesday. The office interiors dealership opened a new design idea center on Nov. 15.

Gierhahn said his success in the past few years is attributed to those businesses in southeastern Wisconsin that are looking to lure in a talented work force by creating office environments conducive to the work force of the 21st century.

Gierhahn said businesses in metro Milwaukee are investing more in interior design to make their business as advanced as the technology they use.

About 50 percent of Schroeder Solutions' clientele consists of Fortune 500 companies, Gierhahn said. The remainder of the business is comprised of smaller, privately held companies in southeastern Wisconsin.

"Employees who want to retain and attract people are designing a more adaptable (office) interior," Gierhahn said.

The more comfortable an employee is with the space they have to work in, the greater the return on investment for the company, Gierhahn said.

"People want good value, not just what's the cheapest in price," Gierhahn said.

Schroeder Solutions was a culmination of Schroeder Installa-

tion Systems and Integrated Office Solutions, which merged in 2002. The business is one of four Schroeder family-owned companies in Wisconsin including Schroeder Moving Systems in Milwaukee and Appleton and Total Relocation Services in Green Bay.

Sandy McGee, chief operating officer at the Schroeder Group in Waukesha, said Schroeder Solutions offered the law firm several options in updating their office space.

McGee said the law firm has worked with Gierhahn and his team for about four years. In that time, the law offices have had two large expansions and several internal employee relocations.

Schroeder Solutions helped install four cubicles after having the fabric reupholstered on the movable walls.

McGee said the design team was able to integrate and match colors and office components into the law firm's traditional style.

"Whether it was used or new, they were able to help incorporate things we already have,"

### Schroeder Solutions

- **WHAT:** Full-service office interior design company specializing in workplace design, office furnishings, corporate relocation services and support services.
- **HEADQUARTERS:** 1920 S. Calhoun Road, New Berlin
- **YEAR FOUNDED:** 2002
- **WEB SITE:** [www.schroedersolutions.com](http://www.schroedersolutions.com)
- **PRESIDENT & CEO:** Scott Gierhahn
- **EMPLOYEES:** 60
- **2006 REVENUE:** about \$8.8 million

McGee said.

"Everything has run very smoothly and we've been very satisfied," McGee said about Schroeder's professionalism and work within the office. "From a local standpoint they understand the area and make up of the businesses."

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