

At Home At Work

Saturday, March 3, 2012 | [U-T San Diego](#) | [Jason Hughes](#), [Shay Hughes](#)

Hughes Marino has seen increased productivity by creating a bright, fun environment for staffers

By Roger Showley

At Hughes Marino commercial brokerage, Dilbert would never be glum again.

The two-story, 12,367-square-foot space at 1450 Front St. in downtown San Diego has become a playhouse for workaholics.



David Anderson of Dynaelectric works on exterior sign at Hughes Marino brokerage.

Hughes Marino

Because Where You Do Business Matters™



Chief follows his owner J.P. Roach into one of the upstairs offices at Hughes Marino.



The former San Diego magazine space gutted and ready for renovation.

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In between wrangling with landlords for their tenant clients, the 24 staffers can shoot a game of pool, perfect their golf game on a putting green, whip up a latte, work up a sweat in the company gym or tickle the ivories on a player piano.

And if you're J.P. Roach, 28, you bring Chief, your Labradoodle, to work for company and client bonding.

"He's become a little bit of the office dog," he said. "People are always stopping by to pet him, saying hi. He's always looking over the atrium, watching people come and go. It really makes for a welcoming, homey feeling, really collegial."



The mezzanine is where most offices are located. The downtown stairs atrium features a giant TV and comfortable couches and seating.



Chief snuggles up to J.P. Roach at the dining room table, where staff gather for lunch.



Each member of the staff gets a lunch box in one of two Sub-Zero refrigerators. The other fridge is stocked with fruit, cereal, peanut butter and jelly and other groceries ordered every Monday from the local Vons. Future plans include bringing in outside chefs to cook for community events and brokerage gatherings.

Formerly the home of San Diego Magazine, the Hughes Marino setup is twice as big as its previous location in a nearby high-rise. Most of the space increase has been given over to fun and games with work spaces on the mezzanine.

(A chessboard upstairs beckons workers and clients to make a move as they pass by.)

The design concept and amenities at Hughes Marino are the work of Shay Hughes, wife of partner Jason Hughes and the company's chief operating officer. She's not a professional interior designer, but she learned plenty from outfitting their home in Rancho Santa Fe and brought her attention to detail to the office.

"Let's make downstairs this incredible living space — bright, filled with sunshine beaming in from the skylights," she said at the outset of the makeover last year. "We thought, let's open the space up so it looks beautiful and appealing and make the upstairs the workplace and downstairs the home."

Hughes Marino is an offshoot of the old Irving Hughes brokerage firm. A year ago, Craig Irving set up shop in the University Towne Centre area and Hughes and partner David Marino remained downtown.

"We truly feel like we are a completely different company than we used to be," Shay Hughes said. "A building having more living space than office space is a culture we've created. We love the people we work with. There isn't anybody in the company we don't enjoy and care tremendously about. It's what's fun for us — to see all the people

enjoy themselves, like a family, like coming over to the house, having coffee, playing the guitar and having lunch together.”

As if to underscore priorities, the big screen TV, surrounded by comfortable couches and chairs, displays family photos, not CNN news feeds.



Near the kitchen are a putting green and pool table. Travis Carter, front, and Ryan McCrary work on their golf game at lunch time.



Danny Turek plunks out a tune at the player piano in the atrium. There also are several Taylor guitars for the half-dozen staffers who play.



John Jarvis works out at the gym — saving him time from driving to his local gym. There are men's and women's shower facilities, as well.

The remodel did not come cheap. After paying \$1.8 million for the property, Hughes and Marino spent \$2.5 million on reconstruction and \$1 million on furniture, fixtures and equipment.

“It’s so far out of budget, it’s gotten out of control,” Shay Hughes said with a laugh. “But we felt like this is really a second home for us. When we talked about it, do we sacrifice on some things, because we know we will own this building a very long time? We kept saying yes, let’s just do it.”

But already, the extra investment is paying productivity dividends. Roach says he often stays extra hours into the evening and on the weekends. His fiancée comes over from their downtown Marina district home. It’s part of the Gen Y culture, he says.

“We really aren’t trying to separate work from family life,” he said. “We’re really trying to integrate it.”

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