

case study

Ballers Union

LOCATION

Toronto, Ontario

INDUSTRY

Community based non-profit organization

PROGRAM FEATURED

Divert



the challenge:

Get the ball rolling for a community-based start-up

The brainchild of Shane Dennie, former all-star college player and social entrepreneur, Ballers Union is a basketball and fitness training facility with a goal to connect and empower people through sport. An inclusive space, Ballers Union builds community within a historically underserved neighbourhood using basketball to teach life skills like hard work, integrity, perseverance and how to deal with adversity. To realize his dream, Shane wanted to create a space that evoked feelings of warmth and welcome to all that entered, while still projecting a polished and professional look.





the solution:

A partnership that gives both ways

Ballers Union was identified as an ideal project by Teknion's Social Impact Group. Comprised of Teknion employees from across all departments at its headquarters in Toronto, the Group is committed to undertaking initiatives that positively contribute to and uplift the local community. Explains Social Impact Group member Kunal Sharma, Director of CRM and Sales Projects at Teknion, "Located just a short a short 10min drive from Teknion's headquarters, Ballers Union was a small start-up trying to get established in tough economic times during the height of the pandemic. I saw Shane's post on Instagram with an empty floor plate and the caption 'starting the business from the ground up'. Reaching out, we sought to see if we could partner to help him furnish his space."

Ensuring the space would perform as well as the athletes using it, Teknion provided space planning and design services in addition to the furniture. Putting together a cross functional team, they began with a needs assessment to determine how to optimize the functionality of each space. Says Diana Alfonso, Product Solutions Design at Teknion and the project designer, "The staff room needed to be more than a breakroom, it needed to function as a meeting and collaborative space to review a game or discuss a program. Storage was needed to store personal items and equipment. And reception needed

to make a first impression of professionalism." Once the furniture specification was determined, several streams of procurement were activated. The first was to draw from redundant showroom pieces. Second was to access Teknion's Divert program that re-uses decommissioned furniture to give them a second life, keep them out of landfill, and help not-for-profit organizations like Ballers Union attain quality furniture. Finally, a new custom-made reception desk was created as a finishing touch.

The partnership didn't end once the space was complete. "Once we did what we could to help get Shane's business running, we discovered there were more opportunities to help each other's businesses", says Tasos Dimacakos, Corporate Accounts, Teknion. Ballers Union could support Teknion's health and wellness initiative for its employees. Working collaboratively, Ballers Union developed Corporate Recess for Teknion. Explains Shane, "Everybody needs two things - time to move, to be physically creative, and time to be seen and socialize. Everybody has a little child in them, and Corporate Recess looks to bring that feeling out." While initially developed for Teknion, Corporate Recess is now available to other organizations who want to bolster the wellbeing of their employees. Kunal summarizes "When everyone comes together, the energy is pretty awesome. Everyone cares for each other. It's not a transactional 'what have you done for me lately' kind of thing. We both win."