



Case Study

Akebono Brake Company

“We needed to design a space that pleased both the American and Japanese management teams, so that all Akebono teammates would be comfortable, productive and happy to come to work.”

-Paul R. Smith, Designer

Customer: Akebono

A world leader in advanced brake and friction material development and production, with facilities across the globe.

Architect: J Andrew Baer

Sales Representative: Great Lakes APG

Designer/Specifier: Paul R. Smith, Kerr Office Interiors
Kerry Kinsel, Trendway

Location: Elizabethtown, Kentucky

The Challenge:

- Create a space that pleases both a Japanese and American cultural perspective while reflecting the corporate standard
- Provide a comprehensive solution that enables future growth and reconfiguration with ease
- Deftly manage power and data requirements
- Meet an aggressive schedule while providing custom solutions

The Solution: Choices® System



When Akebono Brake Corporation expanded its North American headquarters in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, a blend of international culture and design was required.

“We researched the Tokyo headquarters and worked to create a comparable look and feel,” explained Paul Smith, lead designer and space planner at Trendway dealer Kerr Office Interiors, “a design that suits both American and Japanese cultures and provides a comfortable, productive and happy place to work.”

The Choices System design is open and flexible, and allows for future reconfiguration. “In Tokyo, Akebono’s headquarters is an extremely clean, almost sterile environment. With Choices, we captured that same look here.”

“The space plan and furniture design is not “traditional”, notes Trendway Designer Kerry Kinsel. “And with the help of Trendway Custom Solutions, we created hybrid product that’s signature to Akebono. My role was to ensure technical continuity and keep the project within budget.”

The distinctively minimal design offers equally clean cable management. “Choices panels give us structural support for work surfaces and a clean electrical raceway throughout the space,” says Smith. “A single spine anchors the whole environment, with electrical connections at just three points on the floor. This hides cabling and maintains design integrity.”

“We were given a deadline of the second week of December, so that Akebono could move in the first week of January. Orders were cut the end of November — it was a really tight timeline, so much so that I told my client there’s no way. Yet Trendway made it happen, even with several Specials.”

Trendway trucks met the Kerr team the Monday after the holidays and wrapped installation by Wednesday evening — despite a malfunctioning elevator. “Working with a company that allows Specials in 10 working days is unheard of,” emphasizes Smith. “Laminate, edging, paint... for Trendway to be able to turn that around, especially during a time of the year when most manufacturers are closed down for the holidays, was unbelievable.”

“Akebono staff call the space ‘heaven’ because it’s so bright and filled with natural light. The open environment creates productivity and pride because it truly honors their cultures.”

-Paul R. Smith, Designer