

Pleasing the high-tech palate



Providing customers with a host of menu options at a central cafeteria and four satellite dining areas creates a winning combination for foodservice operations at the IBM Toronto Software Development Lab.

To keep more than 2,400 hungry software developers satisfied and ensure speedy and convenient service at its cafeteria, IBM Canada Limited hired LTD Consulting Group Inc. to design the foodservice facilities at its new \$90 million Markham, Ontario, office.

Measuring in at 563,000 square feet, IBM's new Software Development Lab is the third-largest research facility in Canada and one of the technology giant's largest research and development sites worldwide. The new lab is separated into four four-story linked buildings. Because of loading-dock concerns, the lab's main cafeteria, named The Marketplace, was installed at one end of the facility. To maximize convenience and prevent the need for busy workers to travel to the other side of the complex, Stephen Tyler, FCSI, of the Guelph, Ontario-based LTD Consulting Group added four full-service satellite locations distributed throughout the lab.

"Back when the building opened . . . the competition for software designers and developers was quite intense," Tyler said. "They certainly felt a good foodservice offering was something that helped sell IBM to their prospective employees."

According to company statistics, at least 70 percent of the more than 2,400 employees at the lab hold a degree in computer science, engineering or mathematics. Nearly 30 percent hold a graduate degree. The average employee age is 30, and approximately 50 percent are within the first five years of their professional career. As a result, providing a corporate dining facility that would help IBM Canada retain and attract valuable employees was essential.

Designed to maximize throughput and minimize wait times, The Marketplace is divided into 11 different stations to appeal to the sophisticated palates of IBM Canada's employees. Some of The Marketplace's offerings include pizza, pasta, deli sandwiches, rotisserie chicken and stir-fry. Colorful tiles, a loft-style ceiling and corrugated aluminum accents helped give The Marketplace a contemporary appeal.

To give The Marketplace a commercial atmosphere, Tyler made display cooking a priority at nearly all of the stations to increase the cafeteria's appeal and keep foodservice employees in front of diners. "We tried to balance efficiency and promote the display preparation and production at the same time," Tyler said.

His station-style design enabled him to stay away from long, continuous counters. Each station can be altered in the future without cutting, patching and trying to match existing materials, Tyler said. Each station is positioned strategically near the open display kitchen to make restocking easy for employees during the lunch rush. A walk-around self-service bagel and soup station that leads toward hot- and cold-beverage counters, refrigerated merchandise and four cashier stations helps maximize traffic flow.

While The Marketplace provides a wealth of culinary options, Tyler relied on the Lab's four satellite facilities to provide functional, efficient service. The four satellite facilities include a gourmet coffee and pastry shop at the lab's main entrance, a made-to-order deli station, a grab-and-go kiosk and a bistro-style option.



In addition to reducing the time employees spend away from their desks, Tyler said, the satellite options create fluid dining hours and improve foodservice labor costs. If a project team is staying late on a deadline crunch, IBM Canada can opt to keep one satellite facility open into the evening or 24 hours, he added.

Shortly after the new cafeteria opened, IBM Canada changed its onsite foodservice supplier. According to Tyler, the new caterer "easily implemented minor changes," at little expense to IBM Canada.

Fast Facts:

Project:	IBM Toronto Software Development Lab Markham, Ontario
Client:	IBM Canada Ltd.
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