

2019

GROWTH
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COMPANIES

This Growth 500 promotion was developed by SGH Design Partners Inc.



BETTER BY DESIGN

Creating environments where people do their best work



**Monika Sarkisian and
John Tanfield, Partners**

SGH DESIGN PARTNERS, in its 32nd year and growing, is an interior design firm specializing in corporate office design. A strong driver for its success is methodology- and solution-based thinking. An ability to identify business culture before infusing innovation and creativity ensures SGH designs have focus and function. The firm is privately owned by two partners, Monika Sarkisian and John Tanfield (or MoJo, as they're known in the studio), who are flexible in accommodating a variety of design challenges for today's versatile workplace environments. For them, design isn't a standalone activity. It takes into account rising costs in the real estate market, low vacancy rates, project complexities and unbelievable timelines. SGH has mastered these elements, competing daily with large international firms. A powerhouse of 32 talented designers tackles projects of all scales. An SGH hallmark is the level of personal attention and dedication from leadership – there is always one partner engaged in a project and aware of its deliverables.

"To stand out in a market that is ultra-competitive from skill set to fee structure, we need to be super customer- and service-oriented to set us apart," says partner John Tanfield. "Our studio talent is superb; our abilities are equal to the best in the world. Where we succeed, and what has allowed us to grow, are our personalities. We don't sit around and wait, we aren't the people at the top who are not approachable; anybody can reach out. You call, and we answer. We don't say 'we'll get to that.' We do it right away. That's why 60-70% of customers are repeat and have been with us for 25 years."

"One of our core strengths and differentiators is our pre-design services model," says partner Monika Sarkisian, "stepping outside the typical, working with the real estate community to help clients achieve 'smarter' design solutions. We advocate for the tenant and work closely with our industry partners to connect the dots and think beyond the physical built-out. Focusing on legalities, efficiencies and building infrastructure are essential to great design, guiding the process to best suit the tenant's vision. With the right team, we identify potential risk factors early on and support the lease process when it's most critical."

The SGH national portfolio has grown with the addition of offices in Halifax and Vancouver. "As far as we know, no other design firm has actual offices with their own profit and loss in Halifax, Toronto and Vancouver," says Tanfield. "One of the challenges clients face is consistency. We provide a better service model through master agreements with highly recognized clients in the corporate sector, typically earned in a competitive bidding process. They're comprehensive and longer-term."

A recent win for SGH is the completion of a large oversight project for the landmark Royal York Hotel in Toronto. The partners believe it's opened the door to future hospitality work. "The SGH brand symbolizes design excellence," says Sarkisian. "Our diversity of corporate clients provides the firm stability during unpredictability in the marketplace." SGH designs for the consumer, financial, technology and professional service sectors. "We strive for positive engagement and publicity. We are open to learning, and have set renewed goals to be recognized where we have been quiet about our successes in this exciting industry."

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