

## The Switzer Group Sets the Stage for IBM Watson

**New York, March 30, 2015** IBM Watson is heralding in the cognitive computing revolution from its new 150,000 sq. ft. headquarters in Manhattan’s Silicon Alley, designed by The Switzer Group. Transforming floors four through seven of Fumihiko Maki’s glass and steel structure at 51 Astor Place, the award-winning interior architects created an incubator for new applications of IBM’s breakthrough technology, and a design studio for next-generation programs, software and apps.

Functionally and stylistically, the facility represents a departure for The Switzer Group’s work with IBM, which dates back 40 years to the design firm’s opening in 1975—the same year IBM introduced the first portable computer, weighing in at 50 lbs.



### Space as muse

The Switzer Group set the tone with a clean, timeless look for the interiors, combining terrazzo and textured Laminam in the elevator banks, and lots of glass, acoustical wood with walnut veneers, European-inspired furnishings and LED lighting throughout. The fourth floor design studio is a totally flexible, open floor plan, divisible by hanging panels that double as marker boards. Desks with blank-slate white surfaces are moveable and can be raised and lowered for standing or sitting. To counterpoint the wide open spaces, seating areas and niches for small group gatherings, and glass enclosed “phone booths” for increased privacy, are strategically situated.



*“Our primary goal at 51 Astor Place was to create a spirit of excitement, openness and collaboration to move IBM’s business forward and help introduce Watson to developers and industry.”*

Lou Switzer, CEO of The Switzer Group

### The Watson experience

To represent Watson’s cognitive capabilities—understanding natural language, developing evidence-based hypotheses, and “learning” as it receives and integrates feedback—IBM and The Switzer Group, along with Cosentini MEP engineers and AV Services, designed a total sensory experience on the office’s fifth floor. Architectural fins that change color with the “voice” of Watson surround the circumference of an immersion room, where clients can interact directly with the technology. A 40 ft. video wall equipped with Oblong Industries’ futuristic Mezzanine™ system allows visitors to move data from one screen to another with a wave of their hand.

Completed on an ultra-fast track in October of 2014, IBM plans to roll out Switzer’s interior design approach for IBM Watson worldwide, with work currently underway for facilities in Texas and North Carolina.

