

# CALIFORNIA BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Fuse Fuels Creativity and Innovation

Where you work matters. For Fuse Integration, a warfighter-focused engineering and design firm, location was the first consideration when moving its headquarters from downtown San Diego to nearby Kearny Mesa, California, four years ago. The new locale is a defense contractor hub, rich with veteran and engineering talent — and a great place to bike to work.

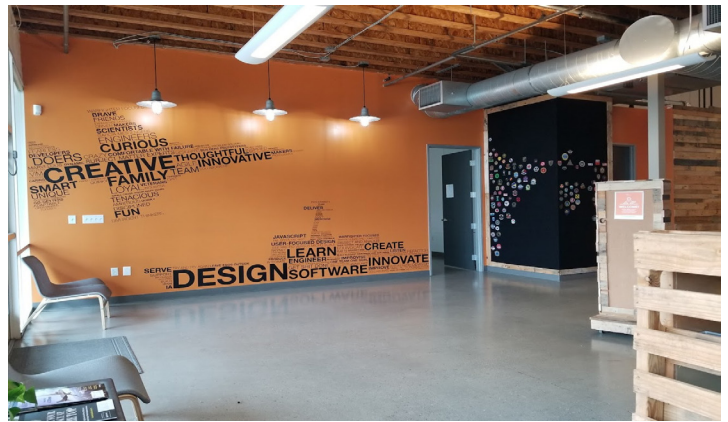
Next, and equally important, Fuse needed to build out the interior space to fit their needs. With a mix of practical and aesthetic requirements, the team set out to create something special for their growing team. Now, leaders and employees agree: Fuse’s headquarters fuels creativity and innovation.

Here are five driving forces that shaped the unique space.

### Distinctive Culture

Fuse is not your typical defense company. As serious as they are about the business of advancing warfighter capabilities, the tone in the office is decidedly creative and vibrant. Fuse has assembled a team of smart, fun, engaged professionals who really like each other and love what they do.

Their distinctive work-hard, play-hard culture is a cool combination of casual dress, pets in the



*Inspiration wall highlights creativity & design*

office, military values, excellence in engineering, and the color orange! First-time visitors are greeted with an industrial/eclectic vibe. Exposed ceiling ducts contrast with a big, orange wall of inspirational words and phrases and a prominent Patch Wall featuring a growing collection of military patches from defense personnel guests and employees. There’s also a hand-drawn Spaceman Spiff wall mural, representing the Calvin and Hobbes-inspired company mascot.

### Individual Productivity, Inspiration, And Connection

Two of Fuse’s five Core Values are “take initiative” and “move with purpose.” Sometimes, team members need a personal workspace to dive into their own tasks.

As part of the build-out, Fuse created pallet wood cubicles to support the best of privacy and connectedness. As they work on their own, team members can surround themselves with meaningful mementos and reference tools in their dedicated space. Or they can consult with colleagues just a few steps away. If one needs inspiration, a walk around the office features a Lego table, a model aircraft display, and Star Wars décor (including a full-size Storm Trooper at the intersection of two hallways).



*Pallet wood cubicles support privacy & connectedness*

## Warfighter Workshops

As part of its warfighter-focused design process, Fuse hosts invaluable interactive warfighter workshops, bringing together users (warfighters), experts, and stakeholders with the Fuse engineering and design team to gather and verify input around a target problem space. Large rooms are flexibly configured with conference tables, projectors, whiteboards, and flexible power and internet connection points. It's where teams gather to step through insights about the users, environments, requirements, and situations the warfighters face — all to inform the design, decision-making, actions, and product features.

## Prototyping, Modeling, And Testing

When looking for a new headquarters location, Fuse leaders knew the company needed more than individual workspaces and conference rooms. A big part of designing and building warfighter-focused solutions is the iterative prototyping process that turns a good idea into a series of models and, ultimately, a viable product.

Fuse designs, prototypes, and tests their products on site and in the air. (Fuse has its own rebuilt USAF O-2A aircraft, modified for flight test operations, that they use to test the performance of their networking systems at a nearby airfield.) So, the Fuse headquarters boasts a large research and design bay, where designers, engineers, and system integrators can safely collaborate, build, iterate, and test their products and solutions.



*Dedicated research & development space*

## Indoor And Outdoor Company Events

Barbeques and Friday lunches. Happy hours. Jam sessions. Fuse weeks and months are peppered with company get-togethers for fun and, sometimes, a little competition. Inside, there's plenty of room to host intense chili cook-offs — complete with homemade sides and desserts — where winners get special spoons of recognition and coveted bragging rights. Outside, there's room to host food trucks or grill up some favorite meats and healthy meals.



*Chili cook-off competition*

## Room To Grow

Earlier this year, Fuse celebrated hiring its 100th employee — an anticipated growth milestone that fits with defense customers' rising adoption of Fuse's innovative communications, networking, and computing solutions. Military initiatives increasingly rely on joint force and allied connections in the battlespace. Fuse's virtualized network systems, tactical edge networking, and airborne networking gateway products are timely answers to the need for airborne, maritime, and ground-based warfighters to share information and communications quickly, reliably, and securely. Thankfully, Fuse planners had the foresight to choose their Kearny Mesa headquarters with growth in mind and the right amount of flexibility to expand design, development, and production. ■