





Invisible Touch

Some of the World's largest organisations are firms most of us have never even heard of. Freddie Steele visits the new London headquarters of one of them - Acxiom.

The first recognised economist, Adam Smith, once famously defined the free market and its creation of wealth as 'the invisible hand that guides the economy'. It was the combined actions of individuals in the pursuit of their own goals that generated the forces to change the world. He may have identified the processes but even he may have been astonished at just how unseen those forces have become in the recent past.

That past is a foreign country. They did things differently there. The world's major corporations had names like Ford, Heinz and IBM and did us all the favour of sticking their names all over the things we drove, ate and used at work. Now some of the world's largest and most important companies have names we don't instantly recognise. At least not until they come to the attention of *Mix*.

One of the most influential companies in the world today is Acxiom. Founded in Arkansas in 1969 at the advent of the digital age, the company is now active around the globe, supplying information on consumers and related services including analytics and consultancy to help its clients carry out their



▶▶▶▶that we have managed to strike exactly the right balance between each of those objectives.'

A walk through the building always reveals a great deal about the dynamics of an organisation and Acxiom is no

exception. There is a different atmosphere in each of the floors even though the design of each is ostensibly identical, with each defined by the understated intelligence of Staverton ZD desks and Humanscale Liberty task chairs, with only subtle

differences in the building's structure and colour schemes physically defining the different floors. This is the all important 'feel' of the different teams within the building and it's not just down to the sound they generate, which is always noticeably higher on commercial floors.

The notion that the services should remain exposed on the ceiling to retain the original form and character of the building had its own challenges, not least in how to carry services around the ceiling in a sympathetic and cost-effective way. The solution was a system of co-ordinated coloured metal containment trays carrying the services across the ceiling, to conceal the wiring and pipe work. It is a remarkably simple and effective solution in the context of this building.

Each floor also incorporates collaborative spaces, including cellular offices with clever bespoke workstations from Staverton and branded whiteboards from Artworks Solutions, which mean that they can double





up as both meeting rooms and quiet offices. Service areas for drinks and food preparation and breakout spaces reflect the aims of the new building in encouraging informal collaboration between colleagues.

The focus on collaboration is also particularly evident in the basement level, which contains a perimeter of partitioned meeting rooms, fully equipped with AV systems from Viewpoint and a cluster of different social and informal meeting spaces incorporating a range of soft seating and cafe furniture from Orangebox, Connection and Pledge. The basement is also home to that most modern of workplace amenities, a

gym. This is a discreet and well used space that features yet another stunning yet simple and cost effective feature in the form of a multicoloured floor made from differently coloured lino tiles.

The most classically formal room in the building is – as always – the boardroom and even here there is a degree of deconstruction in its thinking. The table is asymmetrical, offering a rethink of the democratising idea of the round table in that it is not immediately apparent where its most dominant position lies.

The move to the new building has had a profound effect on the organisation

according to Mark Mercer, and not solely on its bottom line. ‘Overall, we’ve saved about £3.9 million over the term of the lease, as a result of the consolidation into 17 Hatfields,’ he says. ‘But we’ve also noticeably made great gains in other areas too.’

‘The building has more than achieved what we set out to do in developing a stronger identity for the organisation and improving communications between the teams.’

Acxiom may well be the most successful company you’ve never heard of, but they won’t go unnoticed for long with buildings as impressive as this ●

essential ingredients |

Client • **Acxiom** | Design & Fit-Out • **Claremont** www.claremontgi.co.uk

Furniture Supply • **Logic Office** www.logic-office.co.uk | AV • **Viewpoint** www.viewpoint-av.co.uk

Systems Furniture • **Staverton** www.staverton.co.uk

Task Seating • **Humanscale** www.humanscale.co.uk

Flooring • **Milliken** www.millikencarpet.com

Branding • **Artworks Solutions** www.artworks-solutions.com

Soft Seating • **Orangebox / Connection / Pledge**

Storage • **Bisley** www.bisley.com