



cable guys



If you relied solely on the media for information about what was happening in the economy, you'd believe the world had already ended. Well things might be tough, but there's plenty of life out there and plenty of good news stories if you look. Neil Franklin visits the new Bracknell offices of telecoms giant Cable & Wireless.

buried amongst the current reams of bad news published daily and delivered to your doorstep by those agents of the Apocalypse we used to know as paperboys, you can just about discern the faint trace of news stories that tell you that some companies are doing really rather well. One of them is Cable & Wireless which, at the beginning of February, announced that it was on track to achieve its targeted turnover of around £780 million for the year to the end of March.

Success breeds success of course so it's no surprise to learn that another thriving company is Hampshire-based Visual i's, who were responsible for the design and relocation ▶▶▶▶



‘The core idea with the design was to reflect the Cable & Wireless ‘New Ways of Working’, anticipate how they would want to work in future and make the whole space as flexible as possible for the colleagues who work there. It was also a space that was designed with visitors in mind, Cable & Wireless colleagues from other offices, clients and suppliers and so on. So you have touchdown desks there ostensibly for Global colleagues/visitors and permanent desks are limited in the open plan office. That is designed to encourage people to work in new spaces and new ways and also to encourage them to interact with colleagues in new ways and where possible build relationships and exchange information with people they might typically not come into that much contact with. It’s absolutely an office of our times.’

The design goes way beyond simply casting people adrift without their own desks, of course. It’s much smarter than that in the way that it structures the workplace to reflect different workstyles and the ever-changing needs of the building’s inhabitants. Even smarter, it uses Cable & Wireless’ pioneering FMC system meaning colleagues can use their mobile for internal and external communication. And, yes, most new offices have breakout spaces nowadays, but few go the extra step that is evident at every turn in Worldwide House: random peep holes in meeting pods; a ‘Digitok’ which projects global times onto a feature wall echoing the firm’s strapline of ‘Anytime, Anywhere’; an a la carte restaurant; and a ubiquitous Starbucks on the ground floor.

The diversity of the spaces is astonishing, from the use of wipe walls in ‘brainstorming’ zones to the broad palette of colours and visuals that in some areas directly reflect the corporate identity of Cable & Wireless and in others reflects its ideals in less obvious ways. For example, the galley tea-points on both floors each have a theme; one is a life size boat with harbour scene, another a shark galley with a surfboard as a breakfast bar. Not only does this imagery reflect the area’s status as a social rather than work space and bring some outside imagery into the building, the variety of themes helps to define space so people can locate themselves in the building.

As you might expect from such a major project, the move to Worldwide House was managed in two phases over consecutive weekends to ensure minimum disruption to Cable & Wireless.



►►► of Cable & Wireless’s Bracknell headquarters from the previous building at Lakeside House to nearby Worldwide House. The move saw over 600 people move into the new 60,000 square foot offices completed over two weekends in September last year.

‘It presented a real opportunity to reassess the whole culture of the work place,’ says Fran Hamilton Senior Designer at Visual i’s. ‘That didn’t mean reinventing it, just bringing out in the design those aspects of the organisation that were already apparent but perhaps not served as well as they could be by the old offices. It was also a chance for the firm to have a look at where it wanted to go culturally and make a bold statement about itself to the outside world and to its colleagues.’

Well, Worldwide House certainly does that. Visually striking and cut through with unmistakeable swagger, the design is also rooted in the existing identity of Cable & Wireless. Many of the striking images on the walls are the work of employees and the ideals that underpin the concept of the building are undeniably those of a 21st century telecommunications firm. The building is fast-moving, flexible, buzzy and vibrant.

‘As you’d expect, the space had to be flexible to reflect contemporary work styles,’ explains Fran Hamilton. ‘We all move about a lot nowadays and I suppose you’d expect nothing less of a firm that has a vested interest in the new ways we work and which has also embraced those ideas itself.’



case study



▶▶▶▶▶ ‘Planning was everything,’ explains Richard Worrall, Managing Director of Visual i’s ‘Major companies like C&W can’t really afford slip-ups when it comes to something like this. Delays and mistakes will only mean they take their eye off the ball, which you just cannot afford to do in fast moving markets like the one in which they work. So our project managers had to ensure that there was little if any margin for error in terms of our delivery and also liaise with the firms we worked with on the project to ensure that everybody was on the same page at all times.’

One of those firms was Claremont Group Interiors who supplied the package of services for the fit-out of the new building including the complete strip-out and refurbishment of the space, a new mechanical and air handling system, raised floors, ceilings, lighting, flooring, wall coverings, breakout space, landscaping, signage and a full furniture package.

Richard Turner of Claremont believes that it was essential that everybody felt some degree of ownership of the project. ‘We all had to buy into the idea of what was being achieved at Worldwide House,’ he

says. ‘That meant everybody getting involved with decision making, including employees who had a full role to play in choosing furniture and producing artwork. But it also meant everybody being absolutely clear about what was expected of them. There was no scope for slip-ups. That wasn’t an option on a project like this, which is not only time critical but also essential for the success of the client business.’

Richard Worrall agrees. ‘It’s very much a project of our times,’ he says. ‘I know the news is mostly bad about the economy just now, but Worldwide House demonstrates just how important it can be, making the right decisions about property and design. In fact, for firms like Cable & Wireless that operate in sectors that are reliant on technology, those decisions are essential. They have to move fast and constantly innovate if they want to stay ahead in their markets. So the decisions they make about where and how they work and how they portray themselves are absolutely critical.’

Well in the humble opinion of this magazine, Worldwide House delivers all of that in spades. And isn’t it great to be able to read some good news for a change ●

essential ingredients

Client:	• Cable & Wireless
Design, Relocation & Project Management:	• Visual i’s 01256 761116
Fit-Out & Furniture:	• Claremont 01925 284000
Graphics & Imagery:	• Lemon Mouse
Bespoke Joinery:	• Compass Interiors
Systems Furniture:	• Teknion 020 7490 2101
Carpets:	• InterfaceFLOR 01274 690690
Hard Flooring:	• Amtico 024 7686 1400
Soft Seating:	• Orangebox 020 7837 9922 Allermuir 01254 682421
Wall Coverings:	• Tektura 020 7536 3300
Partitioning:	• Komfort 0293 592500
Storage:	• Silverline 01638 715006
Desk Screens:	• ERA Screens 01264 341400