



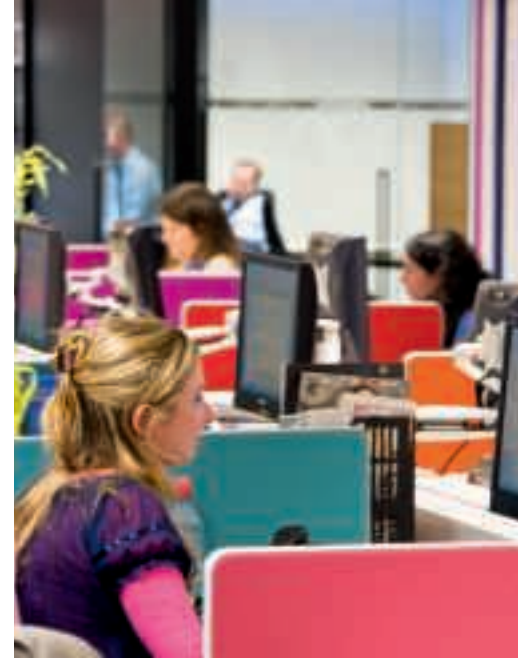


relationships

Gensler's Grant Kanik calls it the wow factor. And he's right – it hits you immediately. Edelman's Robert Phillips calls it the wow factor, as in 'wow, this is the future; wow, I didn't realise Edelman is this big and wow, they live it and practice it'.

This is a powerful and evocative space, recently dubbed 'the office of the future' by the Financial Times, no less. Yet the feelings it stirs in the visitor on entering are not created by a nerve juddering Kirkby kiss of in-your-face brand imagery and screaming floor-to-ceiling plasmas. This is the 'wow' factor of the subtle variety.

'Brand is three dimensional – brand is the attitude, the buzz, the chair I'm sitting on. Brand is not a logo on the wall – it's the experience of every client and every employee,' comments Grant as we tour Edelman's sprawling 38,000 sq ft single floor plate space in Victoria. This is as impressive an exercise in cultural projection through workplace design as one is likely to see, and it's built on corporate self belief. The entire space tells you everything about Edelman's brand and cultural values – size, reach, professionalism, creativity, and youthfulness – constantly, yet with a lightly worn elegance.▶▶▶▶▶▶



▶▶▶▶▶ It's not normal. Here are a few examples to show what we mean. Grappling with the conundrum of bringing together a group of companies, brands and cultures under one roof, we don't see logos on the reception wall, or anywhere else for that matter. There's no imposing reception desk as one might normally expect to encounter at the London offices of the biggest independent PR company in the world. And to get to the three main conference rooms the visitor must, and it's very deliberate, walk past several hundred young media types beavering and buzzing away.

All this as opposed to going a yard or two to a typical meeting room adjacent to a typical reception desk. At Edelman you feel it, all of it.

This is all fine and dandy, but Edelman is a business. How does all this 'no logo' passive underbranding deliver to the bottom line? CEO Robert Phillips reels off the facts and figures with unmistakable relish. 'In

the six months since we've been here the direct and tangible results are there already. Our win rate on cross-practice pitches has gone up by 30% because our people haven't sat in silos. Staff churn is tracking 20% below this time last year and sick days are all but a thing of the past. Another measurement is our quality of life survey – where we've seen probably a 60% jump in approval ratings. Somebody said to me recently 'Why would I want to go home when the office is nicer than my flat?' One number I can't give you relates to the sense of pride here – it's immeasurable.

'And it doesn't stop here. We're staying true to our organic vision because things change all the time. The world's not static, it's fast moving – this is office space for the future, not just now.'

Robert outlined some of the key challenges for the Gensler design team within those success rate stats. Big issues too for a fast growing agency which, what's

more, is growing while many of its competitors are shedding staff. Issues such as collaboration, communication and staff retention can ultimately be boiled down to productivity. This was a complex challenge for Edelman because of the quantity of staff involved (currently 260 in the UK), and the quantity and variety of the businesses co-habiting under the Edelman umbrella. Without belittling the project management and logistics skills needed to relocate the organisation from three different geographical points to one entity under a single roof in SW1, the immeasurably harder part was making the disparate cultures and personalities work together successfully. Improving a win rate on cross-practice pitches by 30% in a rapid time frame is a big deal – and Grant Kanik and his team at Gensler played a major role in that. 'Cross-practice' at Edelman takes in a spectrum of firms such as consumer brand specialists JCPR, research company Strategy▶▶▶▶▶



case study



►►► One, strategic consultants First&42nd, Edelman Digital and a Strategic Media unit. The integration of these very different, dynamic and culturally strong minded brands has been achieved by implementing a design led new work ethos.

Key to the Gensler scheme is an open plan 'Velcro' environment which is designed to support change. Working closely with Vitra produced a unique variation of the Joyn bench which allows for impressive levels of variable density. This caters for 260 staff and can accommodate a further 110 people at no extra cost. This flexibly permits rapid realignment of resources, people, technology and systems to provide Edelman with a competitive advantage. This focus on the workstation design and density achieves several aims. In contrast to the pre-assigned desks of the past, the new workstyle eradicates the 'silo' mentality commented on by Robert, and inherently promotes the Holy Grail of collaboration and communication. The workstation arrangement though is just one example of a strict 'multi-use' policy that is evident throughout the space. The small number of directors' offices double up as meeting rooms; flexible walled conference rooms are constantly expanding and contracting to accommodate an astonishing number of meetings and events. The reception area is a veritable chameleon of coffee bar, reference library, informal meeting space, creative hub and breakfast area. Oh, and there is free breakfast from 7am – wonder why staff churn is dramatically down and sick days are a thing of the past?!

The cost savings of such an approach to the design of Edelman's working environment are not inconsiderable. An aggressive filing audit alone reduced storage requirements by 40%, saving over £80,000 per year in central London real estate costs.

Desk sharing, corridors that double as breakfast areas – the overarching philosophy throughout the entire design process was one of reducing cost, maximising space, increasing efficiency and boosting productivity.

Grant explains how such a result was achieved. 'Our whole approach was about creating synergy. We developed a close partnership with Edelman very quickly, and built a mutually trusting relationship. At the same time, the schedule and budgets were tight, so it was imperative that we worked accurately and fast together. In the first instance, we held a series of envisioning meetings with the company's leaders, which ensured they involved themselves totally in the project. We explored Edelman's aspirations, technology, processes and its people; their strengths and threats. We worked together to understand the business – where they are today and their goals for the future. There was a clear view that this was the time to start afresh and to flush out potentially divisive areas. I think we surprised Edelman and helped them bond as a team. It was fundamental: there was agreement on the vision, and Edelman trusted us.

'Robert's a busy man but made himself available 24/7 – his decisiveness was critical to the project's success. Everyone knew the brief, everybody in the organisation was engaged, everyone had a voice, everyone was on the same page, and no one said 'yes, but...'. Mind you, nobody believed we could do it on time and on budget!

'There's openness about the design which speaks volumes about integrity and trust within Edelman. You can see the leaders at all times. When clients are escorted through the space, they see the supergraphics indicating brand values and they can engage with the certainty and the

vitality that's there for all to see and feel. It's about transparency.

'A key driver was about getting people away from their desks and spending more time focusing on collaborating, learning and socialising. This is the age of communication, a powerful dynamic proven here by Edelman's increased profitability and productivity. And improving space utilisation shows how a building need not place a stranglehold on a company's ability to react to business opportunities.'

This is investment in progressive workplace design. Eschewing the obvious, facing major cultural, HR and business challenges head on with confidence and re-thinking the way work is and will be done, all blend to make this an extremely impressive project on every level. 'The office of the future?' Wow! ●

essential ingredients

Client:	• Edelman UK
Architect:	• Gensler
Project Manager:	• CB Richard Ellis
Main Contractor:	• Structuretone
Systems Furniture:	• Vitra 020 7608 6213
Carpets:	• Westbond 020 7553 9300
Loose Furniture:	• Vitra 020 7608 6213 B&B Italia 020 7591 8111 Fritz Hansen +44 84 4800 8934 Kusch + Co 020 7336 7561
Partitioning:	• Optima 01494 492725
Lighting:	• Modular, Luxo, DAL