

Lansdown Road



Case Study



'I compare our culture to the Vietcong. The generals and the troops all ate the same food, slept in the same rat holes - but they beat America! We're the same here at Hargreaves Lansdown - we have a one firm culture, never us and them. It doesn't matter who you are, you do it yourself. And that pervades the whole firm - you take a photocopy yourself. We carry out most services ourselves - PR, advertising, marketing, our own print, our own graphic design.'



We're chatting with straight-talking Peter Hargreaves, founder of the highly successful financial services company Hargreaves Lansdown. Our visit is to the firm's impressive new headquarters in Bristol's Harbourside.

'I'm difficult, I'm rude...but I'm fun to work with!' He's right on all three counts - and we loved our spiky, bristling, provocative and funny interview.

Peter knows about putting together a 1,200 word piece about the design of the workspace, how it reflects the firm's culture, and how it supports the company's business objectives. So, of course, he describes his HQ as 'just a place to house people'. Or of Harmsen Group's elegant and intelligent interior design, the comment is, 'I had lots of discussions with Nick Fletcher, and then we agreed I was right all along!' >>>>>>>>

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▶▶▶▶ But behind the bluntness and the wit is a mind that's as sharp as a tack, an absolute clarity about the business, and ultimately, an extremely sophisticated understanding about how the design of the new building will add value to Hargreaves Lansdown's bottom line.

'The reason we're here is that we've got everybody under one roof. We had grown over the years and found ourselves in five buildings in Clifton. We had to be at this end of town because most of the staff live round here – it's important that their journey to work is easy. Of course we looked at other locations – such as the new development in Temple Back which is sterile and would have been a bad location for our staff. People like working here. In fact, they love it. We've never lost one person we didn't want to lose. The secret? It's not trimmings and trappings...the way to reward people is with praise, in the pay packet and job involvement.

'People don't usually aspire to be in financial services – but when they join us they like it here, the culture and the atmosphere. We've never had a problem recruiting. We start our recruits taking orders for ISAs and SIPPs over the phone. It's a business where the person you speak to first is the person who deals with you. Our people answer your questions, they don't pass you on.'

'I know what our customers want and what they buy. Success in business is based on three simple points. One: you've got to be able to sell your product – and we have marketing genius. Two: you've got to give clients what they want – the best service at the best price. Three: you've got to sell your product at a profit – knowing your margins is vital, as is keeping costs down.

'Most companies say that they're different. But the fact is they're not. Harmsen always hear that – they reluctantly finally realised we were. What this building helps us to do more than anything is communicate. Everybody communicates with each other. We don't generally use the meeting rooms, maybe only a third of the time – but we encourage people to talk to each other by going to see them at their desk. Or shout across! We put a staircase into the atrium to link people – not floors – together. It's a really important distinction. People use the stairs more often than the lifts, because it means that they'll talk to a colleague. This building encourages that.

'I'm always suspicious of the conventional route. I was acutely aware of the risk that we might end up with cheap ▶▶▶▶▶

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whole company has been together for 10 years. Peter's comments about the non-hierarchical culture at Hargreaves Lansdown, and the need for communication are reflected in the interior design, as Nick Fletcher confirms.

'At the time of the initial design the financial markets were quite volatile, so the design scheme needed to be flexible enough to cope. In addition, the financial services industry has seasonal changes to staffing levels – particularly at the tax year end. So it was important that our design could manage these significant fluctuations in staffing levels.

'But the key feature is Hargreaves Lansdown's strong individual culture. All staff have the same workspace set-up in the open plan. With the large floorplates, initial test fit plans showed that 120 degree workstations afforded great efficiency – but allowed better organic growth as departments and teams expanded. It's worth noting that even Peter and his new CEO work at the same open workstations as everyone else – the only concession to the occasional need for privacy being an Orangebox Volume freestanding pod office.

'As Peter says, the company doesn't encourage many formal meetings, and our design interprets that in various ways. Meeting rooms have been kept to a minimum, and in addition they're generally positioned in the middle of the floorplate and fully glazed so that people can't hide away. Most meetings are limited to 15 minutes.'

The visitor's first impressions on entering the building are of a simple, open space with views directly onto the trading floor. This simplicity is a perfect reflection of the Hargreaves Lansdown ethos and culture – clear, non hierarchical and communicative. The fit-out design, and the building itself, is professional and clean, with no 'trimmings and trappings' as Peter would say. The result is simple, sophisticated, businesslike and appealing – and as such reflects the Hargreaves Lansdown brand down to a tee ●

▶▶▶ and nasty ceiling tiles and dubious finishes if we left it to someone else. When it was decided the building would be leased not bought we refused to let the developers give us a finished building. To make a developer's fit-out half-decent you need to

rip out all the rubbish that has been put in and redo it. So we got an allowance from the developer to kit the building out ourselves and do it properly.'

Hargreaves Lansdown's move into the new headquarters is in fact the first time the

essential ingredients

Client • **Hargreaves Lansdown** | Architect • **Stride Treglown** www.stridetreglown.co.uk

Design • **The Harmsen Group** www.harmsen.co.uk | Fit-Out • **Construction Management Procurement**

Project Manager • **Stephens & Co** www.sacm.co.uk

Systems Furniture & Meeting Chairs • **Senator** www.senator.co.uk

Pods • **Orangebox** www.orangebox.com

Task Seating • **Connection** www.connection.uk.com

Breakout Seating • **Allermuir** www.allermuir.com

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

Storage • **Triumph** www.triumph-tbs.com/ **Spacestor** www.spacestor.uk.com

Partitions • **Optima** www.optimasystems.com

IT Accessories • **Humanscale** www.humanscale.com