

beautiful south

It is nice to get out of London. We know that's an extremely strange phrase for an interiors publication to make, but, as you know, we have a slightly different approach and attitude.



case study

When leaving the Capital, it is not the busy, 100mph lifestyle, congestion, noise and bright lights we're relieved to be escaping from. Indeed, we don't see it as escaping – for a start we know we're coming back. What we thrive on is the opportunity to see how forward-thinking and progressive this country really is right now. You can see this in every city. The development of the city centres and the changing of cultures is all around us.

We're especially fortunate as a fantastic gauge of this is the approach of leading businesses within our progressive and progressing centres. Established in 1979, Skandia UK is now one of the leading international long-term savings groups, providing pensions, investment and protection products. It is a division of the Skandia Group, owned by Old Mutual plc – a savings and wealth management company with headquarters in over 40 countries. ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶





▶▶▶▶ Skandia is also a perfect representation of the giant strides still being made in this country.

Skandia UK is based in three multi-storey buildings in Southampton city centre. Following acquisition by Old Mutual in 2006, and as part of larger organisational change, senior managers at Skandia

recognised the need to re-assess and update the company's property portfolio, to align with changes in company structure and improve the working environment for staff.

'The buildings looked tired. Internal décor and layout hadn't been refreshed for a number of years, and didn't reflect the dynamic, forward-thinking organisation

within,' says Skandia UK's Head of Organisational Development, Sean Muskett. 'New working practices, shared services and advances in technology have completely transformed our traditional structure, so it made good business sense to alter our workspaces accordingly.'

In addition to fundamental commercial inefficiencies with its existing accommodation, Skandia's HR team established that the cluttered, uncomfortable surroundings could be impacting on staff morale, retention and attrition. As good staff is its most important resource, Skandia takes its corporate social responsibilities (CSR) very seriously, and has entered into a programme to become an employer of choice, making re-vamped offices a priority.

Skandia's Head of Facilities, Steve Cox, embarked on a search to find an organisation that could turn its workspaces around through planning, relocation and fit-out, achieving desired results quickly, with minimum disruption to ongoing operations. Steve tells us more: 'After contacting several different companies I was aware of, I selected PiMS Workspace for the job. The Director, Martin Atkinson, has many years▶▶▶▶▶▶





of experience and a great reputation throughout the facilities management industry. His organisation is locally based and offered all the services we needed, so it was the obvious choice.'

Working alongside Skandia's in-house FM team, PiMS Workspace began the project by conducting a series of interviews

with all business unit heads, to establish existing and forecasted headcounts, space and furniture requirements. New plans were created for discussion with each department to introduce improved workflow, increased light and the perception of more room.

Staff interaction was encouraged with the introduction of informal seating areas.

Traditional eight-person meeting rooms were replaced with a mix of smaller rooms, using glass walls to create the illusion of space and natural light.

Offices at Skandia were previously allocated by status. PiMS Workspace devised a space and furniture policy, allocating offices by function instead of hierarchy. One of PiMS Workspace's main objectives was to design each floor so that it 'worked' for the occupants in terms of functional layout, whilst creating an image appropriate for a leading 21st century organisation in the financial services industry.

In line with Skandia's Corporate Social Responsibilities policies, the overall design of each floor was timed to coincide with the life-cycle replacement of lighting and carpets. Lighting that meets the latest energy saving criteria was complemented by new passive infrared switching to ensure minimum energy wastage. As PiMS Workspace is independent (with no furniture or removals company affiliations) it could ensure an unbiased tender process for relocation and fit-out works.

Since PiMS Workspace began work for Skandia UK back in August 2006, return on





▶▶▶▶ investment as a result of improved working environments and more efficient use of space has been fast and dramatic.

‘Feedback from staff has been very positive,’ Sean continues. ‘We’re determined to become a leading ‘Employer of Choice’ and improving our working environment is one of a number of initiatives we are taking to improve employee wellbeing. Survey results suggest a general feeling that Skandia is investing in our team by providing new workspaces, improving morale, loyalty and motivation.’

The individual office culture change instigated by PiMS Workspace has seen

significant reduction in the need for cellular office space, with many managers now sitting with their staff in open plan areas.

Furthermore, improved use of space has increased occupancy densities at Skandia’s headquarters by an average of 20%. The open nature of the revised layouts gives the perception of space although most workstations actually provide less than 100 sq ft per person.

We’ll let Sean have the final word: ‘The financial services industry is constantly changing, so we can’t afford to stand still. We will need to keep re-assessing our workspaces to maximise their potential.

PiMS Workspace has become an important supplier to Skandia, and I anticipate we will continue to work closely with them in the future.’

Well, when we say final word, we mean almost final word. We’re heading back to London, but suffice to say, we’d like to spend a little more time here on the south coast to see how Southampton has moved forward in the past few years. If Skandia is anything to go by, we’d be in for a great time ●



essential ingredients

- Client: • Skandia UK
- Design & Planning: • PiMS Workspace
023 9226 4333
- Systems Furniture: • Herman Miller
0845 226 7202
Eurotek
01243 828921
- Partitioning: • Komfort
01293 529500