



cisco fever

We alight from the train, relieved to have left the G20 protests way back in London, and move through Feltham station in search of a taxi. Thankfully there is a queue of cabs at our disposal and we cram into the first, asking our chirpy driver if he knows the whereabouts of Bedfont Lakes.

Some 10 minutes later we've arrived at our destination and we immediately realise that we needn't have asked Charlie the driver if he knew the park. We might as well have asked if he knew where nearby Heathrow Airport was. This is no run-of-the-mill, out-of-town, bog-standard business park. This is JG Ballard Super Cannes. This is what we should have expected when visiting Cisco.

This park is Cisco country, the building that houses the Emerging Markets department has recently benefited from a new interior scheme. Architect and interior design studio Penson has completed a refreshing and vibrant new home for the global IT and communications Emerging Markets team.

Cisco has had a major presence at Bedfont Lakes for some eight years, and has three buildings. The project management was provided by Procore.

As far as the facts and figures for building 11 go, the space is approximately 21,000 sq ft. 'We were asked to provide seating for 296 although we have just 175 workstations as the Emerging Markets team are located around the globe working flexibly from a variety of ▶▶▶▶



case study



locations,' Procure's Stewart Holmes explains.

The new Emerging Markets workspace reflects the rich diversity and regional differences of both the employees and the customers alike. Inspiration from these contrasting localities has filtered into the overall scheme and enhances the ambience, creating a space that feels personal to the Emerging Markets team as well as engaging and welcoming for visitors. Penson thought it was important that stories from members of the Emerging Markets team are told through both photography and memorabilia. As such, not only did Penson design this space, they also engaged the client with a global photography competition with regular forums to select genuine fabrics and textures as staff went about their travels.

As you enter the Emerging Markets HQ you are welcomed by the mirroring foyers, each with a life-sized black polished lion statue on a plinth. These lions face a grid of eclectic panels covered in the fabrics, which Penson selected from the emerging markets regions. The concept allows Cisco to update and change the panels with new fabrics or photographs, to ensure that the essence of the space reflects their markets.

Penson specified white as the predominant finish for the furniture to keep the space feeling fresh, clean, bright and smart – and this also provides a striking contrast to the predominantly black carpet. White also forms a neutral backdrop to the huge variety of colour and pattern injected into the space by means of the fabrics and the photography.

Penson wanted to make the open plan spaces truly open and spacious by clearing the floor of all the storage units and forming specially designed alcoves to fit the enormous amount of storage required. The existing KI 700 Series storage, with its 25-year guarantee, was still in perfectly good condition and therefore it was all re-used and sprayed white, giving a fresher appearance, whilst also providing a cost-effective and more ecological solution than simply buying new ones.

As regular readers will be aware, our usual angle with project stories is to look in-depth at the overall working practices of a company – the move to open plan, expansion of meeting facilities etc. While these practices were closely examined and managed here, it is the incredible cost-effective detailing that delivers the real story.

'The quiriness and individuality at face value looks amazing, however when you >>>>>>



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The small meeting rooms and partitioned offices around the periphery of the open plan space are all named after the rivers in the emerging markets regions – Zambezi, Nile and Amazon, for example. The existing space had an inherent problem with acoustics due to the enormous amount of floor-to-ceiling glass that surrounds the facility. Cisco wanted to retain the majority of the existing partitioning, so building this with a higher acoustic rating was not an option. Penson decided that acoustic panels could be used as a solution to the acoustics problem, but designed in a way that they became an important visual part of the scheme rather than an afterthought. Thick foam and loose weave fabric were found to have high acoustic properties and, by using a joinery company to make them up, they could be individually sized for each room. The fabrics that had been selected to represent each of the regions were made into the central piece of each panel. 'Fabric Graphics' or photographs of the fabric were then used in the shape of the rivers as a unique design for each meeting room, to give each its own identity.

Another quirk comes from the black carpet in the large meeting room, which has a pattern giving the illusion of a rug in the centre, whilst the map graphics on the walls highlight the emerging market regions in orange – one of the Cisco colours. Being economic again here, seating has been re-upholstered and re-used.

The breakout area is bathed in huge Moroccan floor cushions, a large sofa with more ethnic style cushions and a huge lime green dining table with eight horse legs (and no, it didn't cost a couple of ponies!). The table looks as though it can literally walk-off, and demonstrates that Penson can also turn its hand to bespoke furniture. The area has been designed to allow the emerging teams to 'move-in' to their new home, by providing plenty of surfaces for personal trinkets, books and general memorabilia. Another particularly nice personal touch, we think.

The Penson eye for detail is embodied in possibly the least glamorous or functional space in the building – the central linking corridor. Whilst it would have been easy to forget to 'design' this area, or to leave it in its original post-base-build state, Penson has instead focused on brightening and smartening the space, and also adding utilities such as a tea and coffee post.

It was essential that Penson created a space that is highly efficient and utilises the latest technologies available. Staff members are now provided with a range of varied and flexible working environments which allows all members of the team to communicate professionally with its customers from more than 130 countries globally.

The new headquarters for Cisco's Emerging Markets department certainly loosens up the word 'workplace'.

'This space proves two things for us: firstly, we were invited to pitch for Cisco some time ago,' Lee recalls. 'We secured the commission and we have delivered a space

that really demonstrates how being highly creative and diligently commercial, can provide fantastic interior spaces.

'Secondly, despite the visual entertainment within our portfolio, this project proves how much fun can be had with a minimal rate per square foot, fixed suppliers under frameworks, a very commercial client, mixed, of course, with a lot of dedicated elbow grease from the architect! Why have an unimaginative workspace when for less expense you can have something exciting and functionally proven?'

Quite right. You'll find absolutely no protests from us today Lee ●

essential ingredients

Client:	• Cisco Emerging Markets
Design & Planning:	• Penson Group 020 7902 1181
Project Manager:	• Procore 01794 517338
Construction:	• Overbury 020 7307 9000
Systems Furniture:	• Herman Miller 0845 226 7202
Carpets:	• InterfaceFLOR 08705 304030
Bespoke 'Horse' Table:	• Penson Group 020 7902 1181
Storage:	• KI 020 7404 7441