





## case study



professional relationship with BBi for the past year as they appointed us to do their PR. It was only right, therefore, that we asked them to quote for our office fit-out. However, it was still a competitive situation and they were one of three that we asked to tender.

‘What really impressed us with BBi was their ideas, approach to the brief and total professionalism from start to finish.

‘Our relationship now with BBi is really like a partnership – they have almost become part of the team! And we can promote them with complete confidence that they truly are one of the best in their field, speaking from first-hand experience.’

Freshwater UK’s new offices are a result of its recent acquisition of Cardiff based Marketing and PR agency, Merlin. The office will house the two teams as well as the group’s finance, HR and internal communications teams.

The contract involved the restructure and complete fit-out of the PR and marketing company’s new office space, including video/DVD editing and production facilities, a graphic design studio, training and meeting rooms and a library.

The office fit-out also included establishing facilities for Freshwater Wales’s 45 staff including the Yum Yum Café kitchen, a dedicated sitting room and informal meeting rooms.

The piece de resistance of the new office is the curved wall that greets visitors on arrival in reception. Produced in conjunction with the Freshwater in-house design team, the wall features modern, colourful graphics and quotes about communication from famous writers from Shakespeare to Oscar Wilde.

We are also joined by Carl Williams, Project Manager at BBi, who we ask to tell us about the brief. ‘Freshwater was a dream to work with! Usually when we work with companies, it takes us quite a while to get to a stage where we get a true feel for their requirements.

‘At the first meeting we had with Freshwater, however, they presented us with a plan of how they wanted the space divided, of where the cellular offices were to be located, of how many meeting and boardrooms were required, even sketching out where the post room should be positioned! From these initial guidelines, we very much worked together to develop the brief between us, communicating regularly until we had it just right.’

So what were Freshwater’s aspirations and what was the company looking to

achieve through this project? ‘Freshwater was very clear about how the finished product should look and feel,’ Carl recalls. ‘They wanted to create an impressive headquarters that reflected their status as a plc and one of the largest UK regional PR firms, but they were also determined to develop a fun and funky workplace that reflected their work within the creative industries.

‘The finished office gets the balance just right. The reception area, with its curved glass desk, makes for an impressive entrance but it is edged with fun through the striking and colourful wall graphics that surround it.

‘As projects go, this one had few challenges. If I was pushed to name something that really challenged us, it would be the difficulty, at times, in getting decisions through.

‘As the client wanted to involve staff every step of the way, they set up a working

group to in-put into the office fit-out process. They were especially involved in making decisions as to the final fixtures and fittings, and I can remember a number of lengthy conversations as to what shade of red the dividers should be!

‘While this can be frustrating, I applaud Freshwater’s approach in engaging with their staff. The staff value the fact that they have been involved in the process as opposed to just being presented with a finished product at the end that they’ve had no say over. It really develops a sense of ownership.

‘The brief altered daily! We were changing the seating plan, finishes, colours, wall vinyl practically until the day the staff moved in! We are used to working like this. It’s all about constant communication and being flexible enough to respond to changing needs. What we are concerned about is complete client satisfaction at the end of the day.’



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▶▶▶▶▶ We ask Steve how far the new facility differs from Freshwater's previous home. 'Our new facility is in a completely different league to our previous offices,' he enthuses. 'While our previous HQ was modern and had everything you would expect from a new-build office, it was extremely bland and had no character. Walls were magnolia, desks were beech, and there was nothing that reflected the creativity of the work we deliver for our clients day in, day out. This was one of the first tasks we addressed when planning our new office, and we got one of our own designers on the case to come up with some fantastic wall graphics based around the theme of 'communication' to bring the new offices to life.'

'We were completely lucky with the building,' Carl takes over. 'Not only was it new-build, it was just a vast open space that

was just waiting to be developed into something really special.

'All of the feedback that we've received on the project has been 100% positive. Everybody loves their new space, from the senior management team right the way through to the administrators. We've taken on board everybody's working requirements and have a good mixture of open plan, quiet spaces, meeting rooms and cellular offices to meet everyone's needs and working styles.

'In particular, the staff love the investment that has been made in creating relaxation zones for them. The Yum Yum café is buzzing at lunchtime and the company has even installed a Wii into the sitting room along with Sky TV.'

'Everybody has been extremely complimentary about the new offices, from staff through clients to shareholders,' Steve

confirms. 'We now feel that we've got an HQ that really reflects our size, the work that we do and the creative industry we're in.'

We ask Carl about the selection of furniture and products for the space. 'The vast majority of the products and materials were sourced locally and manufactured by local companies, which was the main reason for us incorporating them into the design.'

'The new office seating was manufactured just down the road in Merthyr Tydfil by Orangebox, along with all the new desking and screening by a company called Pro Office.'

'The wall vinyl was designed and manufactured in Cardiff, as was the partitioning system.'

'The only real item on show that was shipped in from abroad was the glass reception desk. To help that WOW factor when entering the building we had to look for something a little different and our search eventually took us to Germany!'

We'll leave the final words to Carl and Steve. 'The Freshwater offices are a great example of what can be done with a bit of imagination and an injection of fun,' Carl tells us. 'In terms of office design, we've moved a long way from simply being satisfied with magnolia walls and a beech desk. Forward-thinking companies are currently creating exciting working environments that offer something a little bit different.'

'I would have to agree,' says Steve. 'The new HQ has brought the two teams under one roof for the first time and areas like the Yum Yum café have been instrumental in helping a smooth integration to happen. We're just like one happy family now.' ●

## essential ingredients

Client:	• Freshwater
Design & Fit-Out:	• BBi 01874 623089
Furniture Provision:	• BBi 01874 623089
Systems Furniture:	• Pro Office Business Furniture 01685 377211
Screening:	• Pro Office Business Furniture 01685 377211
Task Seating:	• Orangebox 020 7837 9922