

Essentials

Client

City & Guilds

Founded

November 11, 1878

Offices

8,500 centres and training providers in 81 countries

Design & QS

Artelia

Main Contractor

Interior Motives

M&E Consultant

Gary Jones Associates

Furniture

Kinnarps

Reception Desk

Isomi

Carpets

Interface, Milliken

Slate Floor

Burlington Stone

Gilt EDGE

We're in the heart of London and, along with pretty much everyone else on the streets today, are ducking in and out of doorways thanks to the weather.

It's not the usual issue of rain we're all

concerned with today, however. It's easily the hottest day of the summer and shade is what we're craving.

It's a blessed relief then when we reach 1, Giltspur Street, the home of the City & Guild's head office. Just a stone's throw from the greenhouse that is Smithfield Market today,

our destination immediately offers cool, air conditioned tranquillity.

City & Guilds is a global leader in skills development, providing services to training providers, employers, and trainees across a variety of sectors to meet the needs of today's workplace. Its qualifications and apprenticeships are valued by employers across the world, helping individuals develop their talents and abilities for career progression.

City & Guilds' complex project to upgrade and extend its central London office accommodation was facilitated by the cost and contract advice given by the team at Artelia. The scheme, which includes a lightwell infill and extensive rebuilding works, caused the team to face a number of challenges due to unexpected ground conditions, archaeological finds and

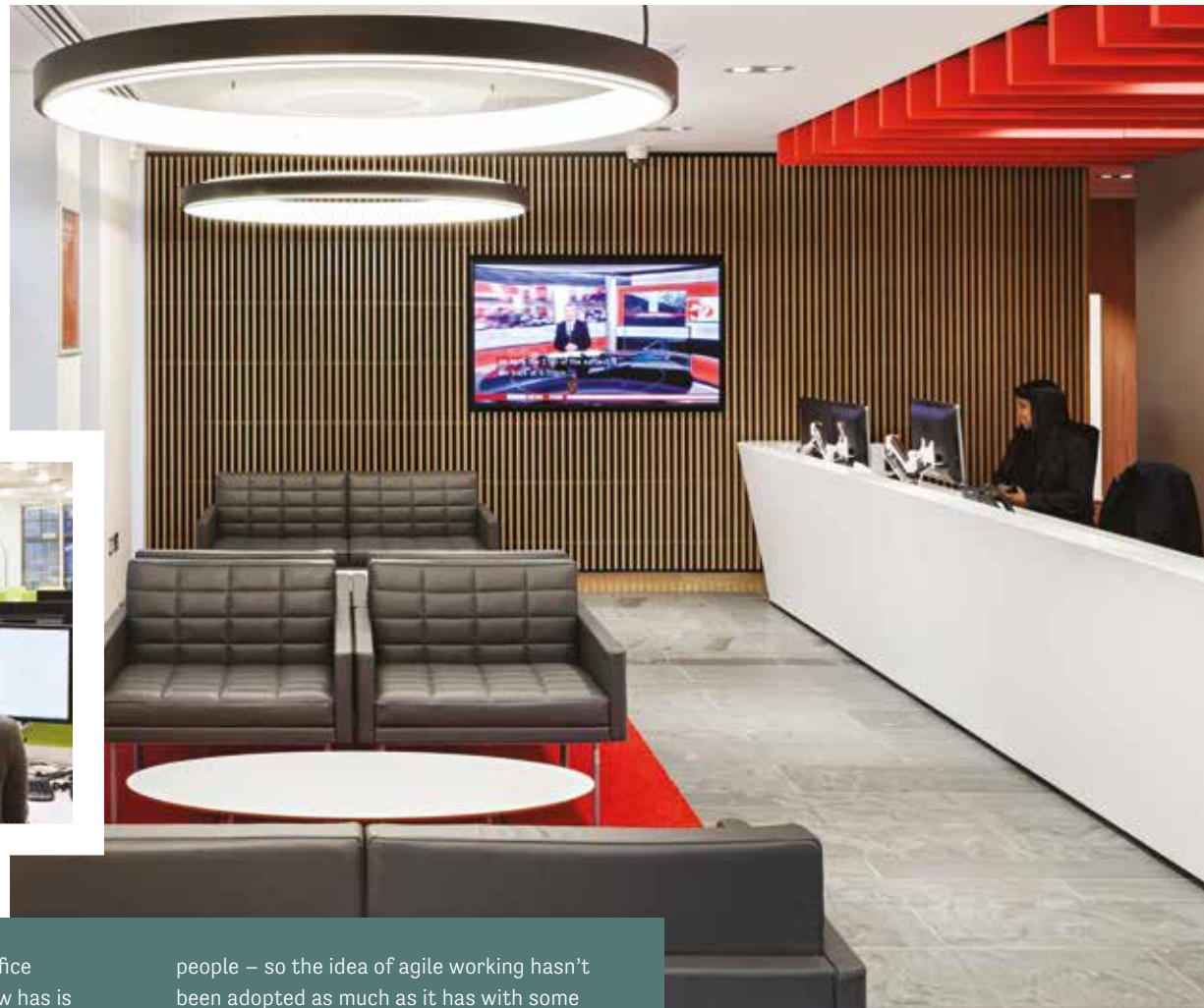
transformer works by EDF. With experience of dealing with such matters on other London schemes, the team was able to help City & Guilds negotiate a way through to minimise impact on cost and disruption.

We are met by Kevin Hutcheson, Head of Facilities for City & Guilds and Rupert Eveleigh, Head of Interior Design at Artelia UK, who take us through to the still cooler breakout space beyond reception. Taking a perch, we begin by asking about the origins of the project. 'We've just sold the building next door – 24-30, West Smithfield – and the whole project, over the past five years, has been focused on decanting that building and taking it to market,' Kevin explains. 'That building is now going to be turned into a hotel – which is great for us as we use up to 2,000 hotel rooms a year in London!'

Rupert tells us that, going back a few years and whilst working for another design firm, he first worked with City & Guilds before they'd acquired the building on Giltspur Street. 'We first bought 5-7 Giltspur Street from the City about six years ago and refurbished that to accommodate half of the teams with the end strategy being to, as we just discussed, release that asset,' Kevin continues. 'Rupert was the primary architect on that project. That was 74,000 sq ft – so it was a big project.' 'Since the 1990's desk sizes have got smaller of course and the fit-out that was undertaken back then was far too →

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←generous and the amount of office accommodation City & Guilds now has is considerably less,' Rupert tells us. 'They had corner core desks and the actual workspace people now have and need has got smaller and the support and meeting spaces have got a lot better. They now provide flexible accommodation and encourage a different way of working.'

Kevin tell us that the new scheme comfortably houses and supports the same number of people as the former home in an incredible 44% less space! 'We have made use of areas that were previously somewhat redundant,' Rupert points out. 'This breakout space here, for example, was formerly a corridor and a ramp leading to the other building. We've tried to get as much out of the space from the circulation zone as possible.'

'The cultural change hasn't been easy,' Kevin admits. 'No one has an office other than the Chairman. People like myself, at head of function level, sit at the same tables as everyone else, in amongst their teams.'

'I think City & Guilds had bought into a lot of that before this particular project,' Rupert continues. 'The principle of offices was already going and the idea of desk spaces getting smaller and allocation of lockers had also been bought into. They still have desks allocated to

people – so the idea of agile working hasn't been adopted as much as it has with some other companies.'

'What we have done is adopted team hot desking – so a team has a set of desks and they then define who should be fixed and who can be flexible,' Kevin says. 'You might have an accounts team where that flexibility doesn't work, so they will be fixed. Corporate communications, on the other hand, are far more flexible, and tend to move around the building and find breakout spaces. Like I said, this has been a real challenge, but I think everyone's really embraced it. Everybody's learning to adapt together. It's not sustainable to continue in that traditional manner. We have to move forward as an organization – and property costs in central London are phenomenal, of course.'

'People like being flexible and, if they are only in for a short period of time, they don't necessarily want to sit at a desk. They're more than happy to plug in and sit in informal spaces,' Rupert agrees. 'This also presents the opportunity to encourage people to sit alongside other teams or even to work from home.'

'People can be quite conservative. Some people will always resist changes – but they will adapt.' 'We did spend an awful lot of →



←time letting people know what was going on at every step of the process – so this wasn't a shock for our people,' Kevin explains. 'I think that helped the change process.'

We also learn that a great deal of money was previously spent on vending facilities. This has now been superseded by simple, smart tea and coffee points throughout the building. Not only does this result in a huge saving in operating costs, it also offers people another opportunity to interact, communicate or simply get away from their desks for a minute or two.

Much of the ground floor space was previously occupied by the staff restaurant. This has now been moved down to the basement, which was previously home to enormous kitchens for the restaurant above. 'We needed to provide fine dining for VIP guests – including royalty,' Kevin reveals. 'We still provide the service – but in a modern, contemporary environment. We've made the kitchens smaller, used the space far better and modernised those facilities – and then put the eating space in the basement and extended that space out into a courtyard. It's had a massive impact on staff morale here. It's a much more inviting space than we previously had.' When Kevin says basement, don't think of a dark, unwelcoming space. This is anything but. Bright, open and modern, the

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restaurant would appeal to anyone – from staff through the Princess Royal! The use of the amazing courtyard area certainly adds to the airy, open feel. 'The staff café is a relatively unusual provision for a workspace,' Rupert considers. 'So staff here are given nice facilities to support their work. 'Furthermore, these changes have allowed City & Guilds to double the number of desks in this building!'

Moving back up the building, Kevin tells us that City & Guilds has heavily invested in its communications throughout the building – again to allow staff to be more flexible and work in the variety of settings provided. Although, as we've discovered, there is a phenomenal amount of space saving here, the upper floors are open, generous and indeed include smart teapoints, breakout areas and more formal, traditional meeting rooms. We're told that meeting facilities were another major issue here, and this has been addressed by the provision of more yet smaller, more suitable rooms – alleviating that growing problem of misuse of space.

The fourth floor is home to City & Guilds' senior management and, as we were informed earlier, is noticeably free of cellular space. Instead, we once again find an open, clean and bright working environment.

We should mention that the vast majority of the impressive furniture selection has been provided by Kinnarps – and there isn't a single corner core desk in sight!

We have to say that, unlike the weather outside, the new City & Guilds home is very cool indeed. ●