

Bringing brand into workplace design



Camped in an ageing office building in the suburbs of the Milan, Fujitsu felt it was time to create a working environment that more accurately reflected the ethos of the Japanese technology giant and its brand promise of “shaping tomorrow with you”.

The beating heart of central Milan called and close to the renowned Bocconi University and the European Institute of Design, Fujitsu found its new Italian headquarters. A striking new space in the Via Spadolini saw Fujitsu become neighbours with kindred spirit technology companies and in a very short period of time the new HQ felt very much like home.

When Fujitsu started to consider its relocation, there was a realisation within the Italian division that something of a cultural revolution was required to maximise the moment.

Up until that point, the company’s 200 plus employees in Milan worked in a hierarchal office environment where, although there was open plan space, there was also a clear divide between management and staff. Individual offices for managers or superior desks in open spaces were the norm and each member of staff had a specified desk top computer and phone.



Federico Francini, chief executive of Fujitsu in Italy, explains: “We wanted to re-evaluate the environment we were working in and explore the opportunities for a new office environment in which we could develop our brand awareness and also be in the heart of a community where there were other leading IT companies.”

When you are based in one of the world’s great cities which lives and breathes culture, style and fashion, it does not serve anyone well to be seen to be behind the curve.

Francini had worked with Steelcase previously on another project and was keen to investigate how best to create an office environment that would be commensurate with Fujitsu’s brand values and promise.

“Our key thought was to create an environment to remove the barriers between management and staff and improve interaction between them.”

FEDERICO FRANCINI | Chief Executive of Fujitsu in Italy

He said: “We are a company whose philosophy is providing human centric intelligent solutions and technology which will serve customers and our own people well, whether they are at work or out of the office. We are unrelenting in the pursuit of technological advance and a company such as ours should be operating in an environment that reflects these aspirations.”

Working with Steelcase’s own team, space planners and designers Tetris, and local dealer, Office Solution, Francini and his colleagues created a space they knew would be a step change for their staff.

SUPPORT CULTURE CHANGE

He said: “It was also important to make our space work harder and optimize square metres so that it would be used more efficiently. This was a big change and at first people were wary of that which is quite a natural reaction to change. However, we made a big effort in terms of our communications to people to ensure they were aware of what was happening every step of the way. Afterwards they could see the benefit and were much more positive about it.”



“We chose to work with Steelcase because we knew we would have a relationship that was based on solutions – it was never simply about products. Steelcase has proved to be very switched on in terms of new trends in behaviours in the workplace and, as such, we are able to offer real insights into the needs of people and the way they work today.”



His sense of satisfaction was echoed by Office Solutions' Claudio Ceresa who said: "Working on this project was at each stage a real challenge in terms of new solutions to answer Fujitsu's new way of working and an opportunity to apply really innovative worksettings." Phillipe Sourdois, CEO of Tetris, said: "We are very proud to have helped Fujitsu to make such a change in its relationship with the office space. It is now a strong vehicle of Fujitsu's brand image and culture. The solutions applied have already inspired many other customers."



REFLECT BRAND VALUES THROUGH WORKSPACE

The hierarchal structure of Fujitsu's previous office was consigned to history as Fujitsu focused on removing the perceived barriers to better collaborative working.

The FrameOne Bench system was an important aspect of the new Fujitsu space as the company believed it helped create a more flexible approach to work and was conducive to their clean-desk policy. "We wanted to get away from fixed individual desks and computers", said Francini.

"We now have mobile phones and laptops. We also discarded a lot of storage space as we felt this is largely unnecessary these days.

"We were determined to have an effective clean desk policy. We had one before but it was too easy for it to slip but now we believe people are seeing the benefits of sticking to it.

"We now have only three individual offices for the CEO, FD and HR director and this is purely because of the confidential nature of some meetings. We have a range of meeting rooms and booths for isolated work so that offers employees a significant degree of privacy and the chance to concentrate on specific tasks.

"It was important that what we do as a company became more visible in our new workspace and I think we have managed to achieve that. The range of technology we now have in our conference rooms, including booking systems such as Room Wizard and video conferencing is impressive and is very much in line with what we do as a company."

The Fujitsu brand is built on the attributes of being responsive, ambitious and genuine. Federico Francini and his colleagues believe these qualities are the foundations of their new workspace and Fujitsu in Italy is where it truly belongs - in the heart of the groundbreaking technology community of Milan.

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