

Connect in the news with Takeover decision

When Field Interiors was asked to source a cost effective furniture solution for the Associated Newspapers HQ building in Kensington, they approached 14 manufacturers. End users made the final decision.

Associated Newspaper's new headquarters building was formerly home to the famous department store Barkers of Kensington. When the store closed its doors for the last time at the end of 2005, it gave Associated Newspapers the opportunity, to move two of its London based divisions into the building.

First, the offices needed to be completely revamped in order to accommodate the 300 staff who worked for Metro, the free daily newspaper, and Associated New Media, which provides the Group's online content for titles such as the Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday and Evening Standard.

Rick Kelsey, group purchasing manager of Associated Newspapers, tells us: "We decided to appoint an interior designer to advise on colour schemes, including wallcoverings and carpets, but wanted specific guidance and expert knowledge of the furniture market to give us a complete solution that provided a functional, cost effective product range which would be delivered on schedule and give us a seamless project".

Tony Herd of independent furniture specialists Field Interiors Ltd was appointed as AN's furniture consultant in October 2005. With a wealth of experience and knowledge of the office furniture industry, gained over 25 years in the furniture industry, Associated Newspapers were confident he would meet all their criteria and ensure that the project was completed on time and to budget.

The outline brief was to source a modern, cost effective furniture solution similar in concept to a call centre environment. It was Tony Herd's role to research the market for suppliers who could not only fulfil the contract to fit-out the Metro and Associated New Media offices but could, if everything went to plan, follow through and replace existing furniture stock throughout the entire Headquarters building.

Initially, 14 major furniture manufacturers were invited to introduce their products, which Field Interiors reduced to nine via a series of evaluations and a scoring matrix. The questions focused on aspects such as suitability of product in terms of design criteria and space saving, source of manufacture, production capacity, after sales services and cost effectiveness. The successful shortlist of three potential suppliers were then paid a visit so that Tony Herd and the AN project team could evaluate their products.

The final two companies remaining in the race were Asher and Morris, selected because their workstation designs met the brief and their credentials as manufacturers were proven. Both were then asked to set up pilot workstations on site so that end users could try the competing product ranges and determine which they preferred.



The value added ingredient that really raises the bar in Associated Newspapers' HQ is terms of striking interior design is the glass Atrium

Although the project team determined the footprint and the corporate finish of maple with silver framework, the staff were given the final choice on both workstation and screen design.

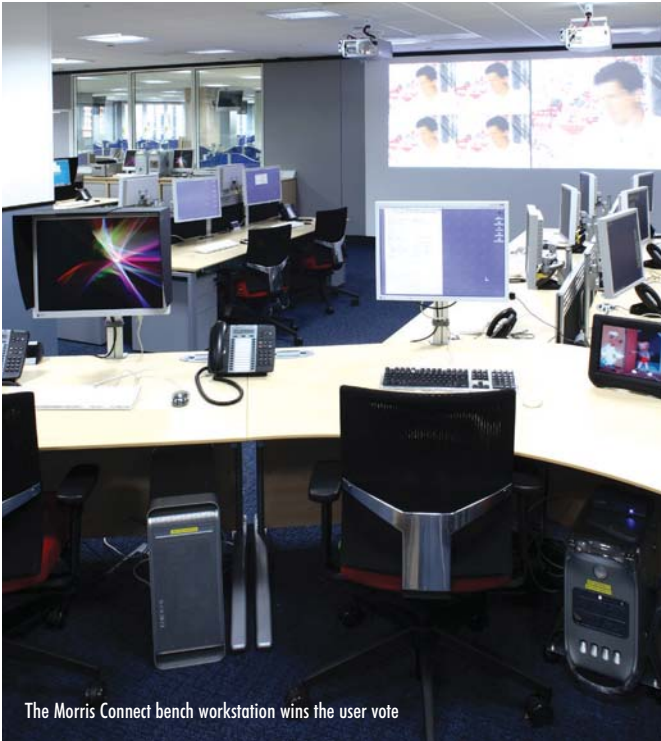
And the winner is Morris Connect

Connect was chosen as the preferred option by a panel of end users and members of the in-house facilities team who were also delighted with the ease with which the system can be reconfigured. They also chose desk-mounted, rectangular double-wave design screens, finished in black for the Metro area and blue for New Media.

Ideally suited to an open-plan publishing environment, Connect can be configured for whole team working as well as providing a 'stand alone' solution for cellular offices.

No one was more delighted than Nicholas Podolier, Morris southern region manager, to receive a contract in April 2006 to supply 315 workstations in June.

"It was not simply that the price of Connect was right, but it is very flexible in that it can be configured as a bench system or can be free-standing. It also offers a degree of future proofing, which means that the cost of ownership represents real value for money. For example, the goal-post style legs are connected by telescopic rails that can be extended very easily to support a worktop from 1200mm to



1800mm. Associated Newspapers opted for 1400mm tops, but if they want to buy smaller or larger worktops in the future, they don't need to buy new frames as well".

Some would argue that Morris is shooting itself in the foot by limiting the value of future orders: "We don't believe we are", says Nicholas Podolier. "By designing in flexibility, we believe we are behaving responsibly. Clients appreciate being able to buy a little bit of insurance against future change. It makes Connect a wise purchase in terms of investment".

Included in the Morris contract was free standing storage for filing and shelving, Morris storage wall and quite a lot of bespoke storage, all in the same matching maple finish as the furniture.

John Graeme, deputy purchasing manager at Associated Newspapers, confirms the reasons why Morris was deemed the winner: "It was quickly apparent on our showroom visits that Morris had the most attractive and suitable product options to meet our criteria. Their Connect range is simple, easy to reconfigure and very sleek in appearance. We required a benching system that was flexible enough to reconfigure into stand alone desking with the minimum of fuss".

Underlining the add value of 'service', John Graeme adds "Tony Herd of Field Interiors worked in conjunction with SBF1 to adapt their Axiom Flat Screen Monitor Arm, usually used in Financial Trading Environments, to give us a fantastic mounting for the desktop technology, which fully satisfied our Health and Safety, IT and end user requirements".

Staff also favour a synchronised Takeover

Dauphin HumanDesign Group was the successful supplier of the seating.

Associated Newspapers wanted the lightness of a mesh back office chair and selected the award winning Takeover chair, designed by Manfred Elzenbeck, Klaus Haar and the Dauphin-Designteam.

For the 'Metro' area of the office all the Takeover chairs have black mesh backs with bright red seats contrasting well with the black fabric on the desk-mounted screens. In the 'New Media' area the Takeover chairs are light grey to contrast with the blue screens.

With ergonomic design a key requirement, one of the features that led to the choice of Takeover was the patented syncro-dynamic mechanism, which allows for weight compensation to provide a permanently balanced posture whilst sitting, keeping the user perfectly upright. The seat and backrest follow the movements of the body in synchronisation to guarantee the correct angle at all times. The chair also incorporates an auto-glide-system, which provides automatic seat-depth that adjusts according to the height and weight of the individual.

All together, 364 Dauphin chairs have been installed throughout the offices, including Takeover high back executive swivel chairs for use in the cellular offices and 50 Takeover cantilever chairs in the meeting rooms.

Installation on time and on budget

The entire project was completed in June 2006 - on time, on budget and to the client's complete satisfaction. Nicholas Podolier is fulsome in his praise for the 'leader of the orchestra'. "Although there was a dialogue between all those involved – client, consultant and suppliers - it was Field Interiors who led the project. They played a really valuable role, not only looking after the interests of their client in the normal professional way, but helping the client to understand the limitations of the manufacturing process and timescales involved in fulfilling a large project. This is particularly helpful when a contract involves bespoke elements of design. It was a good partnership that went exceedingly well".

Paul Rudd, facilities operations director of Associated Newspapers, is delighted with the results and speaks for the team when he says. "We are extremely pleased with the performance of all our suppliers, coordinated by Tony Herd of Field Interiors. We had no disruptions during the installations and our end users were able to occupy their new areas with no delays or interruptions. The appearance of the new offices has been extremely well received and we are delighted that our solution will become the standard as we refurbish the various departments at our Headquarters building".

In fact, Nicholas Podolier received confirmation of the next order via email while he was on holiday in France. When Robert Morris, chief executive insisted everyone should use a Blackberry for easy communication while out of the office, he was not so sure it was a good idea. But following that good news he has changed his mind: "I have to admit it really is a useful tool". ■



Dauphin Takeover seating wins the comfort stakes