

Paragon conceptualises workplace design solution for Deloitte



When global professional services firm Deloitte decided to consolidate its offices into its new African headquarters, bringing together 3 700 employees in a custom-designed building geared for future expansion, it turned to Paragon to conceptualise the workplace design solution. The architecture and interior architecture company clinched the bid for the project at the end of 2018, just when it was completing its award-winning fit-out of the new Discovery Place head office in Sandton.

The 42 500 m² Deloitte development in Waterfall City in Midrand, Johannesburg is known as River Creek. It is a 50/50 joint venture between Attacq and Atterbury. River Creek comprises a ground floor, six office-space storeys and four basement parking levels with

almost 2 000 parking bays. “As a large single-tenant facility, this fully digital, connected ‘smart’ building has been designed to enable a dramatic cultural shift for this progressive organisation,” comments Paragon Director Claire D’Adorante.

The aesthetic interior design concept conceptualises a distinct and identifiable Deloitte brand experience through the extensive and deliberate use of its primary and secondary brand colours. Balanced with warm timbers and the extensive use of planting, a natural and inviting indoor environment flooded with natural light from the central atrium has been created.

The six levels of workspace incorporate a dramatic cascade of colour, representative of the Deloitte brand colours, which enhances the overall brand experience of the facility, as well as providing a distinct way-finding mechanism. Large open floor plans, with no cellular offices, allow the multiple business units to easily share working spaces and building facilities as well as enabling interaction, collaboration and social engagement. To offset the loss of traditional offices, a variety of cellular and open-plan collaborative spaces have been provided to deal with the need for quiet and also for group working spaces. The ground floor has been designed to create a seamless client experience and be open and welcoming for the client-facing meeting and training rooms, as well provide all the shared lifestyle facilities. A coffee shop, restaurant, pub and an external pizza oven complete the overall employee experience. The ground floor is also home to Deloitte’s new Xcelerator experience comprising eight distinct and unique spaces that offer clients a range of high-tech opportunities and digitally immersive experiences to ideate and prototype breakthrough solutions.

The workplace strategy was conceptualised around a ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘energy’ concept, explains Paragon Associate Dale Friedman. Zones of higher energy, linked to louder and more active environments, are located nearer the primary circulation routes and zones of intersection. This ensures that these spaces are active and promote collaboration and interaction.

The lower-energy functions, which require greater focus and a quieter space, are located further away from the central core to aid in the focused work required here. Each neighbourhood has all the

same collaboration areas that allow for the varied task-based functions required. The atrium edge has also been activated through the incorporation of an agile and task-based workspace corridor, affectionately known as the 'race track' and connected by the link bridges.

As Deloitte works mainly on laptops, these shared collaboration spaces enable staff to work where they feel comfortable, based on the task at hand. The multi-generational workforce also meant from the get-go that a 'one-size-fits-all' design principle would not work. "Everyone can find a type of setting best suited to them and their task, meaning happier staff who enjoy their working environment," highlights Friedman.

Technology was the next important element. It is critical that someone can sit down anywhere and have all the necessary tools at hand. "Often technology can be challenging to use and frustrates people when you cannot connect easily. Therefore, it was an important driver to ensure that technology was a seamless support for users," stresses Friedman.

A custom-designed iconographic signage system with integrated QR codes, developed specifically for Deloitte, provides users with information on how to use each agile workspace and is linked to the 'smart' building system. QR codes allow users to easily find out more about the workspace, such as the particular etiquette for the quieter spaces to the more collaborative settings, and also how to connect to the technology and log any faults that users may experience. 📱