



Interiors Roisin Lafferty says goodbye to clutter with a fresh start in 2017 **page 4**

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PROPERTY EDITOR TINA-MARIE O'NEILL



From left: a social area and meeting space at the Hostelworld office in Leopardstown in Dublin



Michael Cockerham

DESIGNER OFFICES

Companies that want to give their offices an identikit Google-esque makeover should be aware that it doesn't work for everybody, according to design expert Andreas Heil



Tina-Marie O'Neill
Property Editor

With supply beginning to catch up with demand in the office sector, companies are no longer competing with each other for space as much as they are now fighting each other for talent: how to attract the best employees and how to keep them.

To that end, image is everything, and it seems the 'Google phenomenon' of über-cool, hip office fit-outs is back.

"Google started the office interiors conversation in Ireland. Before that, when I first arrived here 17 years ago, offices were pretty boring and bland," said Andreas Heil, founder and head of Innen interior architecture, which won the Designer of the Year category at the 2016 Fit Out Awards last November.

"There are now two general approaches to office design. One is a sustainable, sensible approach; the other I call a lipstick, or cosmetic, approach, which might be inspired by what people see in almost every large multinational tech company operating today.

"Google's influence has been profound in that it has entered the interior design and fit-out lexicon. I have had people ask me to 'Google' their office, but what works for one company won't necessarily work for another. If a company doesn't have that fundamental free spirit-type of ethos, hiring a designer to force or create an atmosphere of openness or



The canteen at CurrencyFair in Ballsbridge in Dublin

Ste Murray

collaboration won't achieve the result the company aspires to.

"It's deeper than following trends or decorating with this year's colour palette. There's a bit of spatial awareness, behavioural psychology and experience involved."

Heil offers two recent examples of paradoxical fit-out requirements. The first is CurrencyFair, an online peer-to-peer currency exchange marketplace headquartered in Dublin and which Heil

describes as a young, vibrant, fin-tech company. The inclining, curved wall partitions, on which the staff could cluster or sit at one end and stand at the other using the wall as a writing/ideas board, was a design born out of necessity, but which was embraced immediately by the staff.

"Ultimately, this fresh approach echoed the pioneering culture of the client's organisation. It led to a playful but coherent design, without falling into the trap of becoming too gimmicky – form followed function and flow of space rather than being self-serving," said Heil.

The offices also have chill-out zones and incidental spaces where people can meet, chat and develop ideas in an informal setting.

"It's hard to measure soft knowledge exchanges, but there are certain things you can't force, like scheduled brain-storming around a boardroom table. At the same time, our work has never been more measurable: KPI [key performance indicator] productivity levels can't be faked, but it takes a certain type of employer to embrace the idea of creating informal, 'watercooler'-type spaces," said Heil.

to page 8

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Using the wall as an ideas board at the CurrencyFair office

Ste Murray

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