



Umbrella lighting and curved walls at CurrencyFair, an online peer-to-peer currency exchange marketplace headquartered in Dublin



The 'Liquidity Lounge' at CurrencyFair in Dublin



A social space in the Hostelworld office in Leopardstown in Dublin

DESIGNER OFFICES

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The second client company he describes is an accountancy firm in Sandford, where the fit-out required a calm, mature approach.

"Everything about this company is based on trust between it and its clients. There is a real professional feel, from the moment you enter the building and are greeted by a well-presented and polite receptionist. It's about self-portrayal and needed to say: we are settled, established and there is nothing risky about us. That office required formal spaces and a generous boardroom. So it's horses for courses, and each project has to be approached with a fresh eye," said Heil.

How to be alone

Another example of the Google-type fit-out is Hostelworld's new headquarter office in Central Park in Leopardstown in south Dublin.

The striking 2,500 square metre space is the result of a collaboration between architects Henry J Lyons and Hostelworld employees, led by the company's group HR director Stuart Priday.

The layout incorporates dynamic break-out areas, creative meeting rooms, innovative lighting and unique feature walls, based around the experience of modern hostel travel. The social spaces feature exposed ceilings; metallic tiled ceilings define workspaces; there are two distinct social spaces to sit in the centre of the floor where people can come together.

"The social areas can be meeting spaces too, with their design reflecting the feeling of some of the world's great hostel spaces such as Wombat, Generator and Meininger," said Priday.

"Our customers are going for that social experience, and our employees are highly reflective of our customer base. We also have focus rooms for people to be alone, and meeting rooms designed alternatively for more quick and slow collaboration with a mixture of seating."

Founded by Irish duo Tom Kennedy and Ray Nolan in 1999, Hostelworld Group is a global hostel-booking platform with Hostelworld, Hostelbookers and Hostels.com among its portfolio. It connects young travellers with 33,000 properties in more than 170 countries.

Now headed by chief executive Fergal Mooney, the group and its staff of 170 moved from the city centre to its new HQ at Green Reit's Central Park complex in Leopardstown. The average age of staff is between the mid-20s and mid-30s, and many of them helped to design the space where they now work.

"Ordinarily, the landlord would complete the category A fit-out and we would come in and do the Category B, which is the personalisation piece," said Priday.

"In this case, we did both thanks to a partnership between our colleagues Conor McCabe from Henry J Lyons Architects, Ardmac, KSN project managers and quantity surveyors and engineers Axiseng. We brought together a group of colleagues from all areas of the business to help inform the design process and support relocation communications with the wider team. In the end, we probably said yes to 90 per cent of colleague suggestions.

"We are a very informal company, not hierarchical and with no dress policy. We only have one office space, and everybody works on the floor together. Previously, interaction happened outside the office, in the pub for example, but now we have a space that we can socialise through the working day."

There were initial concerns raised over the impact to staff of the move from Dublin 2 to Dublin 18.

"We anticipated a spike in attrition following the move, but this never mate-



The Hostelworld office incorporates dynamic break-out areas, creative meeting rooms, innovative lighting and unique feature walls

Michael Cockerham



Stuart Priday, group HR director, Hostelworld



Andreas Heil, founder and head of Innen interior architecture

rialised," said Priday. "In fact, our attrition has reduced by a significant rate when compared with the pre-move numbers.

"The social spaces are very social, giving us flexibility at mealtimes, place for town hall meetings, weekly lunch buffets, small informal meetings, children's Halloween parties, end-of-month drinks or just chilling in the hammock."

A world of pure imagination

Back at Innen, Heil said: "The nature of the workplace environment has changed utterly in the past number of years. It has moved from being an entirely functional – almost soulless – place, to one that's

stimulating, creative and sometimes unexpected. The new workplace encourages team-building, collaboration and increased productivity. Importantly, it also serves to reflect a company's culture.

"Unlike before, consideration is now being given to the lived experience of how employees will interact with the many aspects of workplace design. And in the midst of an office boom in Dublin, it's essential that Irish business gets its interior spaces right – it's all about imagination.

"The fit-out sector was borne out of the recession. Business continued, but companies were smaller or had to downsize and needed new, but creative and enticing space. It was the only show in town and I slipped into it to make ends

meet."

Innen specialises in hospitality, retail, residential, healthcare and community commissions. As well as working on his own projects, Heil regularly collaborates with other architects on specific ones. Among some of these collaborations were the re-design of the Morrison Hotel, Dublin, and the newly-built Sheraton Hotel in Athlone. His advice is to avoid pinning your flag to one hard style, trend or sector.

"I have an extensive background in hotels and residential, but I'm not pigeon-holed. Designing hotels for ten years can also get boring. Everything starts to look similar and looks begin to echo themselves. To that end, I also lecture part time on the four-year interior design course at Griffith College,



The workplace environment is now stimulating, creative and sometimes unexpected

and I find that really refreshing. It's a cross-sector. You're working and interacting with young people. Students have no inhibitions, no fears."

Internationally, Heil is currently the interior designer for a new build, high-end private residence in Surrey in Britain. He has also developed a concept design for the new Russian headquarters of Raiffeisen Bank in Moscow in collaboration with KADdesign, Moscow.

"While Google has raised the bar to a standard that can't be turned back, some of it is thoughtful, but some of it is cynical too," he said. "The age of Pinterest has changed this business. Client expectations have changed, but so too have staff expectations. Companies are all competing for the same people, and

Heil's office interior trends

Acoustics: the hard industrial look might be trendy, but you need to balance it with soft furnishings to absorb the noise. You may not notice it immediately, but after a while, the noise will grate on your nerves.

Light: this is a constantly evolving area. We will move towards introducing more natural light. Technology needs to catch up here. It's another wellbeing factor.

Incidental spaces: there is a trend for lots of smaller meeting rooms now and little need for big board rooms. Incidental spaces like watercooler conversation spaces are really successful.

Sustainable materials: the larger companies are active and driving this area. It will be a case of smaller companies following by osmosis.

Integrating technology: some are already ahead of the curve, having offices or meeting rooms in which staff can swipe their phone or iPad on entering a room and download presentations to the meeting room screen, set lighting, temperature controls, etc.

not just in the technology sector.

"Dublin is an international city. Companies have to offer a good package in terms of both salary and benefits. A company's ethos has to be transparent and staff need to know they can let their career grow and develop. The design of the space is another piece of that jigsaw."

Heil cites CurrencyFair again as an example, in that the firm's latest recruitment drive includes a video shot inside its new, Innen-designed headquarters showing potential staff the office environment as another way of enticing them to apply.

"There is constant debate about office design, which is a good thing as it should always be evolving," said Heil. "The BBC Capital website recently had an article debating open-plan versus cellular office space. It suggested that just because we are all sitting in the same space, it doesn't mean we are collaborating. And if we are all in the same space, why do we need to have a meeting in the boardroom at 10am? What are needed are a variety of spaces with a degree of privacy in some. Open plan can be quite noisy and distracting.

"On the other hand, open plan is good for young people, because it lets them observe how business is carried out and how to conduct themselves in an office environment. In essence, though, the concept of open plan started as bums on seats in expensive floor space. It had nothing to do with collaboration or innovation.

"In fact, I was brought in as a consultant on one project in which the chief executive had decided to get rid of her cellular office and sit out on the floor with the staff. The office dynamic and environment changed completely. Colleagues felt they couldn't be themselves, couldn't speak openly and felt self-conscious, inhibited and perhaps even a little paranoid.

"It just didn't work for that company, which brings me back to the start – you can't force a style or trend. Creating a successful office space and environment takes a little more than that.

"We spend more time in the office than at home. If you're not comfortable in your office/workplace/station for eight hours, you're not yourself and you won't give your best."

Flexible office provider Regus goes suburban

Regus has opened its first suburban location in the country with new offices in Foxrock in south Dublin.

The company, which specialises in flexible workspace solutions, has launched the offices at Tudor-building, The Gables, in the upmarket suburban village. The space offers 13 offices in a range of sizes as well as co-working space in a light-filled building with rustic, exposed red-brick walls inside and a mix of modern art and bespoke furniture.

Gearoid Collins, Regus's country manager, said: "The Gables is our first move into the community and it is part

of our mission to provide a workspace solution to anyone in Ireland who needs it.

"Existing and future trends indicate a high demand for flexible working, which is why we are extending our network to not only cities, but communities, to enable people and businesses to work when they want, where they want and how they want. Mobile working is the future."

The new offices join the company's existing network of locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

Regus has a global network of 2,850 locations in over 1,000 towns and cities,



Gearoid Collins, country manager, Regus

across 107 countries, serving 2.3 million members.

It has a range of office formats, as well as a growing mobile, virtual office and workplace recovery business, and so allows people and businesses to work where, when and how they want, with a range of price points, according to Collins.

Customers include entrepreneurs, start-ups and multibillion dollar corporations and the idea behind the new Foxrock offices is to enable Dublin commuters to achieve work-life balance with a new suburban location.

According to Collins, local demand for Regus's workspace has proven strong,

with a large uptake. With clients in finance and technology industries already secured, the company expects the facility to be popular with a wide range of users including local businesses, start-ups and remote workers, particularly given its proximity to tech giants and pharmaceutical firms.