



The graphics and the visual intensity changes from floor to floor. The liberal use of the colour red...in the lift, the lobbies and the reception area adds a vibrant punch.

a
planet 3
studios
designed
office in
mumbai

Under One Umbrella

Planet 3 Studios design the corporate headquarters for a conglomerate of various TV channels, housing 750 employees in an 80,000 sq ft space in Mumbai. 'Since the brand personalities of the different channels were quite distinct, it was a challenge to put them together,' Kalhan Mattoo tells Devyani Jayakar.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MRIGANK SHARMA, INDIA SUTRA, COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS



'It was a challenge for us to create a space where 750 employees from different channels could all work under one roof and yet not get in each other's way. Although the office is spread over seven floors, it wasn't as easy as giving them different floors to work in.'



Colours...MTV...CNBC...Viacom.... When Kalhan Mattoo says that the brand identities of these TV channels are quite distinct, we can believe him. It's quite likely that these channels don't have the same viewer profiles either. 'Even the employee profiles were recognisable. The way they dressed...the music they listened to...their recreational preferences...all these were almost related to the channel they worked for,' says Kalhan.

The media release from Planet 3 Studios reads thus: 'When global media giant Viacom18 brought over 750 employees from a dozen different channels together in a new facility in Mumbai, integration of disparate identities, work cultures and demographics in a single spatial environment was the challenge posed to us. We addressed the needs of commonality with standardised furniture, finishes and planning and balanced it with numerous channel specific interventions in the form of breakout spaces, environmental graphics and meeting spaces, lending a distinct character to each cluster. Democratic distribution of natural light, interconnectedness between various floors and superior employee facilities distinguish this project.'

Okay, now to translate all that into English: 'It was a challenge for us to create a space where they could all work under one roof and yet not get in each other's way. Although the office is spread over seven floors, it wasn't as easy as just giving them different floors to work in,' says Kalhan. So the design

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FACT FILE:

Location: Vile Parle, Mumbai.

Construction: 2011 - 2012

Area: 80,000 sq ft

Cost of construction: 2500 per sq ft

Delivery: Design Consultancy

Design Team: Kalhan Mattoo, Santha Gour Mattoo, Hina Chudasama, Dhiraj Narang, Amit Jadav

External project management consultancy: Team One Pvt Ltd

External project management overview and audit: CBRE



The staff has put up a set of drums, making this their very own personalised space. The café has a bistro-like feel, with walls that are partly in warm brick and partly in a stucco finish and opens onto a terrace. Plans are afoot to install a rock-climbing wall.



Since there is a high density of work tables which are just 4 ft x 2 ft, each floor has at least one breakout zone, where the staff can watch MTV, play Foosball and participate in gaming activities.



has two elements – the constant, which is standard throughout, like the design of the workstations, their size, the lighting and the carpets. But within this framework, there is a template which facilitates customisation. Glass partitions and storage units reflect the “markers of the tribes”.

‘The graphics and the visual intensity changes from floor to floor. The central staircase is not only a device which connects the various levels, but also functions as a vertical street, fostering a sense of community. However, the design is neutral, so that no channel feels marginalised,’ says Kalhan. A visual punch is provided by the liberal use of the colour red...in the lift, the lobbies and the reception area.

Minuses on the site? The low ceiling height, as one can imagine, was quite undesirable. So how has Planet 3 Studios circumvented that? The obvious answer is to do away with false ceilings. But ducting is required for air-conditioning and when left open, presents an industrial look. So Kalhan has created fluid forms which wrap around the ceiling air-conditioners and come down only as much as needed. The maintenance staff must be blessing him, every time they have to service a unit or carry out repairs! No aesthetic but inconvenient cladding to get through, to access the equipment.

Since there is a high work station density, where tables are just 4 ft x 2 ft, each floor has at least one breakout zone, where the staff can watch MTV, play Foosball and participate in gaming activities. These provide patches of relief. Washrooms, which don’t normally get much attention, are colourful, with back-painted glass and have a view of the outside, wherever possible.

In the basement, there is a breakout zone, rather hybrid in its design sensibilities, but it is not a funky space. The staff has put up a set of drums, making this space their own. There is a long communal table which seats more than 20 people, rather than just groups of four. The café has a bistro feel, with walls that are partly in warm brick and partly in a stucco finish. It opens onto a terrace, treated with an outdoor finish. Plans are afoot to install a rock-climbing wall, Kalhan tells me.

‘We had to tread a fine line because this is a “design-intense” office. Yet the aesthetics had to be balanced with function, all within a tight budget. The company also didn’t want to make any bold moves in design, unlike startups, which are young at heart. So within the limited mandate, we have tried to add some flourishes and give the client something better and different, which enhances their culture. I like to think that what we have achieved is not just a better aesthetic...we have understood what it takes to get the different channels together.’

And the rest of their work? ‘Our projects are usually led by design and aesthetic expression. They are dramatically different. But we are doing mainstream work too, from institutions, to hotels, residences, and master planning. I guess that makes us seriously confused,’ he says in jest. Well, here’s to more ‘confusion!’