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CASE STUDY



Marriott International, Singapore: mirroring the company's values Singapore

Embracing and leading change –

In 2014, at a time when the hotel typology was in the midst of a period of fast-tracked transition, Marriott International, the largest hotel chain in the world, redesigned its head office in Hong Kong. “Marriott wanted a new look,” says Chris Browne of Circa ia Design. “Along with the client, we decided on incorporating a New York feel into the offices. At the time, if you looked around Hong Kong, both retail and design spaces were beginning to reflect this design direction.”

As part of the redesign, Marriott discovered a lot about the way its staff worked. It found that its private office use was low, and so in the new fitout, the company went from having 90 private offices down to eight. “This was a radical change for them,” says Browne. However these elements were only the beginning of the change Marriott’s offices were to go through in the coming years.

In Singapore's Harbourfront, home to Marriott International's APEC office, the company was looking to merge two offices into one, and the city presented a lot of opportunity. "In Singapore, there is a regulated minimum nine square metres per person required in an office space, which includes meeting rooms," explains Browne. "That meant that we would have more space to work with and that we could explore the concepts that we had touched on in Hong Kong even further and in a more open way. Compared to Hong Kong, Singapore is more of a green, open place, with big boulevards and outdoor fields. So we tried to bring that in." The office's interior combines a contemporary industrial look with '70s Italian architecture and focuses heavily on using design to communicate Marriott's persona to hotel owners and guests.

Experiential branding through design –

"The main thing with the Marriott International office is that it has a lot of staff travelling in and out to monitor projects and to see hotels and their owners. So it required a centre where everyone could come together and get to know each other in the office," says Browne. When you enter, there is a very large and welcoming hub/café, surrounded by ample seating. As Marriott works in the hospitality industry, the 'reception' is heavily influenced by the sector, with a generous, long desk that features a host, a 'genius bar' for tech help, and a barista. "You can fly in, get a quality cup of coffee, get connected, and have someone show you to the rooms," says Browne.



Custom Schiavello storage units cater to the needs of Marriott International's constantly roving workforce.

"Marriott's view is that as an organisation, people always come first – whether guests or associates. When they have hotel owners visit, they're taken on a tour of the whole space, so we had to make the back of house a part of the concept and part of the client experience," Browne says. "When you, as a hotel owner, pay Marriott for the right to be on board, you want transparency. So that was reflected in the design.



The Piper Workstation is a customisable and cost-effective design solution catering for the Asian market.

When you come to the office, you get to see everybody; nothing is hidden away and you can walk through the whole space. It's about selling not only the brand but also the service."

Flexibility and function with Aire Fold Table and storage –

An important factor in the design consideration of the project was its constantly roving workforce. Not only are its staff always travelling, the office also hosts quarterly meetings, in which numbers increase with staff arriving from Jakarta, India, and various other regional offices. Custom Schiavello storage units cater to this demand and are positioned by desks and along walls to completely fit Marriott's needs.

There are a minimum number of meeting rooms, a lesson learnt from the Hong Kong office, where the team found that fewer and more flexible meeting rooms resulted in better collaboration and communication, and staff congregating in the central hub area.



Storage units are positioned nearby to the desks for ease of use, making agile working effortless.

Singapore's meeting rooms are flexible – able to be combined into one big space, or separated into smaller rooms, with Schiavello's Aire Folding Tables providing equal levels of flexibility in furniture needs. The table can be folded and packed away when not in use, and if multiple tables need to be pushed together for a big group meeting, castors allow for swift movement. This means the team doesn't have to shift huge, heavy tables – which permanently take up a large footprint – every time they have meetings of various sizes.

"The Marriott International office in Singapore requires the most flexible meeting spaces of any client I've had," says Browne. "They have a lot of internal seminars, and the size of each meeting varies a lot, so they're making 100% use of that flexibility."

In a selection of the meeting rooms are bespoke, permanent column leg tables, built into the floor and also manufactured by Schiavello. The tables' disc bases are fixed to the concrete slab, with the disc hidden beneath the flooring. This provides ultimate stability and legroom for the banquet seating of six to eight surrounding it.

For the staff who are more fixed than others, Schiavello's Piper Workstations provide permanent desking and storage. Designed specifically for, and available only in the Asian market, Piper is a customisable and a cost-effective desking solution. Schiavello catered the workstation system for the

project – with the integration of the Cache storage solution fixed to its underside for neat and permanent storage. A pedestal unlike any others, Cache boasts chamfer finger pulls and a slim yet robust exterior.

A prototype for future offices –

After working with Schiavello in the past, Circa ia could see the company was truly design focused. "We wanted to use Schiavello to bring a better quality and be able to include furniture that had top level detailing. We find that sometimes when we customise, it can tend to look a little home made," Browne says. "What we found with Schiavello, is that when we saw the mock-up, it didn't look customised, it looked like the product has been made many times before; it's properly thought out. The design reflected the sketch we did, but more professional, whereas sometimes, with other manufacturers, we find that the final product doesn't actually get any better than the original sketch."

Marriott International's office in Singapore has been a huge success for the company, and it's now the prototype for future offices. Browne explains, "The difference with Marriott is how far the hotel chain is willing to go to give itself a brand. To have a company that truly understands branding is unusual. You walk into that space and it's 'Marriott', and the sense of that branding is far stronger with this project than most other clients."



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Design by Circa ia Design
Photography by Ah Sam Photography