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DreamWorks Animation

I Wish I Worked There!

A LOOK INSIDE THE MOST CREATIVE SPACES IN BUSINESS

KURSTY GROVES WITH WILL KNIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDWARD DENISON



nocent



Oakley



Lego



Google



Urban Outfitters

Walt Disney Imagineering

VIRGIN MEDIA CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRES

Virgin Media is Virgin's largest company, employing around 13,000 people in around 70 offices, and is headquartered in Hook, Hampshire in the UK. Formed in 2007 through the merger of ntl:Telewest and Virgin Mobile, Virgin Media became the UK's first 'quad play' media company, combining digital TV, super-fast fibreoptic broadband, home phone and mobile.

In a huge re-brand of the business, the overhaul involved rethinking and refreshing the organisational structure as well as the environment. 'The last thing you want to do is just stick a badge on the walls,' says Adrian Spooner, Creative Director at Virgin Media. Here was an opportunity to spread the Virgin culture throughout the newly acquired businesses. The strategy for the turnaround was to focus on the staff first, enabling them to focus on the customer, which will ultimately make the shareholders happy.

Focusing on truly affecting the people who are in touch with the customer daily, work started on three pilot customer contact centres where the day-to-day roles of the employees, whose average age is 23, include busy periods of customer calls. The buildings acquired from the former merger spanned a huge range of varying sizes, functionalities and states of repair; so a 'chocolate box' modular approach was taken to ensure brand consistency while allowing for individual quirks. Virgin Media appointed Household, a London-based firm that specialises in branded environments and retail design solutions, to humanise the call centre spaces, making people feel at home, feel free to be themselves and actually look forward to coming to work.

The theme 'Our Neighbourhood' was conceived, providing a visual language which now permeates through



BELOW LEFT The headquarters of Virgin Media presents a bold and energetic welcome.

BELOW Hedge-style bookshelves form partitions that flexibly define meeting spaces in Virgin Media contact centre areas.





the spaces creating a sense of ownership and empowerment for employees, as well as making them feel comfortable and at ease. 'With this concept, we could draw upon inspiration to make the spaces more homely,' says Spooner; so where there used to be peeling paint, you now have wallpaper, gilt picture frames and stencils depicting domestic objects – 'things you would not normally see in an office'.

The Virgin personality is expressed through a tone that befits this young audience. Bold and witty visuals encourage people to chalk up celebrity spottings on blackboard walls, and vinyl-covered MDF graphics suggest grandeur without costing a fortune. 'All these little touches don't cost a lot, but put together become really powerful,' says Spooner. These 'clever, human touches' have had a profound effect, positioning Virgin Media as fun and vibrant, internally as well as externally, and injecting the business with a creative passion that has seen retention levels soaring.

Branson's entrepreneurial spirit echoes throughout the environments at Virgin. 'Screw it, let's do it' rings out through the organisation, empowering people to do business the 'Virgin way' – focusing on the customer's experience, fighting the consumer's corner, daring to do it differently and doing it with a sense of fun. The environment is a key part of delivering the Virgin brand experience, acting as a conduit for expressing the brand personality, instilling a sense of self-worth and inviting people to feel comfortable, be themselves and ultimately help deliver the brand experience to delighted customers.



TOP Virgin Media: simple, inexpensive touches such as blackboard paint and graphic speech bubbles encourage interaction, individuality and a sense of fun.

MIDDLE Fun graphics greet arrivals in the car park of a Virgin Media contact centre. The coveted front-door spaces have been reserved to celebrate internal relationships!

FAR LEFT With over 90 Virgin Media facilities needing a facelift and the entire culture requiring a post-merger revival, attention was paid to high-traffic, communal areas.

LEFT High-impact floor-to-ceiling graphics and exposed light bulbs in the main reception at Virgin Media present a youthful and energetic message.



ABOVE Simple yet fun additions: a ladder is used to display newspapers beneath a silhouette graphic at a Virgin Media contact centre.

RIGHT Virgin Media: bold graphics provide an inexpensive hint of grandeur.



IN AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY, OVER 80% AGREED THAT THE ENVIRONMENT WOULD HELP CHANGE THE CULTURE AND THEY COULD SEE A FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES WITH THE BUSINESS.

