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VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 10

FEBRUARY 2008 • Rs 50

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Architects Manisha Agrawal and Shantanu Poredi design an award-winning Mumbai office based on the radical concept of 'Intelligent Officing'!

TEXT: RUKMINI KAMAT
PHOTOGRAPHS: SEBASTIAN ZACHARIAH;
COURTESY MOBILE OFFICES

What gives a space its character? Is it the physical components — structure, colours, accessories? Or is it the people who use that space? More often than not, one factor dominates the other. Look at the thousands of contemporary workspaces that are being designed all over the world. Is there anything to differentiate one from another? Apart from, say the shape of the cabins, or the number of cubicles, or the technology used? Does the design cater to the users of that space? Or does the user have to adapt to the given resources?

"The balance lies in blending both factors," believe Shantanu Poredi and Manisha Agrawal of Mumbai-based architecture firm MO-OF (short for Mobile Offices). "The design of any space must reveal its purpose and the attitude of the people who use it..." "The designers at MO-OF approach all projects with this mindset. Take, for

[1] Wall of Fame: The Wall of Bats flaunts cricket bats collected from 12 countries, displayed in a light box. Notice the curves in the foyer, which guide, orient and introduce a visitor to the office





'White' and 'light' make the colour palette. The 'white' walls are done in many a material — some painted, others set up in glass or white polycarbonate sheets

instance, the World Sport Group office in Mumbai, which won MO-OF the Nerolac Style Icon Award 2007 for Excellence in Interior Design (in the Office Category). Incidentally, this is the first-ever office space designed by the firm!

The World Sport Group is a sports-media organization that produces, manages, advertises and covers sports-related entertainment. "Designing a workspace for a media company, and that too with sports as its focus, is refreshing. The environment bubbles with energy and activity. Yet, there is an air of casualness about media organizations, which must be reflected in the design," Shantanu reveals. "We were asked to plan a regular 'cabins-and-cubicles' office. But we felt that a prototypical office plan would not do justice to the identity of this organization."

So the designers deviated from 'just submitting a plan' of the workspace. Instead, the team from MO-OF — Charushree Shah and Vrushali Pavaskar along with Shantanu and Manisha — came up with an idea of understanding the clients' work process 'quantitatively and qualitatively', a concept they later coined into 'Intelligent Officing'. This involved a thorough analysis of the old workspace and the work-pattern of its users.

[conceptmaterials]

>CONCEPT

Based on the concept of 'Intelligent Officing', the design reflects the youthful attitude of the organization as well as the employees.

>MATERIALS

Walls	Partition walls of the cabins in glass; elliptical meeting rooms in polycarbonate sheets.
Flooring	Omani Pink (stone)

[2] Interactive spaces have been created in elliptical enclosures that float in the lobby area. Instead of creating conventional rooms-with-doors, translucent polycarbonate sheets have been used to mould, direct and accommodate these spaces



[3] The string of cabins on one side of the lobby are of a minimalist nature. Clear glass walls allow for natural light to stream into all the cabins, while a frosted glass treatment (used in certain places) provides colour variation as well as privacy

[4] Transparent glass and translucent polycarbonate sheets are placed against stark white walls. The surfaces generate reflective and refractive effects by the choreography of natural and artificial light

Not only did the designers consider the resource needs of the users, they even looked into particulars such as timings; meeting schedules; how many employees actively used a desk or not; visitors' schedules; needs of visiting employees, etc. Three days of study involved interviews, meetings and even a written questionnaire for employees

to fill. The office was ready to use in three months (by March 2007).

The 3,200-square-foot space is planned with work areas arranged on either sides of a linear reception-cum-lobby. The plan involves cellular (open office) and interactive spaces (lobby, informal meeting points, conference rooms and cabins for the higher-ups in the organization). Washrooms, a server room, and a recreation space that doubles up as a pantry are located towards one corner of the office.

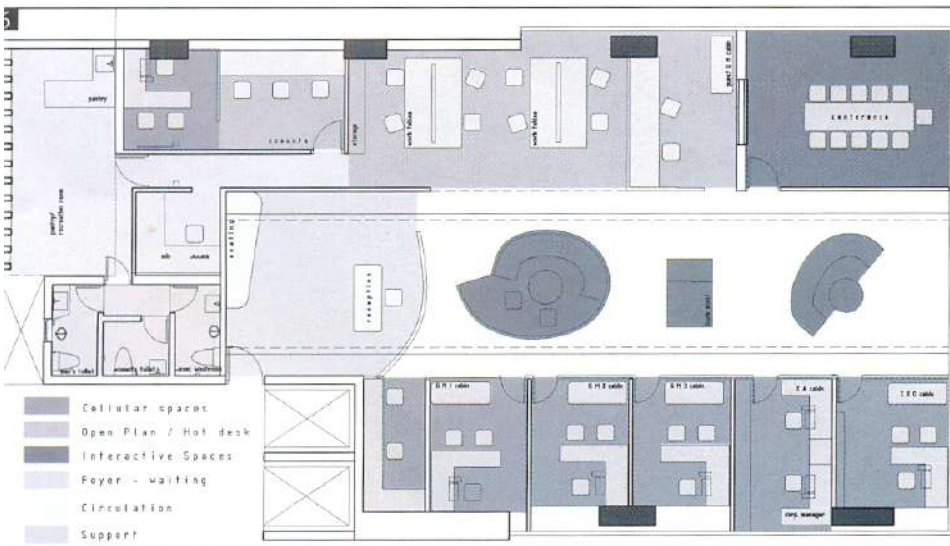
'White' and 'light' make the colour palette. The 'white' walls are done in many a material — some painted, others set up in glass or white polycarbonate sheets. The floor is clad in a stone called Omani Pink. "We wanted to play with texture and light. So we used single-coloured transparent, translucent and opaque surfaces. Light is reflected uniquely from every one of these surfaces." The white, minimalist space shows off a plethora of patterns: light reflecting from a glass wall; or filtering through a polycarbonate sheet; the even radiance on the stone-clad floor; or just bright white painted surfaces.





[5] A subtle colour palette in white follows throughout the office. Light materials such as glass and polycarbonate are used to form internal walls. The floor is in a pleasant pink shade of stone called Omani Pink

[6] The plan of the office



Next, the 'sporty attitude' was to be incorporated in the look. This is done through elements that personalize the office, highlighted by the understated white planes. At the reception, a backlit 'Wall of Bats' on one side, proudly shows off 12 cricket bats from various countries. Another entertaining feature is the stacked rows of television screens, along one wall of the recreation room.

Seriousness meets casual in the non-conformist spaces in this office. 'Formal' meeting areas are all encompassing with well-lit, sound-proof walls; low and casual seating; and multimedia devices. Meetings could never be a drag here!

Even the seniors' cabins and the open office are designed according to usage. Dignitaries who visit from other countries are given 'temporary' cabins — elliptical structures moulded out of polycarbonate sheets in the lobby area! The open office also has ample room to accommodate permanent staff. Visiting employees can use the cabins or casual desk spaces across the office. This whole system of designing ensures that the entire floor plate is judiciously used; the staff doesn't have to compromise on space.

Shantanu sums up, "Each office has its own physical and resource requirements. The design should tap the best of both. This is what we term as Intelligent Officing." So for all conformists who think that an office must be designed to feel like an office — boxy rooms, rows of cubicles... the usual... this intelligent workspace proves otherwise. As it proudly embraces and shows off its sporty spirit! 🏏

[factfile]

Client	World Sport Group
Location	Bandra, Mumbai
Area	3,200 sq ft
Principle architects	Shantanu Poredi and Manisha Agrawal
Associate architects	Charushree Shah and Vrushali Pavaskar
Duration	Three months
Date of completion	March 2007