

## [ MEDIA COVERAGE

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**DATE:** APRIL \ 2007  
**PROJECT:** BEVAN BRITTAN LLP (BRISTOL)

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case study



## good morning brittan

The tight market for employees mean that law firms are acutely aware of the role of the workplace in recruiting and retaining staff. John Mahoney visits the new and inspiring offices of Bevan Brittan in Bristol.

**I**f you're a recently graduated lawyer, then congratulations, you are officially one of the most attractive people in the UK right now. Or at least you are as far as the people trying to recruit you are concerned. You are a rare treasure, the Helen of Troy of lawyers, and your suitors are entrenched in a long and bloody battle for you.

Of course, this war for talent is a result of a sector that is thriving and which cannot recruit the best people quickly enough to

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match demand for them. You can speculate as to why exactly law firms are flourishing in the UK right now, and that's all a bit beyond our remit at Mix, but this is great news if you're one of these fledgling lawyers and a bit of a headache if it's you that has to recruit and retain a new brood of legal

esqueets. And while the train battleground may be drawn around the hearts and minds (and wallets) of these prospective employees, the firms also worry a lot about where all these new people are going to put their backsides. The pressure on firms to attract the best people and keep the ones they

already have means they must offer much more than the right salary package,' says Sarah Jane Osborne of Claremont Group. 'It means taking on workplace issues, making people feel good about themselves and their firm. The great thing from a design and FM point of view is that law firms offer a perfect example of how you can use the design of the workplace to meet these kinds of strategic business goals.'

One of the UK's most successful commercial law firms, Bevan Brittan, has recently found a new home for itself at Kings Orchard in Bristol – a landmark riverside building purchased by the firm in November 2004.

As part of the move, the building has undergone a complete refurbishment, designed by Claremont Group, that has extended the size of the building by 30,000 sq ft to 108,000 sq ft, offering the capacity to house around 600 employees.

Because the size and shape of the building's floorplate meant it was too small to accommodate the firm's growth plans, the initial consultation demonstrated a variety of ways in which the building could be extended to provide sufficient space. The



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... solution was to fill in the C-shaped building to create more space and a new and striking atrium feature. New glass lifts were designed into the atrium, removing the lift cores from premium office space. The finished scheme now includes a riverside café, breakout space, a client suite, a 120 seat conference facility and very high grade main office accommodation.

'The focus is very much on team working and identity,' says Sarah-Jane. 'It is a very contemporary space in the way it is designed to not only bring everybody together physically but also in common cause through the identity that has been developed for the space. This design also ensures that the atrium and circulation spaces are constantly busy, with individuals visible throughout the building to help them feel connected to colleagues and the business.'

Bevan Brittan Managing Partner Stuart Whatfield agrees. 'Without doubt the new environment has resulted in improved collegiality and team working,' he says. 'It is far easier now for people to see each other and work together informally so they can benefit from quick one-to-one get-togethers in the breakout space and the café. Whilst this was always the rationale and intention, it's great to see that this informal exchange of ideas is happening away from workstations and is yielding good results. Certainly having a café as a central hub ensures increased visibility and opportunities for people to meet.'

One of the most striking features of the new office is found in its approach to branding which makes intelligent use of coloured 'fractals' to subtly and intelligently reflect the firm's brand. Colour-change lighting incorporated into the building 'light house' creates night time visibility for the building on the approach in to Bristol and is synchronised with similarly sequenced colour changes on the reception desk itself. The fractals themselves are interpreted in kiln fired glass elements throughout the client suite and are used more literally as manifestations on meeting and quiet room elevations. Naturally the design is DDA compliant.

Intuitive navigation throughout the building was reinforced with a different signature colour for each floor taken from the fractal designs.

The interior identity of Bevan Brittan's corporate identity was conceived and designed by Claremont and developed and implemented in partnership with Artworks Solutions. John Selzmann of Artworks

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amongst the teams here. There is no doubt that the building and the environment here is a great recruitment, retention and motivational tool.

'It's been said a million times, I know', says Sarah-Jane. 'But the workplace is merely a means to the wider ends of the business. Or should be. If people just see it as a place to keep the rain off them while they're working, then they're missing the bigger picture about the possibilities of design and facilities management. The workplace has to provide that sense of identity and togetherness for the people who work for the firm, inspire them, motivate them and so on. And it has to convey the right identity for clients. If it's not done to what the business is trying to achieve, the people who occupy it are missing an opportunity. That's what it's all about, isn't it?'

believes that Bevan Brittan provides a perfect example of how modern law firms focus on creating visual identities in their facilities. 'Image may not always be everything,' he says, but law firms have a three way incentive for making sure they convey the right messages about their business. They need to project the strongest possible identity to clients. They need to use the workplace to help them project that same identity to staff and they need to demonstrate they are sticklers for compliance with things like the DDA: they must practice what they preach. What this means is that they need consistent, strong messages of culture and identity to go out to staff, particularly those who deal directly with customers. Everybody must know who they work for and exactly what that means. That has to be about far more than

logos in the carpet. It has to be smarter and subtler than that.'

Stuart Whitfield agrees. 'However good our legal service is, clients have an expectation that we will deliver certain things with it,' he says. 'A professional environment is essential. Naturally, people judge us on a range of things, but given that so much of their initial impression is based on the visual and cultural, we know that judgements are formed before any service is received.'

'In terms of internal perception, this has definitely put a spring into people's step. Despite the tours and the communication of the scheme before the move, I don't think people realised how good it was going to be in reality. The comments we are getting are frequently 'wow, fantastic', it has engendered a sense of confidence and pride

## essential ingredients

- Client:**
  - Bevan Brittan LLP
- Design, Move Management & Fit:**
  - Claremont Group  
www.claremontgi.com
- Main Contractor:**
  - Wates  
www.wates.co.uk
- Systems Furniture:**
  - Tection  
www.tection.com
- Carpets:**
  - Milliken Carpet  
www.milliken-carpet.com
- Seating:**
  - Orington  
www.orington.co.uk
  - Dauphin  
www.dauphin.com
  - Interstuhl  
www.interstuhl.co.uk
  - Boss Design  
www.bossdesign.co.uk
  - Bene  
www.bene.co.uk