



New Head Office – a hub for business

Case Study: AXA UK, New Head Office

AXA UK is a wholly owned subsidiary of AXA SA, a worldwide leader in insurance and wealth management, with major operations in Western Europe, North America and the Asia/Pacific area. AXA UK comprises four business units AXA Life, AXA Insurance, AXA PPP Healthcare and AXA Ireland.

As AXA UK was rapidly outgrowing its Head Office in Cheapside, London it approached the expiry of its lease as an opportunity to reconsider the role of the Head Office and how it should operate in the future. AWA were appointed in January 2005 to assist AXA UK with the set-up of the project, its management, and the gathering of data about the needs of the organisation and its people.

Following a scoping workshop with the Executive team the key objectives for the new Head Office were set as being:

- A building of suitable quality within the City of London;
- A vibrant, modern and effective workspace to enhance communication and reflect the status of AXA UK;
- The main workspace would be an open environment, with enclosed offices only for the UK Executive team sited in an accessible and visible location;
- Space should facilitate spontaneous / creative interactions as well as *corridor conversations* and the layout should encourage people to circulate;
- A Business Centre to be provided to enable the Head Office to operate as a *hub* for use by all non Head Office based staff, to promote improved communication across the group.

Over an eight week period AWA conducted an Exploration process geared to laying the foundations on which the new Head Office would be developed, which comprised:

- Interviews with Directors and Heads of Department to ascertain future business needs and critical dependencies;
- Surveys of the effectiveness and utilisation of existing workplaces;
- Workshops with representatives from all functions to establish the detailed needs of each job/role;
- Reviews of the ICT systems to establish their capabilities to support different types of workstyles.





In parallel with the Exploration process, AWA assisted AXA UK with the evaluation of potential buildings leading to the selection of c3,750 sqm of workspace in the recently redeveloped 5 Old Broad Street, London.

Following analysis of the data gathered, AWA developed a Proposition which set-out in detail AXA UK's needs for their Head Office, a Design Brief to inform the project team and a design concept for how the Old Broad Street building could be fitted-out to meet AXA's requirements. The key elements of the Proposition encompassed:

- Team workplace clusters all on a single open floor;
- A range of shared support settings including focus rooms, quiet rooms, project rooms, informal meeting spaces, break-out and amenity facilities distributed throughout the office floor such that they are within easy access of every workplace;
- On a separate floor, a reception and meetings suite, with adjacent business centre, all supported by a full catering facility.

During the procurement and fit-out stages of the project AWA's role as a member of the Steering Group, was to provide guidance and advice aimed at ensuring the integrity of the Proposition was maintained during the detailed design and fit-out of the workspace. Additionally, AWA provided guidance on the development and operation of appropriate workplace protocols.

AXA relocated its Head Office to Old Broad Street in late December 2005 and commenced operations on 3 January 2006. Approximately 10 weeks later AWA conducted an evaluation survey to ascertain the views of AXA's staff on the work environment and its performance. Expectations were exceeded, as on every comparable measure the new Head Office not only scored better than the previous one, but in many instances overwhelmingly so. The key aspects of the survey results highlighted dramatic improvements in:

- Space efficiency through adopting smarter working practices;
- The provision and quality of performance enhancing shared support settings;
- Collaborative and team working through easy informal networking with colleagues; leading to
- 99% of AXA staff considering the Head Office to be a pleasurable place to work.

All of which has in turn energised the new Head Office generating a vibrant buzz of interaction and creativity making it a true **hub for business**.

[View interview with Rob Orton, Group Property Director, AXA UK](#)



**Advanced
Workplace
Associates**

Advanced Workplace Associates Limited

No1 Cornhill, London EC3V 3ND

Telephone: +44(0)20 7743 7110 Fax: +44(0)20 7743 7111

e-mail: info@advanced-workplace.com <http://www.advanced-workplace.com>