

02 American Express European Headquarters, Brighton

American Express (AMEX) have recently occupied a new European Headquarters building in Brighton. AMEX are Brighton's largest private sector employer and the new building is both a landmark building for Brighton and a regeneration catalyst for the area of Brighton where it is located.

The interior space is mostly given over to open plan offices, with a central core housing stairs and lifts, meeting rooms, cellular offices and other shared facilities. AMEX wanted to use colour coded 'zones' to break up the floor space, with one zone in each quarter of the building and a central 'cruciform' shaped zone. The zones also had reference letters which was picked up in technical addressing on workstations and rooms.

Spectrum Architectural were commissioned to provide signing for the building. AMEX wanted a light touch for the signs and wanted to avoid heavy handed, large scale, suspended 'zone' signs in the open plan areas. They are a very dynamic organisation and a large proportion of the desking is given over to 'hoteling' or 'hot desking' with a few permanent desks. Similarly, the size and location of teams is likely to change rapidly. Our signing solutions had to reflect this dynamic.

We began by looking for a more sophisticated way to display the colour coding. Rather than simply showing large blocks of colour, we designed a block

of collaged photographs, showing a sculptural artwork used in the building, set into a grid and tinted in the zone colours. We added the appropriate zone letters to these icons. The icons were added to all of the directional signing and the room and workstation signing.

Given the likelihood of regular changes to the space planning, we felt that it was appropriate to use digital print to create the graphics. This will keep the cost of updates low and will be easy for AMEX to carry out the updates in house. We used the Monoline bracket system to hold the digital prints. To ensure consistency, we also used this minimalist system to display Fire Action plans.

The central meeting rooms are glazed and for reasons of confidentiality, required extensive bespoke vinyl. AMEX wished to use their brand in these manifestation panels and each glazed element had to be individually surveyed to achieve the desired 'seamless' effect.

We used the MSS modular sign system on all meeting rooms and cellular offices, incorporating an acrylic wallet element offering a flexible paper-insert system allowing names or agendas to be displayed. The room references include raised 'tactile' lettering.





With regard to the team and individual workstation signing, we used the half partitioning in the desking system to hold a bespoke solution. We designed special extruded brackets that fitted into a channel in the top of the Steelcase furniture and fitted an acrylic wallet to project out above the partition. These were designed to 'push fit' into the bracket and could be relocated rapidly with a basic tool. The workstation references and zone colours are permanently printed to the wallet with the persons name printed on paper. As these signs are by their nature double sided, they halved the number of signs that would be required to sign the workstations individually. Viewed from the circulation space, these partition signs clearly define the colour coded zones but with a light touch.