

Flexible Dining

Creating staff dining facilities for modern business requirements requires the specialist knowledge of a food service consultant to get the right results, as two examples from the telecoms and pharmaceutical sectors reveal

WHEN OFFICE SPACE is at a premium it is unreasonable to expect large areas to be given over to catering. Large corporate dining seating areas dedicated to the traditional lunch break and occasional breakfast customer are not a profitable use of such a valuable resource. So, do we do away with the staff restaurant altogether?

Planning a small kitchen catering for 30, or 300 or 3,000 people, the principles of design and considerations should be the same. The three prime considerations which dictate the design are service requirement, space available and budget. No designer should advance a design without a clear understanding/agreement of these three principles, but it is rare that we find ourselves in a position where all is perfect without any restraint on space or budget. This is, of course, where the professional foodservice design consultant 'earns his or her crust' ensuring that the service requirement is satisfied, tailoring the design to suit space and budget.

The design should also satisfy the codes of practice of food hygiene and handling and comply with statutory legislation. All professional designers should carry out a risk analysis of any design, whether a green field site or existing refurbishment; a thorough risk analysis (a requirement of CDM regulations) will identify any shortfalls which can be addressed in the proposed design.

Multi-purpose

T-Mobile's philosophy at their out-of-town 3,500 staff Hatfield HQ was to encourage staff to stay on site throughout the day and provide them with a well-subsidised, quality food experience. Using large spaces for catering meant they had to perform a series of additional functions to be cost effective including providing:

- an environment for large internal 'team meetings'.
- a location for external meetings outside the main office security zone.
- a location for large corporate entertainment events easily serviced from the adjacent kitchen and servery.
- the ambience for break-out' areas for relaxed, internal meetings.
- somewhere to relax and chat within the workplace, and
- reflect the T-Mobile brand.

FCSI consultants A&E Partnership were responsible for defining T Mobile's overall catering strategy, facility design and project



management of the package fit-out at the Hatfield campus. Six buildings linked into pairs have larger seating areas within buildings 1 & 2, and 3 & 4, with the latter providing the main focus to the site. Each area contains a traditional style self-service restaurant plus a high-street retail branded coffee bar with overall seating for about 300 people within each restaurant.

Breakfast and lunch menus are served in the main restaurants supported by 'all day' snacks and quality, brand coffee in the other buildings. These units are further supported by a large central production kitchen and stores in building 1 and two smaller satellite kitchens in buildings 4 and 5. There is also a hot and cold deli on site accountable for around 15,000 transactions a month.

Premium quality hospitality is in high demand and sandwich lunches for over 1,000 covers are provided each month. Service pantries are located in each building. The open-plan seating space is divided into four distinct zones or styles:

- Long style, wooden refectory tables and benches, set out to encourage vibrant 'team' meetings and group interaction.
- Traditional four-seater square, round or rectangular tables for small groups or singles.
- Quieter fine-dining zone with fully upholstered chairs to enhance the dining experience, entertain guests or to provide an ideal environment for relaxed meetings.
- Coffee Bar designed for 'hanging out' and small, one-to-one meetings.

All zones are fitted with networking and AV technology and each has an environment



A range of catering facilities for T-Mobile

More info

www.fcsi.org.uk

Catering



Before (above), after (below)



created using different furniture styles, changes in floor finish, lighting, wall finish and colour enhancement.

T-Mobile's Project Services Manager Mike Fernandez said, "I am especially impressed with the flow of people around our facilities. The whole experience works well. Uptake of the catering offer is very high and exceptionally well received.

Fernandez advises anyone else thinking about

space utilisation within staff restaurants to firstly carry out a utilisation study on the use of space to assess how it is used, who is using it and the frequency of use.

Reduced space

The restaurant and kitchen facility for a pharmaceutical company was originally designed to cater for an on site work force of 650 staff in the early 1980's. More recently, the numbers on site have reduced to 250 and the existing facility was therefore dated and it was no longer appropriate to reuse the equipment and space this facility had once needed.

The brief for the consultants, Food Service Consultants Limited, was to provide a staff restaurant which gave back valuable space for redevelopment into much needed office accommodation and take into account modern eating trends including 'high street' food offers without leaving the building.

A practical modern solution was that one third of the space originally occupied by the catering facilities were vacated and the new restaurant built using some of the existing catering equipment, supplemented by 'state of the art' food service equipment. New service includes bean to cup coffee bar, cold deli selection, 'grab and go' offer, traditional snacks and 'theatre cooking' servery counters, and a corporate 'fine dining' capability.