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New offices proved opportunity for a fresh approach to staff culture

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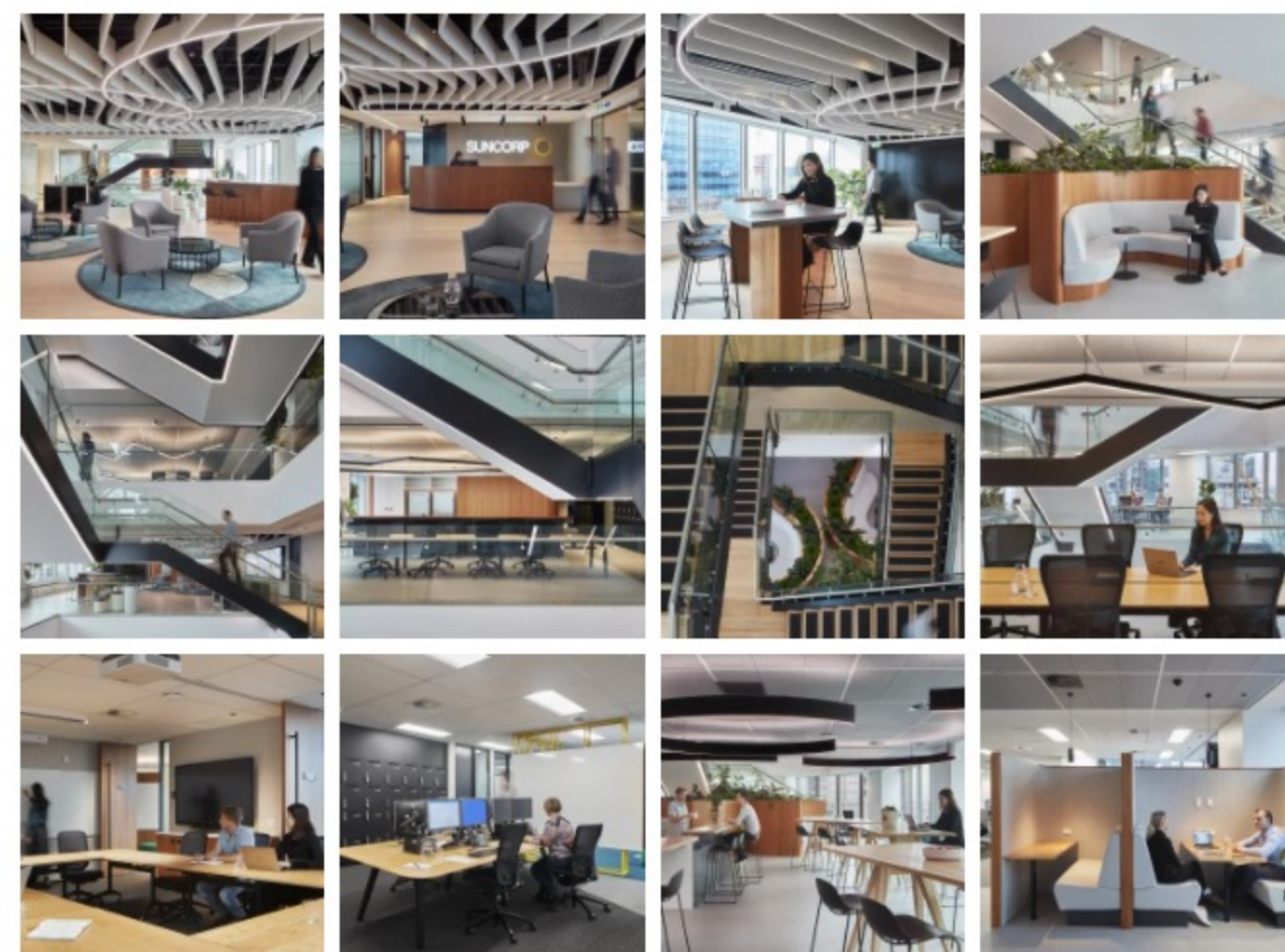
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When Suncorp New Zealand consolidated its companies over five consecutive floors in Auckland's Vero Centre, greater flexibility, productivity and connectivity were key drivers for the fit-out



The mid-level of Suncorp's consolidated new five-level premises in Auckland's Vero Centre is the front-of-house space for all of Suncorp's New Zealand brands. A feature ceiling – one of several in the fit-out – creates interest and acts as an acoustic dampener.



When Suncorp New Zealand renewed its lease in Auckland's Vero Centre, it took the opportunity to use an office refurbishment to transform its way of working and bring its strategy to life.

Connecting its employees was the central vision for Suncorp, but reducing its footprint and providing a more flexible and collaborative workspace were also key goals the design brief needed to meet.

While Suncorp New Zealand and its well known brands, Vero and Asteron Life, were all operating in the same building, they had felt siloed and disconnected with some reached by low-rise lifts and others by high-rise lifts, says Harry Rowntree, Unispace's project designer for the consolidating five-level fit-out.

"Suncorp wanted the reinvented offices to offer a modern, inclusive environment to represent their brand and values – at the same time rewarding staff with a space that encourages an overall sense of belonging, safety, and wellbeing."

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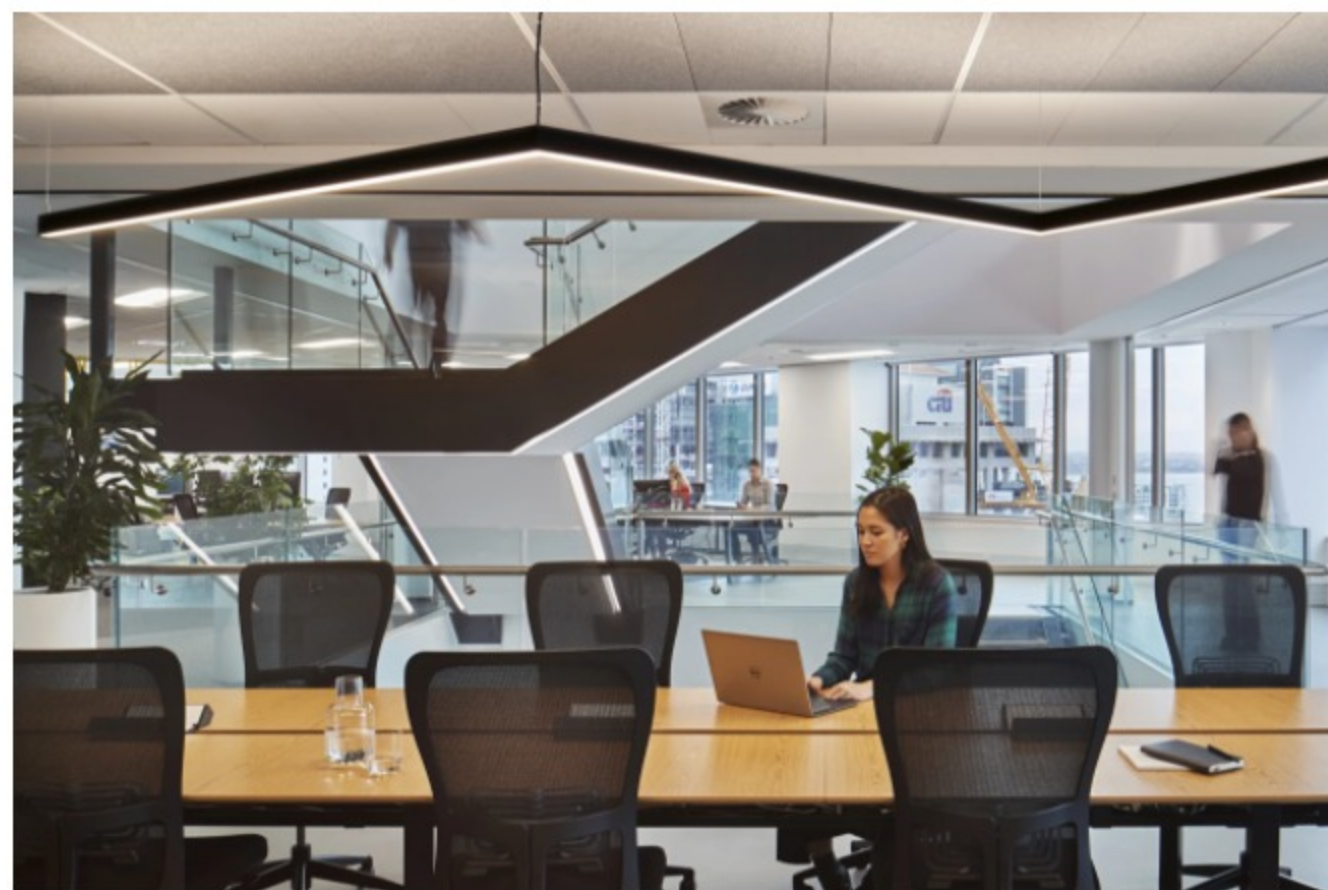
Interior designers Unispace worked closely with Suncorp to develop a warm, soft material palette for the connected five floors of the new fit-out, including the front-of-house space on the middle level.

Several location and design strategies were used to achieve the sense of togetherness and improved efficiencies required over Suncorp's five floors.

"The various functions are now grouped for improved efficiencies – for example, the contact centres for all entities are on level 15, with cafe-style spaces also situated on this level and on level 11. And the front-of-house client floor shared by all employees is located midway up, on the 13th floor," says Rowntree.

"There's a built-in egalitarian aspect to the allocation of spaces too – the uppermost floor could have been reserved for executives, instead of being allocated as an amalgamated contact staff area."

The reworked spaces now offer an activity-based environment with unassigned seating and a strong emphasis on personal lockers over personal workspaces. Breakout areas, wellness rooms and a prayer room are dotted through the floors. Contained areas, such as meeting rooms, are towards the centre of the floorplate, optimising natural light penetration and views for the outer workstation zones.



All five Suncorp New Zealand levels in the Vero Centre are connected by a feature stair.

"Unispace worked closely with Suncorp to develop a warm, soft material palette to create a welcoming aesthetic throughout. Strong brand colours were avoided, in favour of a more cohesive, connected look and feel."

The new staircase linking all floors is crucial to the functionality and success of the space and was a major architectural undertaking with 150 tonnes of concrete taken out and 60 tonnes of steel moved in.

Utilised by Suncorp employees, its central location enhances the idea of connectivity, with staff being visible as they move through the five floors. Visitors can view the flights of stairs from the public 13th floor, while security is seamlessly preserved.

To encourage movement through the levels, each floor has a 'destination' that's prominent from the stairs – ranging from a large social breakout space, to a Smartbar helpdesk, various training suites and, of course, the front-of-house space on level 13.

"The combination of consolidated efficiencies and flexible, multipurpose general spaces has more than compensated for the overall reduction in floor area," says Rowntree.

"Most importantly, the project has been hailed as a great success by the hundreds of Suncorp staff who work there."

Credit list

Project

Suncorp New Zealand

Construction

Alaska Interiors

Structural engineer

Aurecon

Quantity surveyor

Barnes Beagley Doherr (BBD)

Window/door joinery

Stanley Group

Blinds

NZ Blinds & Shades

Flooring

Flooring Junction and Forte Flooring

Veneers

Prime Panels

Lighting

KKDC

Furniture

DO ergonomic seating, Zurich 5 workstations, Stork table leaner, Linea stools – all from Aspect Furniture

Office chairs

Haworth

Additional furniture

Tim Webber

Interior design

Harry Rowntree, Unispace

Landlord architect

Gaze Commercial

Mechanical and electrical engineer

Norman Disney & Young (NDY)

Fire consultant

Cross Fire

Hardware

SopersMac

Tiling

SCE Stone

Wallcoverings/ceiling panels

Autex Industries

Paints

Resene

Heating/air conditioning

Chilleux

Soft furniture

Vidak

Reception furniture

Simon James Design

Story by: Trendsideas

Photography by: Shannon McGrath

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