

## Nothing Square About Carpet Tiles



Carpet tiles have established themselves as a logical choice for office refurbishment. They're hard wearing, relatively cheap to buy, and it's easy to replace small areas of damage or wear. But it's generally accepted that this convenience means sacrificing design freedom. A square tile doesn't lend itself to curves and circular motifs.

**Or so you'd think.**

When Prime PLC resolved to update their Worcester office they enlisted the help of 20:20 Interiors to create a new environment using carpet tiles from Bürofloor. The result is anything but square!

The existing offices were, in Prime's own opinion, pretty old-fashioned. They've grown from a base of four employees in 1995 to their current portfolio of over £200 million in developments.

The brief was to improve their use of the space and to create a "look" more in keeping with a company that's grown at such a meteoric rate. Prime recognised that a move to new premises would shortly be necessary, so the new image was to provide a pilot for the future new site. Initially 20:20 and Bürofloor were asked to look at the existing reception area, waiting and meeting rooms.



The new look was well received. In addition to the carpet tiles it used furniture and seating from Senator, Allermuir and Connection Seating. With the look established, the time was ripe for a start on the new office project. The new space was a prestige office suite at The Triangle on the outskirts of Worcester. It's a first-class development, but not without challenges. Architects today are keen to move away from soulless, rectangular boxes. It's easy to understand - and applaud - the motives behind this, but visual interest can cause headaches for space planners. In the case of The Triangle, three columns dominated the open-plan office. Two possible approaches immediately presented themselves: either to work around them, or to use them as a design feature. To do the former would have been a waste of the architect's talent, so the decision to feature the building's geometry was an easy choice.

20:20 came up with a design that majored on curves and concentric circles. The lighting "doughnuts" that defined work areas from above were echoed by circular grey tones below, using Medina carpet tiles in shades of grey. Simon Lawrence, Managing Director of Bürofloor was pleased to see this use of colour. "Around three quarters of the carpet tiles purchased are in shades of blue," he comments. "While I've no objection to blue as a colour - look at our corporate identity! - it's refreshing when a customer uses their creativity to do something a little more interesting."

In the case of the Prime offices, just two shades of grey were used, but there's no limit to the effects that can be achieved. "Each product family features its own range of colours," explains Lawrence, "Mixing products can cause problems with differing thicknesses, but there's nothing to stop a designer mixing colours within a single product group. The Prime offices demonstrate that carpet tile design options aren't limited to simple rectangles, so designers can be as bold as they like."



The main Prime office accommodates 60 people, in workstations ranged around the company's Central Services. IT and services are under-floor, giving a cable-free environment. Traffic areas are marked out in sweeping curves - an effect that's surprisingly easy to achieve, given competent carpet tile installers.

Most new offices look pretty good on day one. But look again in 12 months' time and you'll usually see something to bring tears to the designer's eyes. No one's space requirements stay the same, and as desks and whole areas are moved, the original design integrity quickly deteriorates. Floors are criss-crossed by cable channels, traffic ways are obstructed by desks and partitions. The original concept quickly vanishes.

This is where considered use of carpet tiles can make a massive difference. Adding or moving services is a simple matter of lifting and replacing a few tiles. Those attractive tonal shades that define walkways can remain intact as office use evolves.

"A good office design is about optimum use of the available space," says Chris Young of 20:20 Interiors, "We work on the client's forecast of the office's use, which would be fine in a static environment. But a successful business is never static. We have to design for a future that, frankly, no one can foresee. So flexibility becomes paramount, and that suggests carpet tiles as the ideal solution. The Prime PLC installation demonstrates that design and interest don't have to be casualties to practicality."

## Essential Ingredients

Client: Prime Plc

Interior Design & Project Management: 20:20 Interiors 01908 516320

Design Support & Project Management: Designed Systems Interiors 01527 870172

Systems Furniture: Senator 01282 725000

Specialist Joinery: Lyndon Jeremiah 01926 885858

Carpets: Bürofloor 01761 473050

Partitioning: Simmons Contract Interiors 0121 433 3939