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A & B

ARCHITECTURE

KBS House, JTCPL Designs
Corporate Office for Team Thai, STAPATI
Portico Design Concepts Office, Portico Design Concepts

INTERIORS

Bound, MYVN Architecture
Bajaj Finserv, NCUBE Planning & Design Pvt. Ltd.
Z S Associates, DSP Design Associates Pvt. Ltd.







Modern spaces, traditional sensibilities

Bajaj Finserv, Pune, Maharashtra

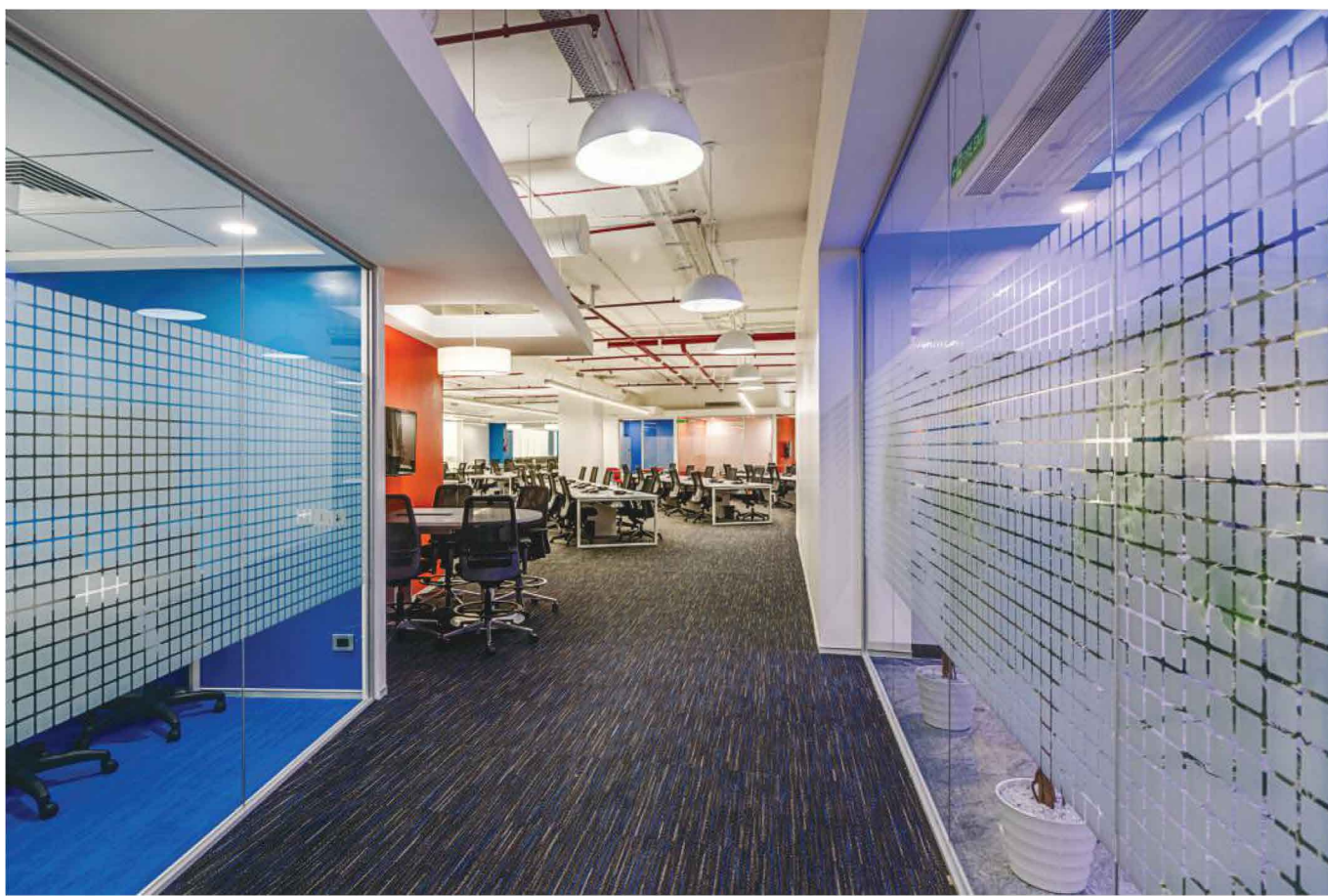
The headquarters of Bajaj Finserv in Viman Nagar, Pune designed by NCUBE Planning & Design Pvt. Ltd. creates an ideal mix of spaces – for focused individual work, for collaborative efforts, and for partnering with clients – in relaxed yet formal environment; perfect for an industry that is modern in its outlook, but traditional in its approach.

Text: Sharmila Chakravorty

Images: Madhav Rao

Drawings: NCUBE Planning & Design Pvt. Ltd.





The financial services industry is often said to be the most reluctant to change. Be it technology adoption, or office space design, the industry remains largely behind the curve and very traditional and cautious in its approach. And one can't really blame them. There is a lot at stake if technology, or design, fails to put their employees, or clients, at ease.

But there is progress, slow and steady. FinTechs are now commonplace, as are relatively modern office spaces. A few years ago, an American global design, architecture, engineering and urban planning firm released a benchmarking research report that focused on the design and work-style trends of leading financial services firms. This report provided key insights into recent trends that the industry was faced with, adopted, or ignored and an in-depth analysis of how organisations of the industry used office space. What were glaringly obvious were the gross underutilization of space, and a lack of mobility strategy. While the report looked at countries like New York and London, the realities of the findings are also applicable to us in India. There is indeed a strong push for ergonomics, employee comfort, and realization of how office space design affects productivity, with more and more organizations opting to actively look towards design to enhance employee output.

Open-plan offices are perhaps the most obvious and visible result of this. But even though financial services firms have a reputation of being more conservative and traditional in their tastes, it only takes the right architect with the right sensibilities to ensure that

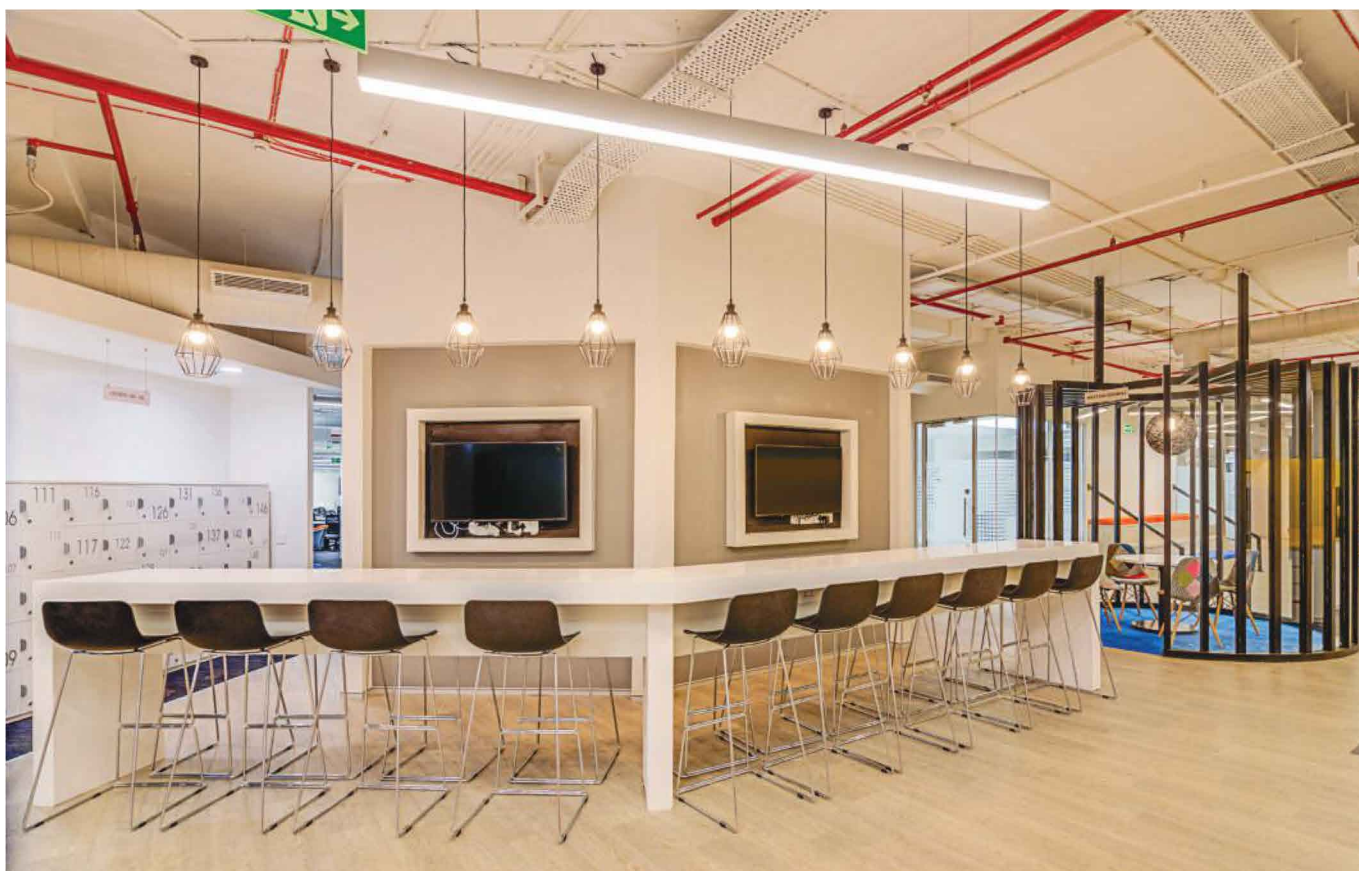
a financial services office doesn't get bogged down by boring design. The headquarters of Bajaj Finserv in Viman Nagar, Pune is one such fine example. Located in a rapidly developing locality that houses a number of global and Indian corporates that seem to be embracing the new principles of office design, the Bajaj Finserv office too makes an attempt to create a workplace that no doubt awes its employees and clients, but also takes care of their safety and security – something that is absolutely vital to a financial services provider.

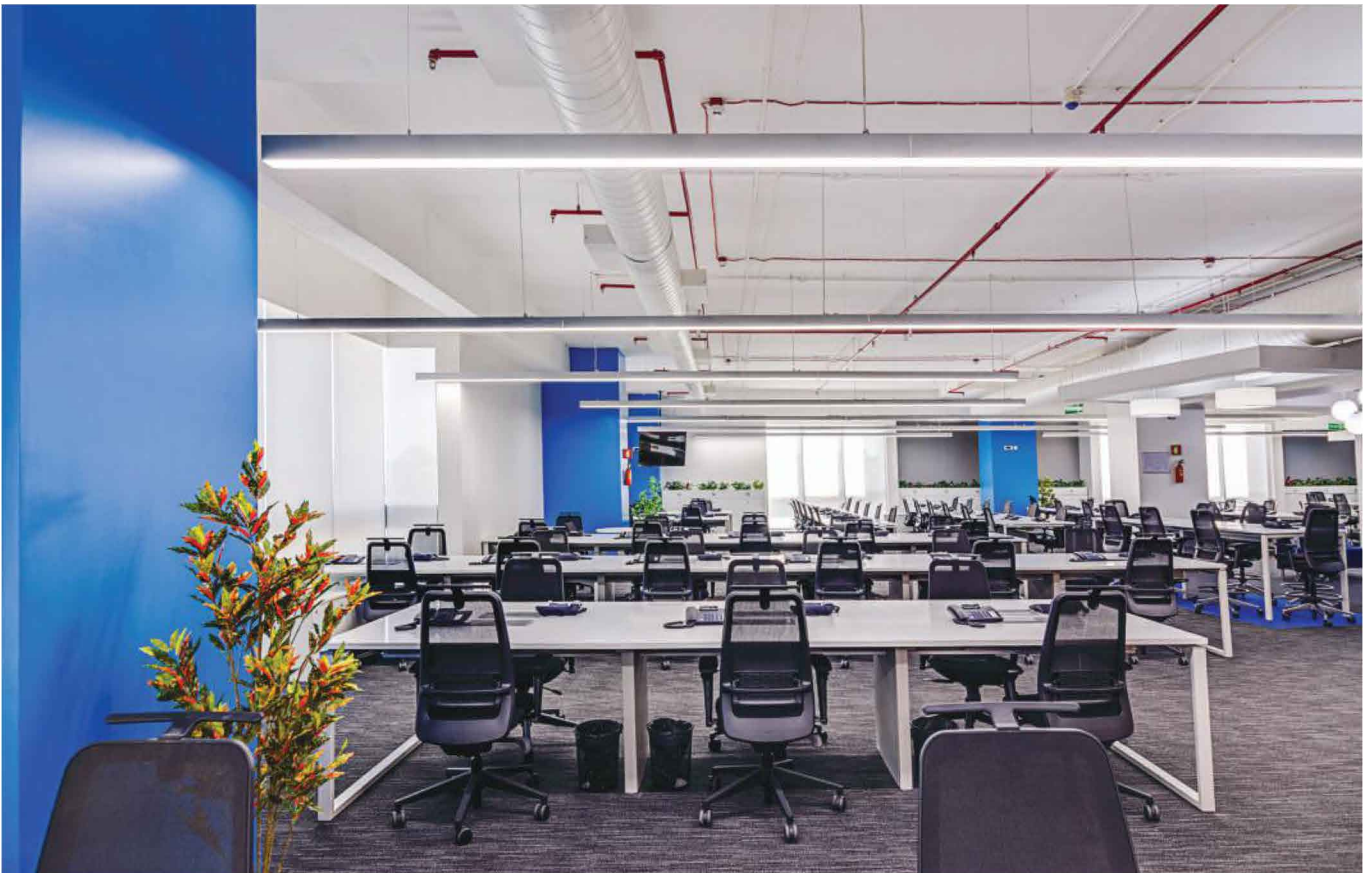
The brief was to create an office space that was close-knit yet provided the freedom and flexibility for its employees and clients to feel comfortable and relaxed. The space where one enters at the lift lobby bifurcates at the reception. Informal zones like the Library, cafeteria, and recreational spaces are placed to the right; while formal spaces such as meeting rooms, conference rooms, and director's cabin are placed on the left. Placing a strong emphasis on centrality and segregation of movement, the workstations are located at the centre of the space, while the cabins and meeting rooms line the periphery.

This perhaps creates a buffer from the outside world for the central workspaces, creating spaces for focused individual work, collaborative work, etc. without being disturbed. The high raised ceilings further enhance the space and maximize the internal volume. The spaces are flexible – a formal environment can be created as and where required, while also being capable of opening up to accommodate large team meetings or informal celebrations.

















The cabins and meeting rooms look inwards, thereby retaining visual integrity. Together, they set the stage for communication and interaction that is key for transactions in the financial services world. Further, breaking the monotony, the cage-like meeting pods not only provide an interesting element to the otherwise plain open-space office, but also create spaces of intrigue and curiosity for visiting clients. The use of bright orange, yellow, and blue at random intervals adds a necessary touch of color within the office space, making it open, welcoming and fun. This creative expression translates into spaces that are more a kind of coffee-shop-casual than strict-finance-office, striking an ideal balance between traditional and contemporary.

Thus, as indicated in the benchmarking research report mentioned earlier, the design of Bajaj Finserv takes into account both the optimal utilization of space and mobility. Another instance of this is the creating of a meeting room with a 4-way partition – a space-saving method that opens the meeting room up to transform it into breakout zones when required. Such kinds of partitioned spaces dot the entire workspace.

Modern office designs have a lot to consider. While some industries can do with projecting their ethos and their culture on the design, others have to focus on the clients they service and their comfort. A financial services office that looks like an ad agency will perhaps never inspire the trust of its clients, and vice versa – one would be weary of an ad agency that looks like a public sector bank! The design of Bajaj Finserv wins in this aspect – it takes the best of modern office design principles and customizes it to make its clients and employees comfortable; comfortable enough for the clients to conduct business and the employees to be at their productive best. ■

FACT FILE:

Project	:	Bajaj Finance Limited HQ, Pune
Location	:	Viman Nagar, Pune
Architect	:	Debora Emert - Design director
Design team	:	Debora Emert, Kunal Velankar, Nisha Mahadik, Vikrant Parkar
Client	:	Bajaj Finance Limited
Project Area	:	48000 square feet
Initiation of Project	:	01.12.16
Completion of project	:	15.02.17