



Transformational Storytelling at 3M



THE people at 3M had waited a long time to move forward with their plans for a new HQ in Bracknell. It had taken some years to buy and make ready the site on the edge of the town. Now they were ready to go ahead. All that they needed, they decided, was a way to have the new HQ designed by their own people – some 900 employees based at one of the two existing sites in the centre of Bracknell plus others in field operations.

3M's own workforce was to decide the look and feel of the place and how the new office building would best support their many and varied jobs.

Navisys Transformation was asked to help. And we used our tools and processes to engage everyone in creating the office building they really wanted. Among those tools was Transformational Storytelling.

Here's how it unfolded.

At the start, there were a few givens. Where the new building would be sited, of course. What it looked like from the outside. The fact that it would be open plan on the inside, however else it looked (and this was a very big change for a lot of people at 3M). It would also be designed for fewer people than worked there, generating the need for flexible working and home working. And a few other important things related to planning permission and health and safety issues.

But the rest was mostly down to the people who were going to work there. Navisys Transformation enabled everyone to put their views forward and to sort out their priorities – their most important hopes and worst fears, for example. Then they created the Future Story, weaving the hopes and dreams of 3M people into a trilogy. ▶



The Trading Places project was led by Pip Frankish (pictured right), who said: "Of all the things we have done in the overall move project, the decision to use Navisys must rank at the top of the list of things we did right."



"The CEO was so impressed he said that it would be the touchstone for all decisions as the building programme went forward"



▶ The Future Story brought to life what it would be like in the new HQ as envisaged by 3M's people. It unveiled the vision through the eyes of three people – a customer visiting the new HQ, an employee based permanently in the office and another who worked more often than not away from the office and needed a 'hot desk' workstation from time to time.

When the members of the Trading Places project team read the Future Story to the 3M board, the CEO was so impressed he said that it would be the touchstone for all decisions as the building programme went forward.

3M people were invited to seminars where they listened to the Future Story unfold. They heard their own ideas, their own hopes, their own words come to life, woven together in a compelling trilogy by Navisys Transformation.



Artist's images of what the new HQ might look like were projected on to a screen as the Trading Places trio narrated the Future Story. And the Future Story itself was captured in a neat booklet handed to every person.

In Bracknell now is the Living Story, the real building, created from the imagination of 3M people and the storytelling skills of Navisys Transformation.

The Three Future Stories are shown overleaf. ▶



A Vision of IMAGE – A Customer's Story

The brightly branded road signs made it easy to find 3M's Bracknell HQ. It was my first time there. As I drove through the entrance gates it was like entering a small country park with a curved tree-lined approach skirted by gardens and lawns partly hiding parking areas woven with pergolas, trees and decorative lighting.

I swung into the visitor's parking bays and stopped alongside a bank of delightfully scented flowers and shrubs. I noticed a discreet security camera nestling amongst them. As I walked towards the entrance I could see people strolling below the pergolas and sitting in the patchwork paved areas, deep in discussion but clearly enjoying the fresh air in this warm spring afternoon.

The entrance doors opened two or three steps before I reached them, giving me a glimpse of a light, airy atrium bathed in moving colours. As the doors opened, the floor in front of me lit up in a series of softly lit stepping stones, each with a watermark welcome message.



Shifting streams of daylight refracted through moving coloured glass sculptures way above me splashed on to the shining tiles floor like a rainbow waterfall. Huge pots of beautifully arranged fresh flowers stood either side of the reception console and there was a buzz of activity evident in the space beyond, which I couldn't quite make out.

I gave my name and was welcomed with a smile and an identity disc, already prepared. "We were expecting you. X14 DBT – is that your car? I thought it must be; it's just come up on the security screen. Now, as you're a little early perhaps you'd like to help yourself to refreshments. There are magazines and newspapers or can you plug in your laptop by any one of the chairs." I was told.

The waiting area reminded me of a modern and classy hotel reception, with comfortable tables and chairs and the added attraction of a fascinating moving display of

mechanical ingenuity created, the sign said, by local engineering students and 3M technicians working together on the assembly.

A couple of 3M employees with their familiar identity badges walked past me, smiled, said "Hello and entered the main atrium through a discreet glass gate alongside the reception console, stopping for a cheerful exchange with one of the receptionists.

I prepared a soft drink mix for myself, selected a small pastry and sat down to consider the conversation I was about to have. The 3M product range I was interested in was part of a display a few steps away and I rose and walked over. One of the receptionists joined me: "Is there anything here you'd like to know about?" The question started a brief but useful exchange which was interrupted by the 3M person I had come to see.

After she'd thanked the receptionist for playing host, she led me through the glass gate into a surprisingly open area, set out like a café bar, bristling with lively discussions between small groups of people, one or two of whom I recognised as customers like me.

My host and I sat on high stools by a tall, round table with its own soft drink refreshment console in the centre.

While we talked I noticed various glass-fronted rooms in the background, each housing groups of people meeting in different styles – formal presentations, workshop activity or relaxed discussion amid sofas and coffee tables.

After a while, my host showed me into a side chamber filled with 3M's products, picked out what we needed and worked through my discussion with her, demonstrating the product's different uses and capabilities on screen or simply by using it. At one point, she called a colleague over to talk through a particular point, and I noted that my conversation was one of several taking place in similar ways.

An hour later, I walked out through the automatic doors with a real sense of achievement and progress. The light studs which acted as parking bay markers suddenly illuminated around my car as the doors swished shut behind me.



These 3M people think of everything!



A Vision of WORKING PRACTICES – An Office Based Employee’s Story

It’s easy to drive into the office at Amen Corner around this time. The rush hour traffic is petering out and there are rarely any hold-ups. It was approaching 6.45pm as I stopped below the canopy of the security gate at the entrance to the staff car park, opened my window and passed my multi-purpose identity card across the face of the glass panel. The gate opened and I drove in, under the comforting watchful eyes of the security cameras that adorn the decorative light standards around the various areas and the walkways.

I parked conveniently close to the main entrance and walked into Reception, stopping at the glass security gate next to the reception console for a few words with the receptionist. It always gives me a buzz walking through the Reception area, with its product displays and constantly updated information screens.



In the atrium behind Reception, I stopped to check the day’s news on one of the electronic bulletin boards and was joined by my colleague, Jane. “I have to nip to the Mall –



I’ve got a birthday card to buy and a prescription to pick up.” she said. The Mall is our name for the collection of retail services gathered next to the café bar in the new 3M building. It’s really useful to be able to pick up a few

essentials on site especially out of hours, when most shops are shut anyway. It’s a good time to meet, around seven when most of our customers have quit for the day. Flexible working hours really help our team. We come and go to suit our needs and our customers.

We find early mornings great for ideas sessions in the creative room, especially after an hour in the gym, and often use the café bar in the Reception atrium for informal meetings and one-to-ones. That gives us the chance to meet other people and catch up with what’s going on elsewhere in 3M as lots of our colleagues use it that way, with customers too.

Jane returned and we strolled through the huge open plan area on the ground floor, which shares the café bar and the Mall with the big interactive area we take customers into to demonstrate products and try out new things.

By now the big room is relatively quiet but somehow you can still hear the vibrant hum that resonates during busy times, generated by scores of conversations taking place around you.

People meet everywhere these days. I enjoy the relaxed team meetings we have sitting on those brightly coloured sofas in one of the breakout areas.

Jane prefers the central concourse, where an oasis of palms and other greenery basks in daylight below a glass dome, and where tall stools and tables mean you can hold impromptu meetings; some people sitting, some standing.



The dome spreads natural light right across the workstation clusters on the first floor, where our team were until last week. We switched downstairs to allow another team room to grow and it’s given us a different view of the place. Quite refreshing.

Tonight we’re reviewing our home working arrangements especially communications because it’s important for is to keep in close touch with one another. A combination of fixed and mobile phones, plus email and video conference calls, seems to be working well – and occasional meetings like this.

Another team is meeting this evening in the restaurant, with a buffet laid on. We’re getting together with them later in the gym for an hour; then a drink at the café bar. I’ll be home by 10 and I’m not in the office again until Monday, when my manager asked me to work through some product issues with one of our key customers. I’ll prepare for that at home in the next day or two.

Before I go home tonight I’ll call Workspace Facilities and book one of the priority customer meeting rooms next to the interactive area and let them know who’s coming in so they can tell Security.

These rooms are designed to the highest specification and can accommodate various sizes of group. They include all relevant 3M meeting room products and there are phone points, plug sockets and network ports every few feet.



Mind you, it’s fairly comfortable having a confidential chat in the open when the office is busy because the hum of the conversations and activity all around seems to diffract individual voices unless you are very close to them. But customers usually need the reassurance of visible privacy, and in the booths you do have the added benefit of being able to do laptop presentations and check data on the network.

Not all the team could get here tonight. Stewart and Tracy sometimes find evening meetings tricky to fit in with their family schedules – but I can see them on the video screen. They’re both linked up from home.

So everyone’s here and we can get started.



A Vision of WORKSPACE – A Home Based Employees Story

Looking across the room, I see a vast open area filled with energy and activity, with groups of people sitting or standing together in animated discussion, smiling and gesticulating.



Everywhere I look there are open spaces bordered by workstations which at first seem haphazard but are, I realise, inter-linked in a kaleidoscope of shapes and settings, all different from one another but very much part of an overall pattern.

There's a tremendous buzz about the place but the noise of all this activity in such a wide open area wraps around me like a warm blanket.

Near to where I am standing, I see colleagues and customers in deep discussion in the café bar area. They're sitting at high stools with papers spread across the worktop in front of them while, close by, another similar group is camped among the brightly coloured sofas in relaxed debate.



As I approach my own workstation area, one of the hot desk configurations, I am always pleased to see that it's edged by plants and that it's

clean, tidy and ready for me – there's a desk diary with my name slotted into the top of the frame alongside the workstation number which matches with one I picked up at reception on the way in. I don't think I've sat at this one before but, like the others, it has all I need – I can plug my laptop into the network and work on either the laptop or the PC built into the workstation.

I pick up the phone and dial my code so that my incoming calls are routed to this handset, which has a headset option if I want to use it, and dim the desk lighting slightly, which suits me better.

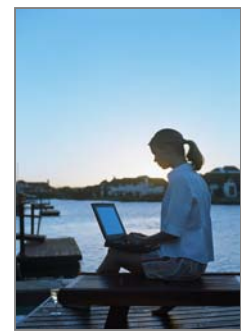
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The open shelves above the worktop provide more than enough space to store the things I've brought with me and my mobile storage console has been wheeled into place underneath. I keep in there all the things I need when I'm working in the office. The rest I store at home.

I have some printing and copying to do today – one of the reasons I'm in – and it's really useful to know there's a printer linked to the PC. Each workstation cluster has its own printer and photocopier. Before I start, I think I'll pour myself a drink from the soft drinks console which forms a meeting place in the midst of the workstation cluster.

Later I'm going to take the laptop up to the restaurant and work at it over breakfast – I don't miss the chance to eat here when I'm in the office. The suspended laptop cradles are easy to work at and keep the kit clear of the food, which minimises the risk of spilling anything onto the keyboard.



The restaurant is a great place for working creatively on screen when it's quiet because the design and atmosphere is so different from the rest of the floor – and when you need privacy the tables with the laptop cradles can be neatly partitioned off from each other with attractive foldaway screens. I called earlier to book a table. The Workspace Facilities people handle that, along with the meeting rooms and hot desk set-up. It's almost as comfortable to work in the office these days as it is to work from home.

My restaurant slot isn't for another hour so I'll work up an appetite. I open my bag and place a few items on the worktop to give the workstation a personal touch – it's my desk today and it almost feels like home.

