



## The best of both worlds: Privacy and openness at the tower

This iGaming company office located within the new 14 East high-rise in Gzira has it all. Designed by Elisa Fedeli and Edward Coppini from Parallel Architects, it showcases stunning views reaching from Sliema and St Julian's to Manoel Island and Valletta right on to Mdina - views that can be enjoyed from anywhere within due to the glass partitions, without, crucially, compromising on privacy, thanks to expert acoustic treatments. **Edward Coppini** explains how this was achieved to **Sarah Micallef**.



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Photos by Luca Noto

"The client approached us as they were planning to take over the ninth floor," says Edward Coppini of the impressive office within Gzira's 14 East, which comprises half of the ninth floor of the tower.

Showing me the plans, Perit Coppini explains that the space was being handed over to their client, an iGaming company, already finished from all services, although design-wise, it was thought out as an entirely open-plan space. "The only set rooms were the bathrooms and server room, which we retained, but the rest was an open space which we needed to modify, in keeping with the client's needs."

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The whole of the office enjoys fantastic views, with the perimeter of the building itself entirely made of glass. Because of this, Perit Coppini tells me, the outlook was quite an important factor when designing the layout. "The client requested that it not be kept as an open space, so as to accommodate different offices and departments," he says.

Apart from individual offices, the new layout includes a large kitchen area, TV area and coffee station, as well as another two spaces: a formal boardroom for important meetings, and a more casual meeting space in which employees can meet, hang out after work, or have a small event. The

office also enjoys a sizeable terrace, which the architects chose to make accessible via this meeting room. "The terrace also had a bearing on how to allocate the spaces - it made sense for the terrace to be used for entertainment, so we linked it with the casual meeting room."

But, due to the glass perimeter and awkwardly shaped space, the division wasn't a straightforward one. "The fact that the façade is made of glass means that you are restricted. You don't have a blank wall; so it was an exercise to calculate divisions according to mullions. The shape of the space was also not straightforward, consisting of a number of triangular shapes,



so fitting it in and providing the right space ergonomically for each desk was also a challenge," he continues, albeit one which the team certainly rose to.

"Despite the divisions, we didn't want to lose the open feel of the space - the fact that you can see all the views as soon as you enter the office," Perit Coppini explains, leading to the decision to use glazed internal walls. "Most of the internal walls are glazed, but we needed to juggle privacy at the same time."

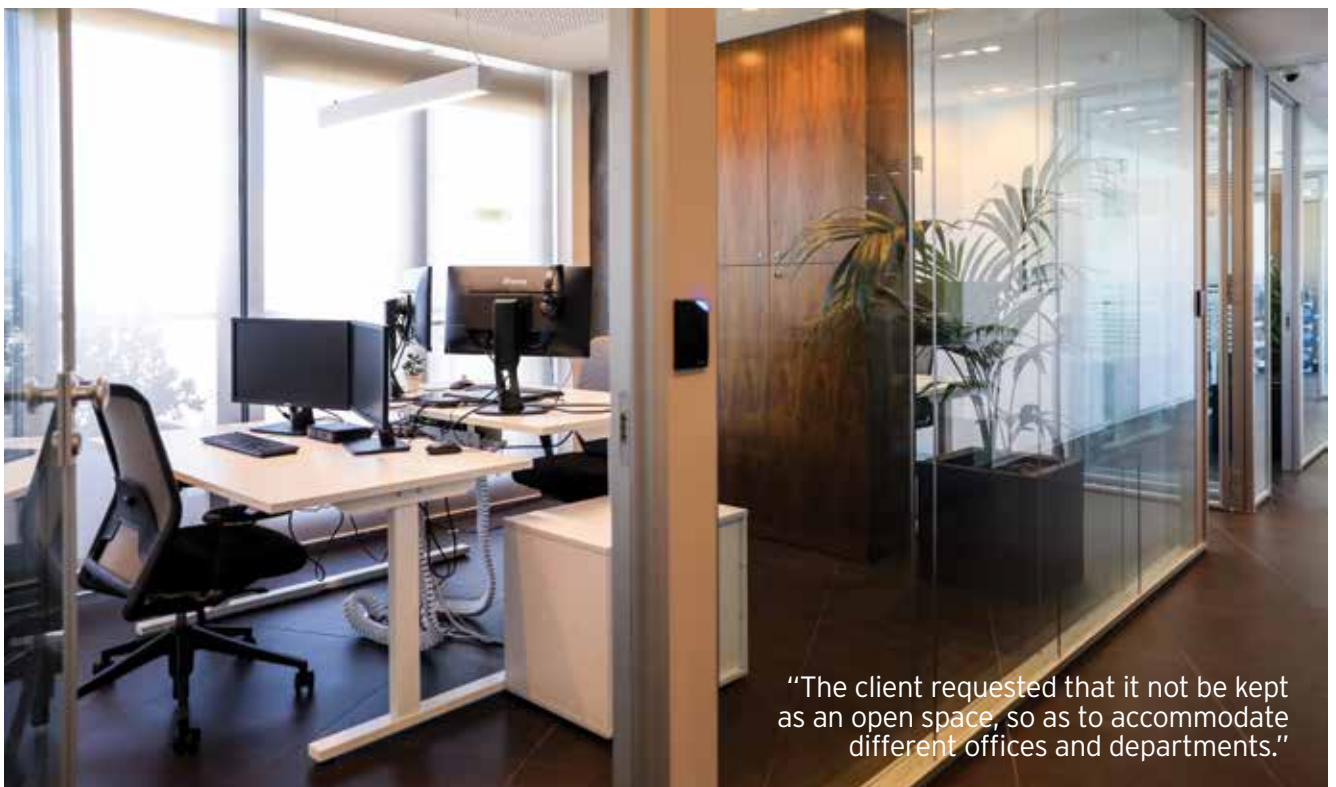
In fact, the client's first request, and Parallel Architects' primary consideration, was getting

the acoustics right. "The first thing we did was rip up and replace the walls between both properties (the walls dividing the two halves of the floor)," he says, explaining that the only solid walls in the tower were the core and columns, with the rest comprising glass and a lightweight gypsum.

"As always, we liaised with a sound engineer, who we brought on board for this project. Once we had the brief from the client and came up with a design of the space, we engaged him to spec up the partitions," he continues, maintaining that all the partitions

within the space are speckled so as to have total privacy from one room to the other.

The modifications also necessitated the change of services within the ceiling. "Apart from moving the obvious services like ACs and fire sprinklers, we also had to factor in the fresh air ducts which were crossing from one room to the other and, from one office to the next, and which could effectively work as an intercom," he affirms, so these were replaced and properly insulated, following a simulation of each space by the sound engineer.



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Another challenge was the reverberation which comes along with the glass surfaces. “We added perforated boards and rockwool in the ceiling, which reduce the echo. Glass doesn’t absorb sound, so we treated as much as we could of the ceiling to cut out the reverberation of the space. This was also done through the sound engineer’s simulation, and it worked out very well,” he continues.

Design-wise, the overall look of the

office is contemporary and clean. “While there is some colour, we focused more on the use of raw materials, including an elegant walnut veneer which is corporate yet contemporary,” Perit Coppini explains, highlighting the cabinets inserted into niches, allowing them to be viewed as part of the wall rather than an addition in the room. “This way, the furniture forms part of the line of the wall. The desks are also all motorised and height adjustable, so each

employee can adjust their desk to their preference,” he says, adding, “the furniture is all custom-made, including the upholstery, which was another very interesting phase of the project,” highlighting the custom kitchen, coffee station, filing cabinets, meeting room bench, printing hub and boardroom unit.

And despite the challenges, Perit Coppini agrees that the team was able to achieve a great balance: “although it is not a traditional kind of office with closed spaces, you get the feeling of an open space while still enjoying privacy between one space and the next.” Indeed, the best of both worlds! **cc**

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