



DESIGNER FORUM

Speedo's Los Angeles headquarters makes a big splash.

■ By Stephanie Boldon

Shaw's Grain LVT sets the stage for Speedo's Aqua Lab pool.

Considered by many to be an epicenter of fitness and healthy living in America, the new Los Angeles, California headquarters of swimwear giant Speedo is a hybrid workspace that seamlessly blends a dynamic corporate fitness aesthetic with retail merchandising and athletic research. Repurposing a former Southern California industrial space, the ultimate goal for the project was to use open plan office design and expansive flooring to dissolve obstacles, real or imagined, and promote activity and collaboration in the company's own corporate culture.

"We were inspired to incorporate Active Design guidelines into this project," said Rodney Stone, president of the Los Angeles office of Environetics, the design architect. Originally developed on the East Coast, Active Design is a series of initiatives applied to the built environment that encourages walking and being active throughout the day; it is growing as a national movement that is important to public health. Stone continues, "We used flooring to visually tie together functional spaces like conference rooms, restrooms and the cafeteria, which were organized a pleasant walking distance away from individual workstations. All physical activity spaces were located within centrally visible locations across the building."

AQUA LAB SETS TONE

At the entrance of the space, visitors are greeted by polished concrete flooring that speaks to the original industrial nature

of the building they are entering. Exposed ducts in the ceiling above the concrete floor are echoed throughout the entire 68,000-square-foot headquarters. Pool racing lanes, created with mosaic tile near the reception desk, continue behind a glass wall and give a hint of the graphic and dynamic space visitors are about to enter. When designing this space, Environetics worked closely on colors and materials with The Marketing Group, a division of PVH, the parent company of Speedo.

The entrance floor immediately transitions from concrete to another hard flooring surface, Grain, a luxury vinyl tile by Shaw Contract, which sets the stage for the first remarkable feature in this forward-thinking space—the Aqua Lab pool. This showstopper of a design feature sets the tone for the headquarters and is located adjacent to the reception area. Surrounded by glass mosaic tile made by Porcelanosa, the Aqua Lab pool boasts two water treadmills and has room for aquatic bikes.



The mezzanine boasts a blue pop of color with Shaw's Shape carpet tile accented by Bentley Mills' Cohort.

this floor, as well as the flooring in the mezzanine above, are covered in Shaw Contract's Shape carpet tile with accents of Bentley Mills' Cohort. The ground floor carpeting sets the stage for client-facing conference rooms that can be arranged as mock retail environments with product displays that highlight new merchandise to potential buyers.

AN OPEN FLOOR IS KEY

Surrounding the retail conference rooms and Aqua Lab on the ground floor is an array of open plan work areas, which are arranged by department. One of the main reasons for Speedo's decision to move into this

space was to transition its employees from working separately in private offices to implementing an open-plan environment that was much more informal and collaborative, compared to its previous Los Angeles space.

Open plan office design usually calls for carpet tile, and in this case, the decision to go with carpet tile used in conjunction with soft and luxurious area rugs took on an important role of place-

making. The warm wood LVT, selected to match the teak decking, is a visual contrast to the polished concrete flooring in the front space, yet it provides the right kind of flooring performance for an array of technical demands that happen throughout this area, including a code-compliant HVAC system and climate control equipment, not to mention 5,800 gallons of water. The Aqua Lab is a unique incubator for Speedo R&D to conduct swimming research; however, it can also double as the perfect set for promotional video or photo shoots. Safety railing and scientific measuring systems along the side of the pool can be quickly removed for a clean, focused image.

After a vivid and immersive experience in the Aqua Lab, the flooring continues its sleek and sporty aesthetic by transitioning to interlocking Duo Tile rubber tile by Mats Inc. for the weight training area—another popular cross-training activity and a favorite with Speedo. The rest of



The use of carpet tile along with soft and luxurious rugs in the open office space serves a placemaking role.

making for this new office. Many departments and collaboration zones are defined by their flooring borders in this space, but the departments that regularly collaborate with each other are also buffered with lounge zones that are intended to dissolve cultural borders between departments. The entire office was designed with different intersecting circles of collaborating departments in mind, and everyone in the building is connected by expansive sight lines across the double-level space.

The open area continues with Shaw Contract's Shape, a carpet tile with a subtle, yet dynamic pattern. Accent and office carpet was Cohort by Bentley. Cameron Grimsley, the local Bentley rep who was instrumental in coordinating custom flooring applications for this job, noted, "It means so much when the L.A. community supports California manufacturing. Bentley is proud to operate and manufacture in L.A. and honored to be a part of the new Speedo Los Angeles Headquarters."

One more Active Design initiative for this project was to encourage Speedo to leave behind traditional casework and storage-based furniture and opt instead for sit/stand desking at every open plan workstation. This encourages employee movement throughout the day, which, in turn, promotes productivity, creativity and collaboration for everyone.

Since sitting is now considered the new smoking in the workplace, an expansive and open floor is key to encouraging movement and walking throughout the day. With over 40,000 square feet of this project using carpet tile, the designers knew



The boardroom features Bentley Mills' Cohort carpet tile.

the best way to promote walking was to specify a cushioned back on the carpet, which was done in as many areas as possible. Using a single type of carpet throughout the office space makes it safe and easy for workers to switch between sitting and standing wherever and whenever they feel they need to. Facilitating this ease of movement is one of those invisible design elements that imparts the real health benefits of sit-to-stand working.

Located within the heart of Speedo's new Los Angeles office is an expansive double-height space, complete with lounge furniture and large projection televisions. While Environetics worked with Speedo during design development, this space gained greater importance and evolved into an area with a communal or town hall type of program. Encouraging greater collaboration with its own staff, Speedo held a design competition among the workers in this space for six separate furnished lounge vignettes in the town hall open area. Winners selected the furniture and area rugs within each discrete space.

The town hall area is also open and engaging. Daily business meetings are conducted in equal measure with informal groups viewing major sporting events or participating in team building exercises. The open floor plan lets the active California lifestyle become seamlessly integrated into workflow in a way that could never have happened in Speedo's old Los Angeles location.

According to Speedo, the power has always been in the pool. This new Los Angeles headquarters solidifies that branding statement and reinforces the belief that there has never been a better time to be a swimmer and engaged in an active lifestyle than right now. ■



Sit/stand desking encourages movement throughout the day.



● THE AUTHOR

Upon graduating from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles, California, Stephanie Boldon, NCIDQ, started her design career working at the Pacific Design Center. She joined Environetics in 1989, working her way up from junior designer to associate, senior project director.