



STEPHENSON AND TURNER (S&T) is an architecture and engineering company that is prepared to walk the talk. Its ethos is about creating sustainably designed spaces, marrying the need for sound environmentally friendly buildings and aesthetics.

So for its new Wellington office S&T practiced what it preached. The company is now based in a studio loft, which the team refitted in such a sustainable way it became the first historic building in New Zealand to be awarded a 6 Green Star Office Interiors rating. This is the highest level attainable under Green Star, representing world leadership.

The studio fit-out, constructed by Mainzeal Interiors, features sustainably-harvested and reused timber, addressable lighting, natural ventilation, heat-pump and radiant heating as well as a green wall and strict use of low VOC paints and adhesives.

A particular focus on construction waste minimisation resulted in 90 percent of waste materials being recycled or reused.

S&T also won the Resene Total Colour Sustainable System Award. This is the second year in a row S&T has won this.

The official opening of S&T's new office space was attended by 150 of the company's friends. Jane Healy, CEO of the World Green Building Council congratulated S&T on walking the talk. "It's a major achievement... they have done simple, smart things," she enthused.

BUILDING CERTAINTY

We would like to say an enormous thank you to all the subcontractors, suppliers and our own dedicated staff, who helped make the S&T fitout project such an outstanding success.

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The new S&T offices, a sustainable and creative environment.

Also in attendance was Wellington's Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, who praised S&T on "taking the lead on sustainable design" and urged other offices to follow suit.

The company's CEO Murray Pugh says the new office is a "fresh, comfortable, open and airy

working environment. Our clients now enter directly into the creative environment and can be actively involved in the design process with our teams. It's a great place to work."

Before moving to the loft, S&T was located in Shell House (now Transpower House)

from 1960 for 20 years and more recently in Radio NZ House for 18 years, both buildings being of the firm's design.

When looking for a new office, the attraction of the heritage building was strong. "Being able to revitalise an existing building is

something we are passionate about," Pugh says. "New Zealand's building stock is getting older — landlords have to grapple with how to refurbish older buildings in a sustainable manner to attract good tenants," he says.

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Leading from one creative area to another, S&T's office fit-out is a prototype of its ethos.

"Green design is the baseline standard of providing great working environments — which are a prerequisite for productivity excellence."

Murray Pugh, S&T CEO

"The opportunity to build something new is not often available in terms of space or viable in terms of money," S&T CEO Murray Pugh says. "For us, demonstrating that a world excellence rating can be achieved with limited budget in heritage building shows what we are capable of. This office is a prototype for our clients."

Many businesses think green designed buildings are important because they are good for the environment, or save money on power bills. While this is certainly true, Pugh says they are other less well known reasons.

"Green design is the baseline standard of providing great working environments — which are a prerequisite for productivity excellence. It has been well-documented that sustainable buildings improve well-being for the people within them and this increases job satisfaction."

Building better

S&T takes on a range of projects, showing off its clever design work all over the country. Work currently on the books includes apartment buildings, heritage building restorations, primary and secondary schools, university buildings, scientific laboratories, commercial office blocks and office fit-outs as well as high-end residences.

In particular, Pugh says S&T especially understands large or complex social infrastructure projects. That's why it has designed so many structures or refits for schools, offices, prisons, hospitals and recreational facilities — such as arenas and aquatic centres.

S&T has also completed work in the Pacific and is currently pursuing various projects throughout Asia. "We do bid for overseas work, and through that we've created opportunities to pursue more projects by building relationships," he says.

Points of difference

Pugh says S&T has many points of difference, other than its focus on green design, which sets it apart from its competitors.

"We have great technical capabilities in building information modeling. That's the 3D modelling of a building throughout the design process. This is a new emerging area

of design which is quite widespread in the USA and Australia — but not yet in the New Zealand market.

"We also have a lot of information and skills in life long upkeep of a building."

Growth

Getting bigger and better is high on S&T's agenda. Pugh himself is a new CEO, starting just over a year ago in September 2010. Four new principals in the architecture and engineering departments have recently joined the team. "The new principals have a range of interest and expertise, such as in emerging technology, urban revitalisation, lighting design and educational institutional developments," he says.

To accompany the new Wellington studio the company has launched a new web engagement strategy which includes its new interactive website — allowing people to see its impressive architectural and engineering design achievements online. The website is easy to navigate and has numerous photos, along with written explanations, about every project.

Pugh says the company is watching the situation in Christchurch as the city prepares to rebuild itself. "The firm is being patient in waiting for developments in Christchurch. We are looking for the appropriate opportunity to be involved — we have lots of skills in the green design area and could be actively involved in the next 5-10 years of the design process.

"In the future, I want us to leverage the multi-disciplinary capability of the firm on a national basis. Our architects and engineers each understand the demands, constraints and opportunities of the other. This places our firm in a position to deliver strong integrated design which is truly sustainable."

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