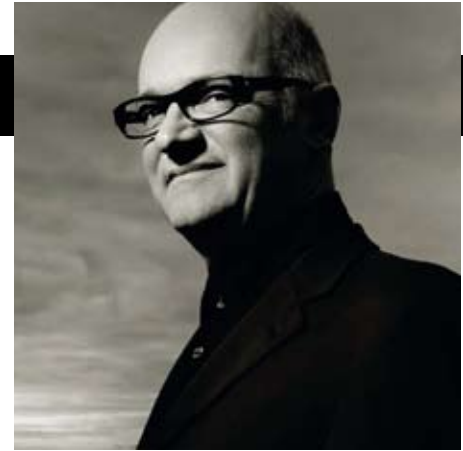


# THE STRATEGIST'S VIEW

ERIK VELDHOEN IS A DUTCH WORKPLACE STRATEGIST WHO HELPS HIS CLIENTS DISCOVER 'A NEW WAY OF WORKING'. HE SPOKE TO ANGELA FERGUSON ABOUT ACTIVITY BASED WORKING (ABW) AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ONE SHELLEY STREET.



After working in the building industry in project management, Erik Veldhoen started Veldhoen + Company in 1989, advising companies on their needs and then providing the buildings to service those needs.

Veldhoen's groundbreaking project was in 1994 for the police in Holland, who rarely occupied their desks but required space to concentrate and communicate. "This was the first step towards a new way of working," he explains. "Their workplace was able to be 40% smaller than it had been in the past."

It was after this project he wrote *The Demise of the Office*, about the physical,

virtual and behavioural elements of the workplace and how they combine. "To develop ABW you have to be spiritual. A company has to answer questions like: 'What is the meaning of our business?', 'What are our core values?', 'Where do I want to go?'. The answers are the basis for a new work style," says Veldhoen.

Interpolis, a Dutch insurance company, came across *The Demise of the Office* and commissioned him to develop the principles for their organisation. Insurance is all about trust and they wanted to create a new environment and culture to reflect that. Employees were empowered to choose how and when they worked.

There was "no process to control" and line-of-sight management was gone.

The solution was various settings and no allocated desks. By only using half the building, 250 million euros were saved.

Different cultures have influenced the popularity of ABW. "There is more hierarchy in the US and the Mediterranean. ABW needs business leaders to buy in and empower their people, and to close down hierarchical styles of management. Leadership should not be about having a big office."

Macquarie was wanted to develop a new way of working, and ABW could support the changes they were wanting.

"To create the brief, we looked at the three types of environments in a workplace and created design guidelines for Macquarie Group. These environments are the virtual (links between technology and business processes – the change from paper to digital), the physical (no-one has their own desk) and the behavioral (which is the cultural change)," Veldhoen explains.

"ABW is a paradigm shift. At Macquarie Group, 50–60 per cent of the settings are for the individual, the rest are for collaborative work. In 10 years time this will be 20 per cent for the individual and 80 per cent collaborative."