

Workplace design majors join hands

Singapore and US firms to pool expertise in area of office design for global client base

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From left: David Bourke, co-chief executive (CEO) and president of Interior Architects, Arsh Chaudhry, CEO of Space Matrix, and Tom Powers, co-CEO and president of IA. PHOTO: SPACE MATRIX

Singapore

TWO major firms specialising in workplace interior design have come together to form a strategic partnership.

At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that a majority of people around the world are working from home rather than at the office, Singapore-based Space Matrix and US-based Interior Architects (IA) have announced their partnership to join forces to provide design services and capabilities to service their clients.

Space Matrix was founded in 2001. It has 15 offices in Singapore, China and India, and project experience in more than 80 cities, largely in Asia. Some of the offices it has designed include those for Cisco Systems in Singapore, Airbnb in Gurgaon, India, and SAP in Shanghai.

IA was founded in 1984, and has offices in 24 cities including New York, London and Toronto. It has designed the offices of Dyson in Illinois, Bank of the West in San Francisco, and LinkedIn in New York City.

Interior Design, the magazine which publishes an annual list of the top 100 interior design firms around the world, ranks IA as the fifth largest design firm in the office-design sector, with a sum of US\$86.67 million earned in design fees last year.

Space Matrix comes in at 10th position with US\$38.82 million in design fees.

Their combined revenue puts them in second position for office design in the world, after Gensler, which earned US\$442.55 million.

The partnership includes the formation of a "global studio", which will connect more than 1,400 staff across 37 locations, allowing both companies to service clients in more than 500 cities in over 60 countries.

Arsh Chaudhry, chief executive at Space Matrix, said: "This partnership puts both firms in a unique position, we are creating a platform that is completely unmatched globally."

Mr Chaudhry, with IA's chief executives Tom Powers and David Bourke have been in talks about a partnership since mid 2019.

"We saw a gap in the industry where there was no true global partner that was available for clients that could provide services, design thinking and advice to them on a global basis. With the two firms coming together, we will be able to answer a part of the industry problem too," said Mr Chaudhry.

Space Matrix's clients in Asia who want to expand to the US or Europe will be able to tap into IA's expertise, and vice-versa.

"From a client's perspective, they can tap into our global studio and not have to find multiple partners to work with, which helps when many of our clients have global portfolios," he said.

The two firms share similarities, including being 100-per-cent employee-owned. Mr Bourke added that they also share a vision, complementary values and a passion for interiors.

"That is what made this consortium the perfect fit."

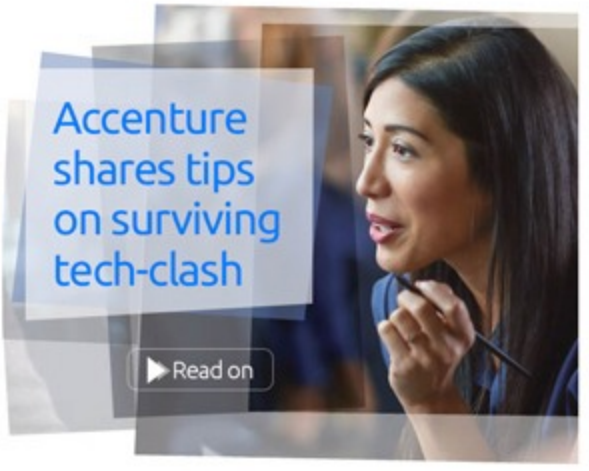
Mr Chaudhry added that "alignment in core values, a culture of excellence and client servicing - we found all of those in IA, not just at the leadership level, but also across the firm". The only difference between the firms was their geographical locations.

The two firms are jointly working on two projects - one for a financial service company in Australia and the other, for a technology firm in India.

The partnership is especially relevant now. Mr Chaudhry said: "We can exchange ideas, and advise clients on how to respond to pandemic situations."

He cited an example of a survey done with 1,000 clients from Space Matrix and 1,700 clients from IA. The survey was undertaken to identify the issues companies are concerned about when planning for their employees' return after lockdown restrictions are lifted.

"By working together, we now have global research and insights. We can provide clients with a global perspective which wasn't available before," said Mr Chaudhry.



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