

# LD+A

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## Office 2.0

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Photos: Christopher Barrett

# Think Globally

Though headquartered in the American Midwest, a high-flying technology company deserved an internationally inspired design

BY PAUL TARRICONE

**F**or a company with offices and customers worldwide, a little flag waving only makes sense. For ShopperTrak, there proved to be no better place to wave the flag—all of them, really—than in the lobby of its new corporate headquarters high above Chicago on the 41<sup>st</sup> floor of the Willis Tower. Rather than cloth raised

on poles, these “flags” are actually custom fixtures—just one piece of the lighting plan devised by Gwen Grossman Lighting Design and architects Harley Ellis Devereaux (both local firms) that starts in the lobby and wends throughout the 52,000-sq ft space. “The big thing” was to reinforce the fact that ShopperTrak “is a worldwide



company,” says Gwen Grossman. “The minute you walk in, that’s the theme. They wanted to tie Chicago to all their other bases of operation.”

A technology company that provides retailers, malls and entertainment venues—including Mandalay Place, Crocs and Crate & Barrel—with foot traffic analytics and point-of-sale data,

ShopperTrak has offices in the U.S., Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and more than 1,000 customers worldwide. That global reach is driven home immediately through the lobby and reception area’s flag motif. “They had hanging flags in their previous office, so the architect wanted to replicate that, but do it with light,” says Gross-

Every day is Flag Day: Light boxes representing the flags of 26 nations line the lobby and reception area ceiling.

Decorative globes with plumen-shaped fluorescent lamps add a playful touch to the café.

Opposite page, the global theme carries through to the lounge, where a black textured wall with understated spheres is backlit by LED grazers. More globes appear in the pendant luminaire.



man, who received a 2014 IES Illumination Award for the project.

The custom flag fixtures are scattered throughout the elevator lobby and reception. These rectilinear light boxes are covered with acrylic that is backlit with LEDs to create thin, strip-like representations of the flags. A total of 26 flag luminaires were installed, including one for Great Britain—a nod to company CEO Christopher Ainsley, an Englishman and former geography major. The flags produce “high drama” with the open black ceiling as a backdrop, notes Grossman, and work in tandem with the black concealed pendant LED cylinders that provide ambient light in the lobby/reception area.

The reception wall, meanwhile, showcases an LED backlit company logo and glowing acrylic linear boxes to texturize the wood wall—part of the inviting entrance ShopperTrak desired.

## GLOBETROTTERS

The flags in the lobby/reception area set the tone for other areas of the space. “We’re really trying to make sure people understand we’re an international business when they walk in here,” says CEO Ainsley. Among the visual cues are large posters of different shopping environments around the world, boardrooms named after cities where the company has offices or clients, and a large, 8-9 ft wide ShopperTrak global map along the corridor.

Other areas of the office also express the international theme. In the café, large decorative globes with plumen-shaped fluorescent lamps identify ShopperTrak as more than a Chicago company. The café is also one of the more playful areas in the office, and uses more color on the walls, benches and tables than other areas, which are more architecturally black and white. LED cylinder downlights at the tables and small



linear black pendants at the kitchen island add additional light in the café.

Another informal area is the lounge-breakout room, complete with writable walls to encourage collaboration and impromptu meetings, and playful pops of color in the furniture. “The lounge has a retro-modern feel,” says Grossman. A black-on-black textured wall with subtle, globe-like spheres is backlit with LED wall grazers. Overhead is a modern pendant with 10 separate fluorescent globes to light the ceiling and the seating.

### LOOKING THE PART

A growing tech company’s headquarters, not surprisingly, also has to feel cutting-edge. For example, wood media walls throughout the space are grazed with linear LED light to accentuate the textured surfaces and allow the flat screen TV monitors (which show ShopperTrak’s technology in action) to pop off the wall surface.

## The Sweet Spot

A global user study on lighting quality perceived in offices conducted by Zumtobel and Fraunhofer IAO has shown that office users’ preferences with regard to color temperature differ very much. The range of color temperatures perceived as ideal is usually between 3000K and 6000K, with a majority preferring 4000K and 5000K scenarios.

The study also shows that office users rate their work situation significantly higher when it is possible for them to adjust the lighting to their needs. However, 57.4 percent of those surveyed have no influence—or only to a limited extent—on lighting control and therefore cannot optimize the lighting accordingly.

The office ceilings were intentionally left open to convey an industrial vibe and give the impression of an up-and-coming company. Fluorescent pendants—20 percent indirect to accentuate the ceiling and 80 percent direct to the work plane—was the lighting system used here. The employees were also furnished with an LED task lamp. At the drop-ceiling level, mechanical pieces made by the company can be displayed to clients touring the facility. The technology is illuminated by linear-slot fluorescent fixtures recessed into the wall.

The blue glass fronts of the smaller conference rooms are an abstract representation of storefronts. Within each room are floating square pendants which glow through the blue glass walls, as well as wall washing at the rear to add depth and contrast. “The floating pendant is a square inside a square room to keep everything rectilinear,” says Grossman.

The large training rooms use clean line recessed linear T5 fluorescents with square LED downlights and wall washers to create a layered lighting approach.

### SOUND INVESTMENT

*Global reach and high-tech company* were the overarching design themes. For those using the space, the response was more visceral. As one

The small conference rooms showcase floating square pendants which glow through the blue glass walls.



member of the staff said, “It’s a whole new atmosphere. Everything is really bright and vibrant, with a lot clean lines and spaces to collaborate.” Another employee added, “Everybody was wandering around for the first half of the day; I think productivity probably went down considerably.” A small price to pay for the days that follow. □

#### THE DESIGNER



**Gwen Grossman**, IALD, Member IES (2004), LC, is the founding designer of GGLD, certified in Cook County, IL, as a WBE (Women Owned Business Enterprise). She has been awarded numerous IES Awards of Merit and volunteers on the Board of Managers for the IES Chicago Section.

#### FAST FACTS

- The architecture makes use of flags and globe-like design elements to accentuate ShopperTrak’s international reach.
- LED and fluorescent sources were used.
- The project is LEED Silver Registered and uses 0.77 watts per sq ft, 30% below the 90.1-2007 target.