

The experts' opinion

For the latest view on the market from a leading contractor, we posed a few questions to Peter Nagle, Managing Director of BW: Workplace Experts.



Peter Nagle
Managing Director,
BW: Workplace Experts

Q
What are your thoughts on how 2021 will finish for you?

"From speaking with clients and consultants, it is hopefully shaping up to be very busy with lots of exciting opportunities in the pipeline. September for example always feels like a point of reset with the schools returning and in this particular year it was the point in 2021 when lots of people returned to work after what was a long break, so that's a positive sign for the sector overall. The market continues to be extremely competitive so we need to be focused on converting the tenders."

Q
What is BW's outlook for 2022? Do you see any lasting market changes resulting from the pandemic?

"Hopefully not, I think if the last few months have taught us anything, it's just how resilient the market is. The London market in particular has recovered well. That's not to say we don't have a long road ahead, we most certainly do! I would strike a note of caution in predicting what next year holds really. I've been with BW for 17 years

and so I know that the market can be unpredictable in any given year and you learn never to be surprised with what unfolds. I would be cautious about predicting what next year holds, however the current market intelligence is largely positive."

Q
Is BW anticipating a big change in the way people work?

"I think things will get back to normality fairly quickly. Of course many organisations will review their workplace strategy and there will be a degree of hybrid working: a mix of WFH and returning to the office, where specific roles allow this of course. And it depends what stages people are in their careers too of course. Senior managers might for instance have space at home for a more dedicated homeworking set-up but I appreciate that younger colleagues might not. For them, coming into the office is vital for career development and opportunities for continuous learning that just can't be replicated virtually."

I think there may be some parallels to be drawn in terms of anticipated changes in the wake of 9/11.



Architect: HLW



Architect: HLW

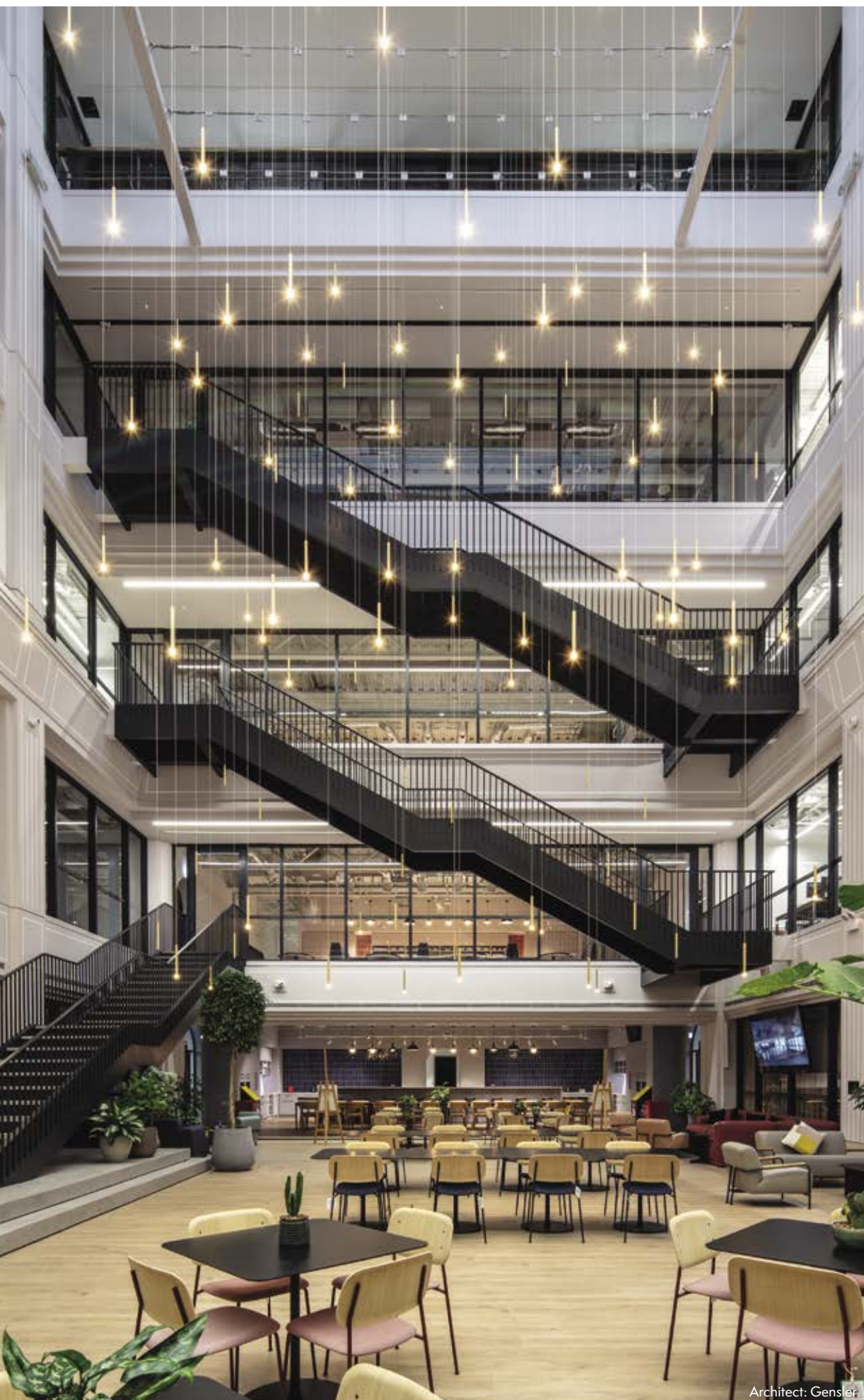
There was speculation then that people wouldn't want to go back to work in skyscrapers but two decades on and many tall buildings have since been built and occupied. With coronavirus, I think eventually working practices will go back to the way they were without much notice."



Various material shortages such as plasterboard and steel are a real concern.

Q
Are there any specific challenges for contractors?

"Various material shortages such as plasterboard and steel are a real concern for the industry as a whole and require careful management. There's even things like the shortage of microchips and the impact that has on the supply of AV equipment that you might not immediately think of."



Architect: Gensler

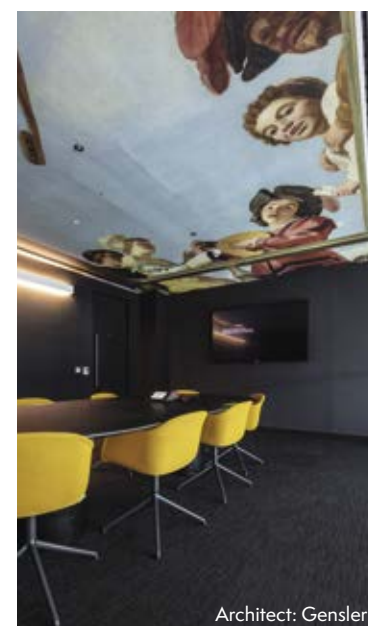
Attracting and retaining skilled labour within the construction industry has been a challenge for a number of years now and continues to be the case. This has been compounded by the summer holiday season and the pandemic of course; it's something we're all experiencing."

Q
Any stand out projects in the pipeline?

"In the past few years, we've attracted clients across a variety of sectors from pharmaceutical to legal to entertainment and that continues to be the case in terms of the projects we have in the pipeline."

Q
Any changes to the challenges of working in central London?

"Aside from the labour and material shortages I've mentioned, not really. There might be more people working from home in certain parts of the more central areas of the city which may have an impact on how we plan noisy works in the program. We've also known about the potential logistical consequences regarding the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) such as the upgrade of vehicles on the part of our suppliers for a long time. As part of our commitment to a sustainable supply chain, we are aware we must work closely with all of our suppliers to make sure our Net Zero Carbon Strategy is a success."



Architect: Gensler

Q
What are the key success factors in a good sub-contractor relationship?

"I would say collaboration, honesty and respect. We are only as good as our supply chain and we succeed or fail together. Central to everything we do is being Defect Free at Practical Completion (or DF@PC). Supplier performance management is one of the areas we focus on in regular workshops and training, using feedback and client engagement to pinpoint areas for continuous improvement."

BW is committed to being Net Zero Carbon by 2030 and also in terms of our supply chain, we are also constantly looking to improve its diversity and are aware that to appoint more diverse suppliers, we might need to work to encourage and develop them."



There are definitely advantages in using a one stop shop approach.

Q
What's good about your relationship with Specialist Group?

"I've been working with Specialist for a decade, which is testament to BW's relationship with them. I like the fact I have direct access to one of the owners/directors at all times. I love the family feel of SG and how they treat all their staff from top to bottom. They listen and are always responsive when needed which I also like. Also, SG have fully embraced the DF@PC."

Q
Do you see advantages in using an integrated supplier for joinery, glass and metal?

"There are definitely advantages in using a one stop shop approach. It makes the complete design, manufacture, install process easier, with less margin for delays, interface and quality issues."



Architect: Gensler

Q
What ways are you responding to the carbon challenge?

"We have set a company target of Net Zero Carbon across all 3 Scopes by 2030. Due to the nature of our operations; we do not directly purchase heat, electricity or fuel, own any vehicles or create any fugitive emissions through industrial processes so our Scope 1 & 2 emissions are already zero. We are therefore focussing our Net Zero Carbon Strategy Scope 3 which is concerned with emissions that are produced indirectly, such as by our supply chain, use of products or services or transport."

This is typically things like manufacturing materials and products used in our offices and projects, transport of materials and waste to and from site and electricity and water use on site. There is a three stage process we are committed to.

Firstly, we are going to focus our efforts on identifying and offsetting carbon, particularly looking at recording and reporting embodied carbon from the materials used in our projects and their transport. We will then use circular economy principles to avoid waste and return strip out or surplus products to the original or similar manufacturers for reuse

or reprocessing into new products. We have already successfully started using Take Back Schemes for materials such as carpet and ceiling tiles, raised access flooring, timber, paint tins and plasterboard. Finally, we are committed to a sustainable supply chain. That's why we are engaging with our supply chain to understand more about their methods so that we can look at the risks and opportunities for reducing our overall carbon footprint. Auditing the supply chain is key too and we already have the tools in place to do this. We know that a key part of responding to the climate emergency is to work closely with our suppliers to shape what we build and how it is built.