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Hollywood touch to designers

ONE of Birmingham's fastest growing creative outfits is bringing a taste of Hollywood to the city's streets.

383 Project, which is the brainchild of local graphic designers John Newbold and Sukhi Dehal, celebrated its first birthday in May by winning the contract to complete the full marketing, branding and website of Broad Street's Walk of Stars.

The concept recognises local people who have made a significant contribution to the world of music, television, film, radio, sport, business and literacy.

383 project has enjoyed a remarkable first year after using Business Link West Midlands to secure work with both the BBC and Channel 4, and seeing its designs hit the shelves on 12 million Sprite cans and bottles.

"We never expected the first 1e months to be so interesting," said John, who studied at Coventry University.

"When we launched the website we had over a million visitors log on in the first six weeks. Within that time, it was also featured by Jonathan Ross and Chris Moyles and was also named website of the day on Radio 2."

Hard on the heels of Walk of Stars, 383 Project is now working on the city's largest business and retail directory - www.broadstreet.co.uk - which launches later this month.



■ STAR QUALITY... graphic designers John Newbold and Sukhi Dehal.

EMPLOYMENT: 27pc of Midlands employees no longer office based

Home's where working day is

By Jon Griffin

MORE than a quarter of full-time employees in the Midlands spend part of their week working from home, a survey shows.

A total of 27 per cent of staff in the region are no longer office-based for some of their working duties, according to research from home insurer Zurich.

Around 74 per cent of Midlandsers who work from home want to avoid the commute into the office while 30 per cent of homeworkers in the region expect to spend more time at home in the coming year.

The survey says: "New research has

found that almost a third of full-time employees surveyed (30 per cent) spend time during the month working from home, clocking up an average of 15.73 hours.

"One in ten of the ad hoc homeworkers surveyed spend more than 40 hours each month and nearly one in twenty (four per cent) clock up more than 80 hours working from home.

"Even those who don't officially work from home find it difficult to leave the office behind, with one in five (21 per cent) respondents saying that they occasionally check e-mails or read documents from home.

"Avoiding the commute to and from

work is the most popular reason for homeworking, with 66 per cent of respondents citing it as an advantage.

"Peace and quiet from colleagues (55 per cent), freedom to choose working hours (50 per cent), flexibility (48 per cent) and lack of distractions (46 per cent) complete the top five reasons for home working.

"Those surveyed also appreciate a few home comforts - one in five (22 per cent) welcome the chance for a lie-in, while nearly one in ten (eight per cent) tune into daytime TV during their working day."

Mark Searles, Zurich's managing director, Retail, said: "We are going to see the popularity of homeworking rise."

InsideView

With John James

Sorry, boss, I'm off to meet my mates

OBSERVERS of the trade union movement will not be surprised by the latest wacky pronouncement from the TUC relating to "cyberslacking" in the workplace.

Many companies have forbidden their employees access to internet social websites such as Facebook because they are concerned that their staff would spend too much time reading news feeds about their friends and taking part in other cyber-activities such as online Scrabble.

However, the TUC says that cracking down on the use of sites like Facebook is not a "sensible solution" and that it is "unreasonable" for employers to try to stop their staff from having a life outside work.

Well it seems to me that employees do NOT have a right to organise their social life whilst AT work because they are paid to do full-time jobs - not to organise their private lives: an attitude clearly shared by Tesco, which has banned Facebook, allowing access only if workers can make a valid

case for using it for their job.

Another problem with taking the TUC line (which specifically encourages employers to allow staff to electronically "poke" friends and join "just for fun" interest groups whilst at work) is that it generates a legal minefield for employers and employees alike, including challenges to a worker's right of privacy.

It is therefore splendidly ironic that it was a large London law firm which was recently forced to make an embarrassing U-turn on its Facebook ban after a staff revolt.

Pathetically, it backed down and decided to reinstate access because the employees claimed the site had a "potential for business networking" (oh yeah, sure).

So now you know why we go to work - to kill time during the day until we can fulfil our social engagements at night (the ones of course we set up during "work time").

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