Early in 2014, global engineering powerhouse Aecom moved into new offices in Pretoria, South Africa. With more than 10,000 employees worldwide, Aecom is consistently ranked at the top of Engineering News Record’s Top 500 Design Firms, and has been named one of the World’s Most Admired Companies by Fortune magazine for the last two years. The new working environment for the Pretoria team includes several Ecophon solutions throughout the facility, but the most impressive part of the building is without any doubt the atrium. Originally just an entrance, Aecom decided that the space could be used as a dining and lounge area as well.

A silent explosion of shapes makes a dramatic atrium

Ecophon® Solo™ Square
Ecophon® Solo™ Baffle

Design in ACTION

Photography by Thys Dullaart

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Designing with sound absorbing materials

“As high noise levels were expected, the design should include absorbing materials”, stated Kobus Kunz, Architect at Hofman and Partners. Kobus wanted to explore the effects of an explosion and how it could be translated both visually and practically. The result is a complex but visually stunning installation of Ecophon Solo Square and Ecophon Solo Baffle in a combination of standard and custom sizes.

Precision installation at a dizzying height

While the panels themselves are simple to install, the scale of the atrium and the complexity of the design required focus and precision. In total, around 252 wire hangers were used to install 220 Ecophon panels. The scaffolding used for the installation was more than 50 feet (15 meters) high. To make the impressive installation look and function perfectly meant a lot of precision work and miniscule attention to details when lining up panels horizontally and vertically.

“We use this area mainly for informal meetings, training and presentations. The acoustic installation made a huge difference not just functionally but aesthetically as well and is very comfortable not only for the speakers but also the staff. The design and concept of the installation was done by the architect and approved by Aecom management. We are very happy with the beautiful design and the results as well. It’s not just a feature but a piece of art.”

— Kevin James, Aecom Senior Management

“Photography by Thys Dullaart

PROJECT
Aecom
Pretoria Office

LOCATION
Pretoria, South Africa

PRODUCTS
Ecophon® Solo™ Square
Ecophon® Solo™ Baffle

PERFORMANCE
Provides an NRC of 0.95 for premium sound absorption and a LR of 0.85 to maximize ambient lighting

ARCHITECT
Hofman and Partners
Architects, Kobus Kunz

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1-800-233-8990
Improved acoustic conditions

The end result looks fabulous and the acoustic conditions have definitely improved. The long reverberation time has been reduced dramatically and the Ecophon solutions have made a huge difference to the noise levels as well. Greg Mocké, the Ecophon architectural sales manager on the project explains, “When talking to the architect in one corner of the atrium, we could not overhear the installer who was standing 15 meters (50 feet) away from us, also having a conversation.” Aecom Senior Manager Kevin James adds, “The acoustic installation has improved the working conditions and we often receive comments on how quiet the various spaces are in the office. The clarity and intelligibility of speech have also improved dramatically.”