

# INTERIOR

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PROJECT Nº. 001

# SPARK

Renaming the company provided the ideal opportunity to rethink its brand image and its retail spaces.

WORDS | CAMILLE KHOURI | PHOTOS | PROVIDED

PROJECT NAME	Spark	CLIENT	Spark
DESIGN	Spaceworks Design Group	PROJECT TYPE	Retail
LOCATION	Auckland	FLOOR AREA	Various

**I RECENTLY** heard the story of a mother telling her young daughter that mobile phones had not been around when she was a child. The daughter replied incredulously: how did you google? Indeed, mobile phones are no longer just for calling people, and telecommunication companies are no longer dealing simply with calling plans and dollar-per-minute deals.

Telecom realised this and saw the need for a change from its more staid, traditional, corporate image to a youthful brand that comprehends the latest technology – hence the launch of Spark. Spaceworks was contracted to bring the new brand’s image into its stores. Christy Ormand, Head of Retail Design at Spaceworks, said the first step was to look at where the company was as Telecom and where it wanted to be as Spark.

“The Telecom stores were very white, with an injection of blue in the form of signage. The intention was to be neutral and clean but the company realised it was a sterile environment for the residential consumer. Spark is more encompassing of an entire customer base rather than being business focussed. They wanted to create more community and to appeal to the younger target market, especially in Auckland, and to create a telco retail space like no other in New Zealand.”

In terms of materials, Spaceworks chose to use whitewashed American oak cabinetry and concrete flooring to give the stores an urban look, although this is not taken to the extreme, as too much of a raw aesthetic may have alienated the business customer. Timber counters and storage cabinets are in the informal yet

clean style you might see in a café. Stools, chairs and benches allow plenty of comfortable seating options. Lighting is varied soft, with pendants hanging over the central counter spaces.

Space planning played a large part in creating a friendly environment. Spaceworks firstly did away with the traditional point-of-sale counter, replacing it with smaller sales counters throughout the stores in among the merchandising displays. It also removed the customer service counter, traditionally to the rear of the store, and encouraged Spark to make customer service and retail one and the same.

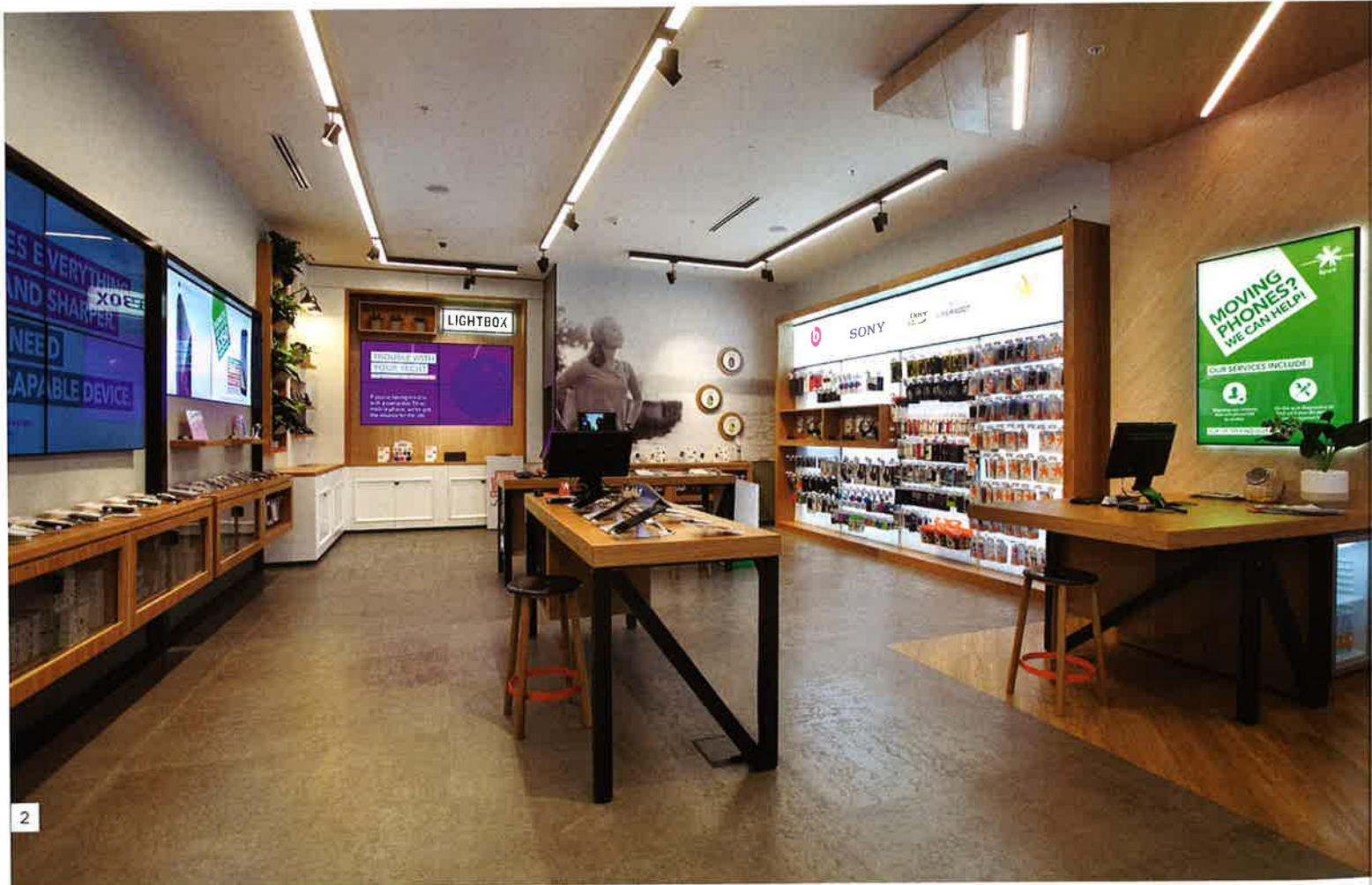
“In our research in the existing stores, we noticed that, although customers were coming around the side of the counters to look at the monitors with the staff, so we brought the staff out from behind these counters and onto the shop floor. Staff can now manage side-by-side transactions with the customers,” says Ormand.

Storage in Telecom stores was out the back, so staff members would need to leave their customers to retrieve products. The new stores feature below-counter storage, so the retail team is able to stay on floor. Also, phones on the display shelves are no longer locked to the displays, but feature alarm chips for security so the customer can pick them up and play with them.

“The more you can get the customer to engage with the product, the more you can help the sales. Many people want to pick phones up and see how well they fit in their pockets,” says Christy.

To make each store seem more open and welcoming, Spaceworks widened the entrance by removing the shop window from one side. In the remaining shop window, the visual

1. (Previous spread) Detail from the Queen Street, Auckland, store.
2. A clean-lined look is more in keeping with the new company name.
3. Whitewashed oak and concrete provide a neutral backdrop to colourful promotional displays.



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PARK LOVES MOVIES  
Get our deals at [spark.co.nz/thanks](http://spark.co.nz/thanks)

**MADE FOR MUSIC**  
\$499

**PREPAY. PAY LESS**  
\$199

**YOUR OFFICE IN YOUR POCKET**

SONY

SPARK

BRING YOUR PHONE WITH YOU WHEN YOU SWITCH TO SPARK

LIVE MOVIE DEALS

PARK LOVES MOVIES



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merchandising is integrated into the design of the store, rather than appearing to be removed.

“This was about creating a much more interesting, fashion-focussed shop front than what was just a poster and a mobile phone on display. There was a second layer of visual merchandising to try to bring these intangible stories to life,” says Ormand.

These stories are told in creative ways, using visual props, such as the pile of office equipment in the business section of the store, letting the customer know all these appliances can be replaced by their mobile phone. In the entertainment area, a popcorn machine is a visual prompt about the movie ticket programme offered by the company.

“Often, in other telco stores, there is a couch set-up with a TV to allude to a lounge, but Spark wasn’t creating large flagship stores and this would have been just a waste of space. Instead, we have the kitchen shelf set-up at the rear of the stores with mouldings and a green wall, creating a welcoming environment to showcase the home products and services,” says Ormand.

Spaceworks also designed lockable cabinets in each store to allow customers with low juice to charge their phones while they shop. Branded Spark water bottles are free for the taking from the bar fridges next to the soft bench seating.

The new store in Queen Street, while not an official flagship, is a larger store than most with a café integrated into the retail space. Further stores will be rolled out over the next three to four years. ♦

4 - 6. Spaceworks was inspired by a kitchen aesthetic, rather than the typical games-room or lounge look. 7. Adding a small café reinforces the message of portable, go-anywhere technology.



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**CLIENT STATEMENT**

The time had come for us to evolve our store format to deliver the best-possible experience for Spark customers and also for our frontline team. Clearly the big change for us has been the transition to a much more customer focused brand in Spark and that needed to turn up at retail; ultimately we see this as being the physical face of the brand. Following a research trip on global best practice, we had a very clear vision of the elements that we wanted to deliver and, as a cross-functional team, we boiled this down to five key things:

- **Access to people:** our customers tell us that is the main reason that they come in
- **Product as the hero:** making it easy for customers to touch and play, and understand our products and services
- **The environment:** making it welcoming and less ‘intimidating’ than was traditional retail
- **Ease of access:** ensuring that the store supports the increasing demand of customers to interact easily with us across multiple channels.

Capability will continue to evolve in this space (as technology evolves) so there is an element of how we can future-proof to plug some things in down the track.

- **Operations:** the format simply needs to work for our customers and our staff. How could we become more efficient to enable the team to spend more time with customers?

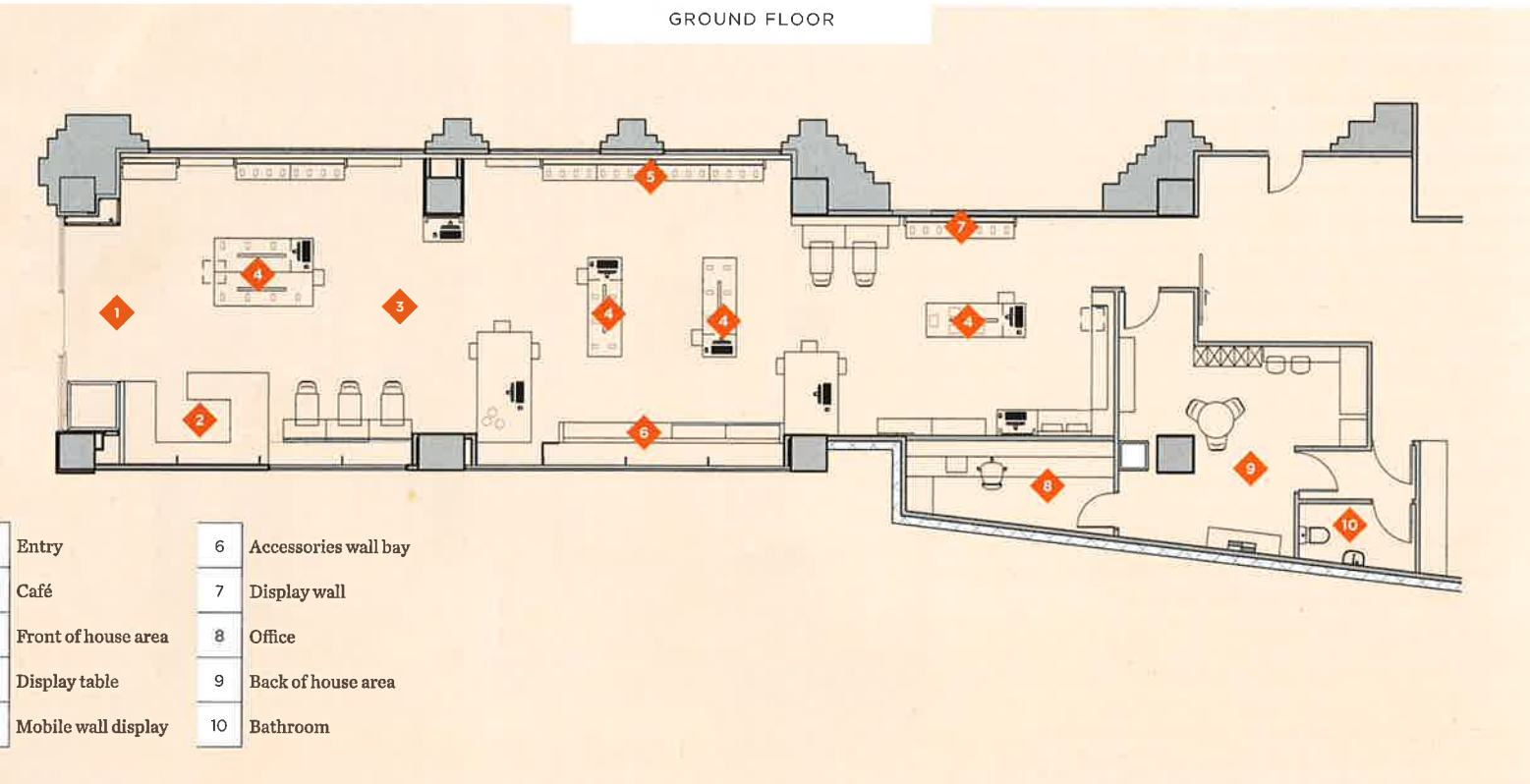
*Greg Clark - Head of Consumer Sales, Spark*

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Client:** Spark  
**Property owner:** Wallace Development  
**Design practice:** Spaceworks Design Group  
**Design team:** Christy Ormand, Jessica White, Lizzi Hines, Kelly Rowe  
**Project size:** 190m<sup>2</sup>, including back-of-house toilets and staff area  
**Construction company:** Format  
**Engineer:** Aurecon  
**Project manager:** Spark  
**Interior architects:** Spaceworks Design Group  
**Façade – café area:** Carter Holt Harvey  
**External Walls:** Barn Doors NZ  
**Ceiling:** Resene

**Flooring:** Polyflor; Karndean  
**Furniture – indoor:** Format  
**Furniture – indoor – stools:** IMO  
**Furniture – indoor – tables:** Titan Furniture  
**Furniture – indoor – chairs:** Simon James  
**Internal columns:** Ambitec  
**Internal walls – café:** Format acoustic panelling  
**Laminates:** Prime Panels  
**Lighting:** Light Plan  
**Lighting pendants:** Lighting direct  
**Lighting – café pendants:** Eunice Taylor  
**Paint:** Resene  
**Signage:** Signcraftsmen  
**External lighting:** Boudi

GROUND FLOOR



# SPARK QUEEN STREET

Thoughtful planning and a material palette that emphasises warmth and accessibility are the hallmarks of this new street-side retail space.

A LARGER FLOOR AREA MEANT SPACEWORKS was able to incorporate a café into the design of the Queen Street store, which is Spark's only street-side store.

"Developing the coffee offer was a secondary brief in the design process. The café needed to have its own identity but to merge, to a degree, with the rest of the store. We have taken the steel framing elements from the joinery used in the store as a framework to create the café zone. Darker, moodier timbers and blacks are used to work in with the Flight Coffee brand," says designer Christy Ormand.

The concrete and timber ceiling in the Queen Street store differs from ceilings in Spark stores in the malls, which all have plasterboard. After removing the low grid and tile ceiling, the designers found an extra 500mm in the cavity. By leaving the concrete and timber exposed, they were able to introduce more natural and raw elements, which fitted with the shop design.

Spaceworks used 3D modelling to see how the café would integrate with the Spark store. Knowing this in advance of installation was especially important as the café would have counter service onto the street, which would mean penetrating the façade of the store. When the design company was in the concept development phase with Spark, they created a space plan for the stores, which involved laying out a full-scale, physical model using cardboard boxes where the furniture would be. The designers and clients were able to have a walk-through and see where any tight spots might be and where queues could build. This was particularly important to Spark as previous Telecom stores had queuing issues around the sales counters.

Spark stores offer virtual queuing – although Ormand says customers are still learning to trust it. The system takes a photo of every customer as they enter the store and the picture comes up on the computer, so staff can approach people in order of their arrival.

**"The café needed to have its own identity but to merge to a degree with the rest of the store."**

*Christy Ormand*



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1. Natural wood display cabinets. 2 - 3. Black, wall-mounted light fixtures line the walls. 4. The Queen Street location features an in-store café.