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Introduction

Branding has typically included variables such as business cards, logos, pantone references and witty advertising using social media profiles and websites. While all these variables are crucial in the creation of a strong brand, workspace design including furniture and lighting have a dramatic impact on how the brand is perceived by both its clients and staff. Sharmila Kumbhat, Director of K-Lite Industries is of the opinion that branding a space must be done thoughtfully as it stems from the core beliefs and guiding principles of a company. In the year 1977, K-Lite Industries began a long journey of innovation into lighting products by chasing the dream of establishing a luminaire manufacturing company in India. After Sharmila undertook the reins as director of K-Lite in 2011, the company has progressed tremendously with a turnover increase of over 400 percent. K-Lite also looks into international markets under her directorship when it was awarded the prestigious "Asia One - World's Greatest Brands" in 2017-2018. All this led to an overhaul in the K-Lite corporate workspace design as a branding strategy to reinforce its work culture with existing and potential employees, attract fresh talent, and demonstrate the embodiment of its corporate philosophy to its clients.



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Creating E-Lite

One section of the K-Lite assembling unit on the first floor was converted into a new 3600-squarefeet corporate workspace creating a direct link with the supply chain and providing scope for future expansion. Having majored in design during her postgraduate studies, Sharmila took it upon herself to redesign the space. She was quick to realize that a forward thinking culture of collaboration and creativity will be best reflected through an open plan office design. She was also conscious about the underwriting role of a lighting designer for embodying the K-Lite brand in the workspace. Hence, Lighting Research & Design was brought on board in the early stages of design. When determining how to brand the physical workspace, the first discussion centred on understanding the guiding principles of K-Lite. These principles were used to guide how the clients, employees and visitors will experience the space, thereby creating a springboard for all other design aspects.

Embracing the concept of an optimal workspace for all associates implied equal access to all amenities including daylight and other environmental benefits for all employees. Illustrating the commitment of K-Lite to its staff. However, the design team faced several challenges during the conversion of an old factory into a workspace that will be conducive to urban consumption. One of the main challenges was the very low ceiling height of the existing factory building. Low ceilings can make a space seem cramped and oppressive. Although it was not possible to raise the ceiling due to architectural limitations, the design solution was to create a roomier ambience and give the illusion of a more voluminous space by the paying attention to colour, lighting and style.