Unilever House
London, UK

"One of the principal remits on the job was to manage the internal natural and artificial light levels and reduce solar glare, whilst avoiding a 'gap tooth smile' effect from the blinds that were not lined up at the end of the day"

comments Kevin Bloxham, director, Levolux.

Background:

Unilever House occupies a prominent site on Victoria Embankment, overlooking the River Thames and Blackfriars Bridge in the City of London. Opened in June 1932 for Unilever as the company's global HQ, this Grade II listed building was in need of major refurbishment seventy years on.

The challenge:

After almost four years of work, the redevelopment of Unilever House turned the once dark interior into an airy, state-of-the-art working environment. Unilever HQ now faced a new challenge – how to manage so much additional natural light. Working alongside companies such as Lutron and Levolux, the latest in natural light control technology was installed to manage the ever changing balance between the artificially and naturally lit interior.

Lutron's Sivoia QED® electronic drive for controlling roller blinds includes:

A quiet electronic drive (44 dBA at three feet), that moves blinds in perfect unison

Minimal light gaps around the roller blind

Simple installation, and a flexible design that can work in virtually any location

The solution:

Solar heat gain and glare throughout the South Easterly side of the building were major issues for the architects Kohn Pederson Fox Associates. Unilever House sits 45 degrees onto the Thames, giving it some of the best views of the river, however its position also means that the 8th floor dining area, director's dining room and meeting spaces, as well as all cellular offices from floors three to seven are vulnerable to considerable solar heat gain and glare as light levels increase throughout the summer months.

Over 200 electronically controlled fabric blinds that manage solar heat gain and glare were installed throughout the South Eastern and Northern sides of the building, alongside blackout blinds for particular meeting rooms. Lutron's Sivoia QED motor drives technology was installed into all the blinds and linked to photosensors, to ensure the ultimate automatic control of internal light levels. In addition, all the Sivoia QED drives were linked to Lutron keypads for individual control as required.

The results:

Not only has the combination of Levolux blinds and Lutron Sivoia QED motor drive technology been highly successful in managing solar heat gain and glare, but from an aesthetic point of view as well. Kevin continues: "One of the principal remits on the job was to manage the internal natural and artificial light levels, whilst avoiding a 'gap tooth smile' effect from the blinds that were not lined up at the end of the day.

The linking of the blinds to photosensors has enabled all of the blinds to be progammed to lower and rise automatically throughout the floors as light levels alter throughout the day and evening and enabled them to be realigned for external symmetry at the close of play each day."

The end result at Unilever House speaks for itself. The 350,000 sq ft of the structure has been stylishly redeveloped providing Unilever with high-quality, flexible spaces ideal for the company's modern office and operational requirements.

Client	Unilever
Architects	Kohn Pederson Fox Associates
Installers	Levolux
Equipment provider	Lutron Electronics Co., Inc.
Photography	Lutron
Lutron products	Sivoia QED motor drive technology and Lutron Keypads

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