



# Insured Success

## The Willis Building

**Yes, it is possible to install a cashless system that increases spend-per-head and footfall; that eliminates queuing and requires less operational staff...**

The system: VMC's Metro; the client: Willis; the location: the heart of the City of London.



**The Background: nothing left to chance**  
Willis has a corporate objective that's easily understood: 'we've never been more passionate about our vision of becoming the best insurance brokerage in the world.' To help get there, recently the firm launched a new brand promise, which drives its every action: 'Willis will always challenge the status-quo to create new and better ways to serve our clients' best interests.'

With more than 16,000 active associates employed globally, Willis is undoubtedly a major international player and, as you'd expect, the need to attract and retain the most effective staff is pivotal to delivering its objectives – hence, they're constantly challenging the status-quo to create new and better ways of becoming the employer of choice for the best people the industry has to offer.



Andrew Eastwood,  
Client Services Manager

As a statement of confidence and of future intent, The Willis Building, its brand-new, 'green', high-tech, state-of-the-art London headquarters - located across the street from Lloyd's - will take some beating.

London's fourth-tallest skyscraper, a stone's throw from 'The Gherkin', is a landmark building - proof positive that when Willis states 'we never settle for second best or rely on the old ways of doing things', they really mean it.

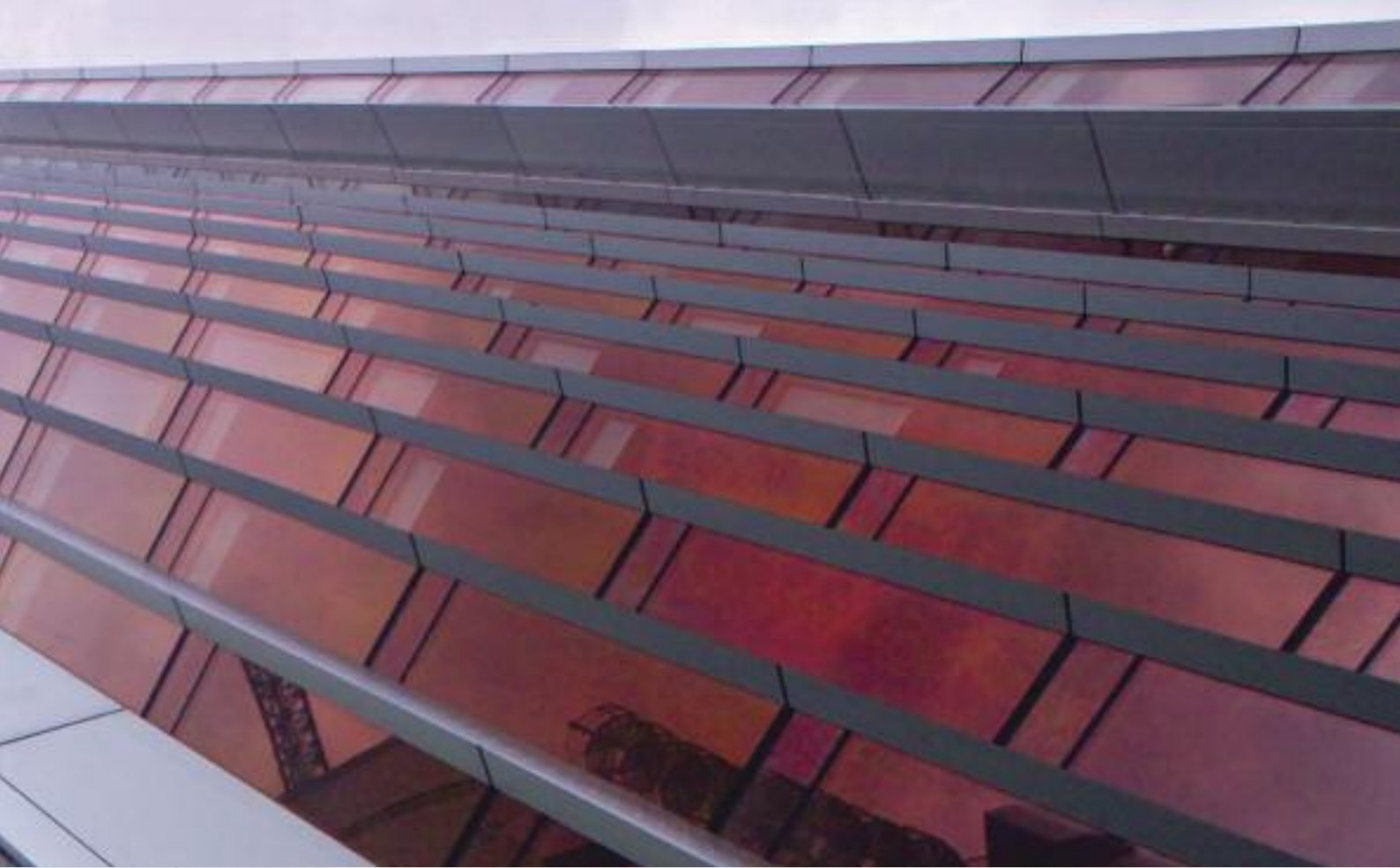
From the outside, the facility is breathtaking and the same applies internally, most evidently in the company's catering facilities. Located on the fifteenth floor, and benefiting from floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook a jaw-dropping panorama of the whole of London, Willis staff can rest, relax and re-fuel in a location, and in surroundings, that would do credit to a Michelin starred restaurant.

As you'd expect, nothing has been left to chance - and it's no surprise that the cashless payment system that some 1,600 staff have come to take for granted, is Metro, by VMC.

### **Choosing VMC: two into one will go - and no compromise**

The Willis contract didn't come easy to Britain's pre-eminent provider of cashless solutions. In fact, the firm was painstaking in its choice of technology partner, as Andrew Eastwood, Client Services Manager, recalls: 'From 2004, when the new building was announced, we began the process of looking at new systems on the market for the building in general and we were very aware that our contemporaries were all offering cashless payment', he said. 'It was a case of researching what they (the cashless system solution providers) were doing, and the VMC name came up. We got them in to have a chat and it started from there.'

VMC chose to let its Metro product speak for itself and invited a delegation from Willis to 'touch and feel' the system in similar installations nearby. It's easy to make claims about a product, but site visits allow potential clients to draw their own conclusions, and it was one of the VMC Metro system's unique features - the fact that two card readers can be linked simultaneously to one till - that raised eyebrows immediately. 'We particularly liked



the fact that there was one till operator running two queues', Andrew says. He saw at once that the system would allow him to cut down on staff, without compromising the service provided to customers.

Impressed with the Metro system, Willis management ensured that there would be a sustainable cultural fit between themselves and their would-be supplier. 'Just working with VMC's sales team through the tender process, we really liked their style and approach. They were very efficient, very professional; they didn't keep us waiting for information and they couldn't be more helpful,' Andrew says.

The fact that they were easy to work with was clearly a factor in VMC winning such a prestigious contract. However, ultimately it came down to the company's reputation. 'We spoke to people in the business who are doing what we're doing using VMC and they were all very positive about the name,' Andrew says. 'That gave us a lot of confidence.' Ultimately, it got VMC the job...

### **Building up to the 'go-live': 'it went like clockwork'**

Logistically, it could have been a nightmare. Staff members from four separate locations were scheduled to move into an un-tried building – no wonder that there were fraught nerves amongst Willis management and staff alike. 'Obviously, the extent of the project meant that it required a huge communications plan' Andrew Eastwood admits, 'not least because Willis were 'going cashless' for the first time. We're a forward thinking company', he said, 'quite modern, with lots of young people, so (the concept of) cashless wasn't actually a huge challenge. VMC produced a lot of information and a lot of help and advice from their previous contracts. They attended the weekly presentations that we did for new staff coming into the building, so they were on hand to answer questions and they brought sample equipment in so that staff could try it for themselves.'

The nett result was a satisfying one. A very robust roll-out plan was put in place and, according to Andrew, 'it went like clockwork. We were ready on time and it just seemed to work smoothly from Day One.'



**The Operator's Point of View: 'With 8-900 transactions every lunchtime, it's been a dream'**

Nick Nunn's previous experience of a competitor's cashless system wasn't all it might have been. 'When it worked it was very good', he recalls, 'but it was very unreliable in terms of system errors and we ended up spending a great deal of our time trying to solve problems.' But that wasn't the worst of it... 'The service we received from the supplier wasn't really fantastic to be honest.'

As the catering contractor's manager, tasked with delivering a fluent, efficient catering service, you might say that Nick had misgivings – not least because his new customers were being presented with a cashless system for the first time. 'I was expecting a lot of negativity towards the system,' he admits, 'but I have to say that, because of the work Willis had done in conjunction with VMC, it was very seamless. All of the possible areas of complaint had been addressed beforehand.'

It wasn't the last pleasant surprise he was to enjoy.

'I don't get involved with the VMC system a great deal because it tends to look after itself. To be honest, it's been a dream, really, in that respect. Very few people are unhappy with the system and those people who are not comfortable with a completely cashless system are able to use the visitors' terminal (to load their cards), which doesn't rely on their having to use a credit or debit card.'

Nick's other concerns were rather more pragmatic: 'When I started here and I saw just two till points I was concerned with how we would cope with a busy service, but when you see the system in reality it works well. The fact that there are two card readers on each till means that the cashier can move on to the next transaction whilst the customer is finding their card and placing it into the reader. We very rarely have queues, so long

as we have both till points open and a competent cashier on each one. For a restaurant that's completing between eight and nine hundred transactions each lunchtime, we don't have an issue with queues.'

By Nick's reckoning, without the VMC Metro system in place, 'we'd require three or four terminals, and in this day and age clients just don't have the space or the manpower to do that.'

**The Future: music to your ears?**

To stand in a quiet corner during service, and to watch as upwards of eight-hundred people descend upon Willis' restaurant in the space of just an hour, is to see for yourself that the VMC Metro cashless payment system really, really works. Quite simply, there are no queues at the checkout, even at the height of service; and that means no grumbles, no long faces – and no problems.

The building has card loaders stationed conveniently throughout, and busy Willis employees have taken to using the system like the proverbial ducks take to water. And as for customers' reactions to the system, it's the stuff of dreams – if you're a catering manager. One diner told us: 'I always end up spending more money than I planned to...'

Isn't that music to the ears?

*The future of volume catering has arrived... It's being enjoyed right now in the Willis Building, and it could be enjoyed very soon in yours...*



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