

Communication on Progress



October 2017

Contents

- 3. About Nota Bene
- 5. Our mission, goals and values
- 8. A statement of Support
- 9. Key areas of CSR
- 12. Projects for a big family (Human rights and Labour)
- 19. Projects for high expectations (Human rights and Labour)
- 21. Projects for a great future (Human rights and Labour)
- 24. Projects for our planet (Environment)
- 27. Anti-corruption

About Us

Nota Bene was founded in 2001 as the Studio of interior solutions. As the first highly specialized organization in the field of interior design in Belarus, we have worked our way up from the studio of customized interior design to the project team, applying comprehensive approach to problem solving.

Maxim Maksimenko is a co-founder, art director and initiator of the Studio of architecture and interior design Nota Bene.

Tatiana Antipova is a co-founder, CEO of the Studio of architecture and interior design Nota Bene.

Thanks to multidisciplinary interior and architectural experience, the NB team ensures the result and high standard of projects regardless of the geographic location of the facility. NB has customers and implemented its projects all over the world (Belgium, Norway, Ukraine, Montenegro, Russia, Kazakhstan, Cyprus, Italy, the USA, Saudi Arabia, Belarus).

Publications in international professional magazines: Perfect Homes International, New Builds & Development, ID.interior, IN / EX Magazine, Salon deLUX, Salon, etc.

Tatiana and Maxim are actively engaged in educational activities. They are the initiators of professional events - NB nights, NB days for designers, architects and students in Belarus.

First of all, an independent architecture and interior design studio Nota Bene is its team. The Studio team is one of the biggest and most successful among similar studios in Belarus. The NB team consists of highly-qualified architects, designers, engineers, visualizers, project managers. We manage to produce 40+ projects per year, including projects of the highest level of complexity.



Our Mission

To create architecture and interior design projects, which become the source of power and inspiration

Our Values

1) PROFESSIONALISM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Each NB employee is a true professional in the chosen field, who strives for development and professional growth, who learns and grows with the team and who is able to take responsibility for the result of the work.

2) RESULT-ORIENTED

We do not create virtual projects. Each employee sees the result of the work (including intermediate stages) and provide all the necessary means to achieve it. The task of everyone is to ensure this result and create the drawings and plans, which will be clear and understandable to the builders and other contractors. All Nota Bene projects are brought to the logical point.

3) OPENNESS AND SUPPORT

Each NB employee is committed to creative synergy. We are the team where everyone follows one goal – to create the best project. We do not compete, we learn, we share our experience and try to help each other to become better. This is our strength – we are together.

4) INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY

Each NB employee is a proactive participant of each studio project, a person who never stops, develops, improves his skills and broadens his professional horizons. This is a person, who is not afraid of challenges and changes – he is flexible and always ready to learn new things.

5) CREATIVE SUNERGY

Each NB employee strives for creative synergy. We are the team and everyone aspires to create the best project. We do not compete, but learn and share our experience, trying to make each other better.

6) PASSION FOR WORK

Everything we do, we should do sincerely, with passion. Love your craft and it will love you.

Employees who share corporate values, the philosophy and mission of the company, are able to solve tasks of any complexity effectively. Employees, who feel that they are a part of the Team.



Nota Bene joined the UN Global Compact initiative in 2016. We strive to lead socially responsible business. We are eager to provide all necessary opportunities for solving the problems of society both at global and local levels. Having joined the UN Global Compact, we reaffirmed our readiness to implement the principles of corporate social responsibility in business practice systematically.

We respect the UN Global Compact principles building sustaining relationships with each other, with customers and society. We respect all the religious denominations, nationalities and minorities. The Global Compact is based on the requirements of public social reporting and transparency of the company's activities, as well as employees' interest in initiatives and activities aimed at implementing the principles of the Global Compact.

Statement of Continued Support

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I am pleased to confirm that *Nota Bene* supports the ten principles of the Global Compact on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

With this communication, we express our intent to implement these principles. We are committed to making the Global Compact and its principles part of the strategy, culture and day-to-day operations of our company, and to engaging in collaborative projects, which advance the broader development goals of the United Nations, particularly the Millennium Development Goals. *Nota Bene* will make a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the public.

We recognize that a key requirement for participation in the Global Compact is the annual submission of a Communication on Progress (COP) that describes our company's efforts to implement the ten principles. We support public accountability and transparency, and therefore commit to report on progress within *one year* of joining the Global Compact, and *annually* thereafter according to the Global Compact COP policy.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Tatiana Antipova

CEO of architecture and interior design studio "Nota Bene"

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'a' followed by a checkmark-like flourish.

KEY AREAS OF CSR

In our Studio we develop:

- Team-building projects
- Providing advanced opportunities for project development, modern equipment and ergonomic working space
- Providing conditions for a comfortable pastime throughout the working day: a kitchen for lunch, a terrace and a patio for summer recreation, a space for yoga and aerobics classes and more
- Training and professional development, exchange of experience and development of competencies

Our projects and initiatives:

- Projects for a big family
- Projects for high expectations
- Projects for our planet
- Projects for a great future

HUMAN RIGHTS

PRINCIPLE 1

Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

PRINCIPLE 2

Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

LABOUR

PRINCIPLE 3

Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

PRINCIPLE 4

The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

PRINCIPLE 5

The effective abolition of child labour.

PRINCIPLE 6

The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Nota Bene complies with the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our customers trust us with one of the most important things in their life – home. We are not only architects and interior designers, but also good psychologists. We do our best to understand our customers and their needs and wishes. We feel happy when know that our work changes our customers, improves their self-evaluation or relationships in the family.



PROJECTS FOR A BIG FAMILY

We are sure that office design can drive workplace productivity. We design offices for life and, besides boosting sales and brand promotion, our goal is health of employees and a positive environment in an office.

Today even technology companies strive to create office spaces with a positive work environment. One of the most popular examples is Google. Their offices are created not only for effective work, but also for recreation, inspiration, meetings with customers.

How to plan a space with a creative atmosphere that will be comfortable for the team and customers and will reflect the field of activity at the same time?

We have individual customer questionnaires: for corporate and private customers, for landscape, exterior or interior design of apartments and houses.

What does Nota Bene offer?

As a rule, the customer formulates what he wants. We offer all range of services from creating a concept to its implementation and complete project management and package.

In fact, it only seems that the amount of design solutions is innumerable. However, if you combine all the wishes of the customer, the characteristics of the space, the budget, you will see how specific it is.

We pay much attention to office layout planning. It is possible to arrange office seating and equipment in many different ways. Here a customer's vision is very important. For example, in an advertising agency – there are already some communication scripts among employees and its customers. Alternatively, all the employees hate red color, etc. We need to take care of every little detail.

How to create a positive working space?

First of all, the characteristics of office life are important. The scenario affects a project concept, a layout solution, etc. The most important is light, ventilation, a comfortable workplace. A place to relax and eat. What will be painted on the walls is secondary.

An employee does not need to be chained to a single desk and monitor in modern world. After all, very often work, especially in the creative field, demands inspiration and fresh ideas. You should devote time to think something over and comprehend it. Moreover, even if an employee is in a bean bag chair, it does not mean that he does nothing. He is busy working out his goal.

Today only time is regulated. Sometimes we need time for self-education and strategy development process. And it doesn't matter whether you do it at the desk or on a bean bag chair. Very often, you need only the sense of freedom at the workplace. Such bean bag chairs exist as an attribute, component of a creative space.

An office is creative when all the scenarios of a person's life (entering the office, leaving, and working on different tasks) are thought out and brought together into a cycle. It is very important to think it over, even at the stage of choosing office space.

For example, **the office of educational center Federal Leader Group.**

Federal Leader Group is an educational center. The headquarters - Moscow. This center works with managers, leaders of large corporations. Developing the interior design of the center, the task was to create a comfortable and powerful atmosphere.

We wanted to show the progressiveness of FLG, focus on technological development and freedom. We wanted to show individual approach and unique knowledge a customer can gain there. The aim was to create a space with concept, history and life script. No white walls, blue chairs and blinds like in typical conference halls.

We chose color scheme concept of Luis Barragán – complicated and bright color combinations. There is innovative vinyl flooring. Acoustic panels, which allow to listen and to hear, are incorporated in the walls.



We share value concepts with our corporate customers

Any commercial object does not exist without the company concept, key idea, values. The company mission, goals and values, peculiarities, management and market position play crucial role when we start to work on a project. Architecture and interior design is not only look.

There are marketing coordinators in our team. The lead designers and architects of the Studio are now taking additional marketing course. Such approach allows the customer to obtain not only a design concept, but also an

effective business. Of course, to develop business each company needs marketing research. Today both private companies and state-owned enterprises understand the need to conduct such research and are ready to change for better. In Belarus the quality of goods and services have improved significantly, and good design gradually becomes an indispensable part of any commercial object.

We are sure that design can change the life of a person or the whole company. **We have developed the code of inspiration for the largest filling station network in Belarus – Belneftekhim.** Belneftekhim provides a quality service to their customers. The latest equipment allows filling up a car minimizing the emissions of gasoline vapor. The problem is that these gas stations do not make an impression of modern, high tech gas stations. Thus, modern design gives a client the opportunity to receive clear vision of the company.

We prepare thoroughly before the start of work. The first step is research and analysis, only then – the first sketches. We visited a lot of gas stations in Minsk, compared them with gas stations in Europe and noticed the differences. We focused on the construction of customer scenarios. A gas station is more than only to fill up a car. Today gas stations are also fast-food restaurants and shops. If we are short of time and want to have a snack we would rather have dinner at a gas station.

Today a gas station becomes the place for business meeting, fast breakfast or snack. There you can buy everything you need for a picnic or a party, etc.

Quality services, products and design are not enough for the development of business and society. We believe that business should be based on values.

What else can be the contrast? What any gas station in Belarus has not implemented yet? Contrast can be in the value concept. CSR has become a philosophy of many companies. The value advances along with the promotion of the product.

Developing a project, we focused on eco-friendliness, simplicity, brand colors, open spaces, floor-to-ceiling windows, inviting you to come. Belorusneft is the largest filling station network in Belarus. It is a national brand. It forms opinion of hospitality, comfort, and even wealth in the country. We offered a concept of eco green gas station. Harm from the emissions is compensated by planting trees; it can become even a family tradition. There is an idea of lollipops with a biodegradable stick with a seed inside. A family can buy such lollipops on the way to the cottage and plant the seeds.

All the great brands are based on the concept of value. Positioning, promotion and design should start with it. We are sure that design is a necessity of success. Including brand success. Design helps a brand to become a part of our lifestyle. Design helps to show, reflect brand values.



The Nota Bene Office and Life

Our office is located not in a shopping or business center. It is located in a detached house, which we designed by ourselves.

We have organized workplaces, zones according to our internal logistics and coordination. Coordinators work next to designers, etc. Today we are designing bike parks. We have a shower: an employee can change clothes if he has biked to work, for instance. There is place where employees can keep yoga mats, clothes.



By the way, we do corporate yoga to concentrate on work, and do fitness to lift after work, right in the office. We do not need to spend time to get to the gym. There are, also, several terraces, where you can go out to have lunch, sunbathe, lie down, and hold a meeting. There are places for negotiations, a kitchen where an employee can eat. There is a library, where you can look through inspiring books, magazines. Here we can hold a skype conference, as well.

NB Nota Bene

We regularly have team building activities, which help us to know each other better and to build effective working relationships.

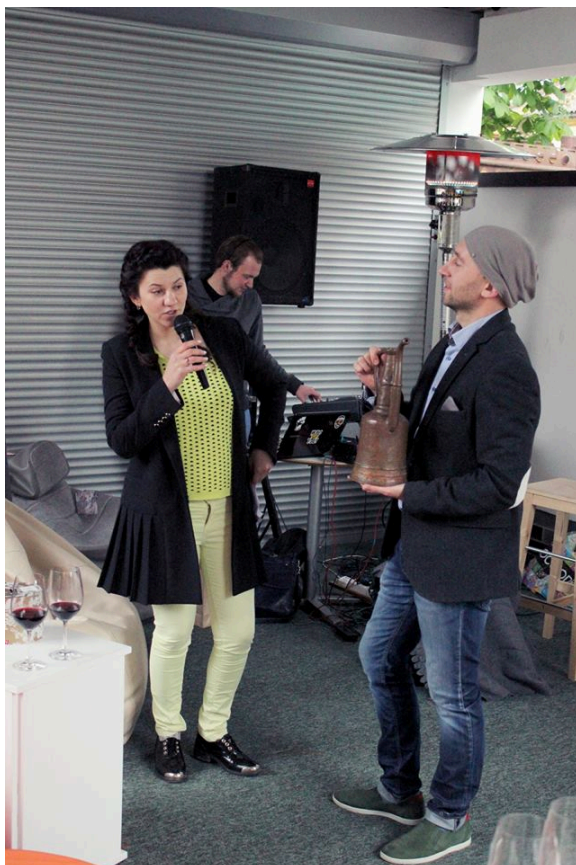


PROJECTS FOR HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Charity

Nota Bene responsibly helps to solve socially significant problems. Nota Bene feels responsibility to society, therefore, pays attention to socially oriented “kind” projects aimed at helping children in grave condition. The key moment for the Studio is the opportunity to help with the construction of special centers for children, such as the Belarusian Children’s Hospice. Annually we organize charity events and fundraise money, pursuing charitable purposes.

It is important that each of these projects is not only a material contribution, but also an opportunity to share professional experience. Experience and development in the construction or arrangement of such an institution.



Establishment of the Professional Association for Interior Designers

Tatiana Antipova, a CEO of Nota Bene, is also initiator and co-founder of the Professional Association for Interior Designers in Belarus.

The aim of the Association establishment is to contribute to the value of the profession, to make terminology clear. Today it does not exist in the legal field of Belarus. The issues and problems, which the Professional Association for Interior Designers will decide, are very important. Today designers in our country are not legally protected. Very often customers do not understand what a design project is, what it consists of. Today the profession of interior designer is trendy, but how to preserve the prestige of it? Today an interior designer needs to know technical and design norms, Technology Code of Practice, know all the materials, furniture, project implementation technologies. Design is not only beauty. It has to work.

There is no doubt that this issue requires an integrated approach. The Professional Association for Interior Designers in Belarus supports professionalism and transparency and starts its work to implement all the goals, which it seeks.



PROJECTS FOR A GREAT FUTURE

Coffee shop network for the employment of persons with disabilities

In our work we meet optional technical housing standards, accessibility and wheelchair housing standards. We create accessible, safe environments (step-free access to dwellings, spacious corridors, etc.) We have clear understanding of housing needs of all people. It concerns either ailment (motor system strengthening in kinder gardens, cafes for blind and partially sighted people, etc.)

We with Belarusian activist Aleksandr Avdevich have started to work on a unique project. We plan to design **coffee shop network for the employment of persons with disabilities** in Belarus. Now persons with disabilities start barista training courses. The goal of Nota Bene is to make their workplace comfortable, taking into account all the peculiarities.

Unfortunately, in Belarus persons with disabilities feel discrimination and isolation, not by the society. There are no conditions for the life of persons with disabilities in every sense of the word.

We are sure that this initiative will help to make the life of persons with disabilities better and will become an inspiring example not only in Belarus, but also in other countries. This project reflects our mission. We want to create the source of energy, power and inspiration for persons with disabilities. This initiative will contribute to the integration of our society. We want to contribute to the end of discrimination in respect of persons with disabilities and their employment.

Educational projects NB NIGHTS, NB KIDS

The Studio of architecture and interior design Nota Bene feels responsibility towards professional community, current and future participants. In regard, among the priority field of corporate social responsibility the Studio sees educational projects aimed at unifying professional community, shaping independent union of designers and architects, moreover, educating each other and building a cooperative way forward. Now the project that aims at shaping professional community and adaptation of young designers (students as well) is NB NIGHTS.

NB NIGHTS

NB NIGHTS is private initiative of the Studio. The project was started in order to gather and unite Belarussian professional community of designers and architectures to overcome challenges together, solve important problems and promote interests.

These meetings are purely professional events exclusively for designers and architects. The participation of contractors and advertising performances are prohibited. NB NIGHTS are meetings of various formats, the main purpose of which is to combine the experience, development and growth of each participant.

NB KIDS

In the near future, we plan to start a new project – NB KIDS for children. This initiative will help children of different ages to learn the profession of interior designers and architects. We plan different meeting formats: master classes on painting, and even sculpting and woodcarving by our professionals. We are sure that this project will be a source of inspiration for children, our colleagues and us.



PROJECTS FOR OUR PLANET

ENVIRONMENT

PRINCIPLE 7

Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

PRINCIPLE 8

Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.

PRINCIPLE 9

Businesses should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Nota Bene creates not just architectural and design projects, but also cares about preserving the environment. We design **passive houses**, ultra low-energy buildings, which use the earth for heating and cooling.

We apply such architectural solutions that help the house to get maximum heat from sunlight. It helps to minimize energy losses in winter. It provides highest possible lighting in the house and well-designed layout with the opportunity to ventilate the house using recovery (interchange) of warmth and moisture. The heating of each room can be controlled depending on specific purposes and environmental conditions. Using membrane structures, we reach the effect of **breathing house**.

We promote separate waste collection in the office; try to use only electronic documents and to shorten paper consumption.

Usage of natural materials

We employ eco-friendly materials that leave minimal impact on the environment, from the beginning until the final stage; such materials as clinker brick and tile, natural stone and wood. We use natural landscape when are planning a territory – we do not try to change the nature, but adjust to its natural forms. Our solutions take into account the differences in the relief up to 9 meters.

The area of the designed buildings is optimized, and the light apertures are located so that they have enough natural light and heat energy in the winter, and create shading and minimize the need for artificial air cooling in summer period.

Usage of current engineering systems

Ventilation is obligatory energy efficient and safe for nature at the output stage. In addition, geothermal ventilation is often envisaged in interior and architecture projects, – a system, which is capable of heating and cooling air by using the ground temperature.

Water supply – water cleaning by environmentally friendly reagents, as well as processing of sewage sludge by antiseptics, which turn into ordinary water and are taken out of the house water supply system.

Heating equipment – works with the calculated capacity for specific facility, and its quality allows not only saving energy, but also reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. Moreover, Nota Bene uses solar panels and collectors on houses' roofs, and we prefer biocamine fireplaces to ordinary fireplaces, which help make the house even more energy efficient.

"Smart home" – the system that we use to interact with all the house engineering; the system, besides being user-friendly, creates economical regimes and controls energy in the house. In addition, our designers provide power sockets for charging electric vehicles on parking lots.

NB Nota Bene

Our future plans are to install alternative energy sources, such as solar collectors for heating water and for house heating, as well as solar panels.



ANTI-CORRUPTION

PRINCIPLE 10

Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

We calculate how many hours each specialist of a project group spends on a task and prepare a detailed cost estimate for our customers. Our approach to pricing is economic and transparent.

