

# Ash Brokerage: Unlocking Potential in People



Ash Brokerage is the nation's largest independently owned insurance brokerage firm, providing financial services and insurance products to thousands of financial advisors across the United States. Founded in 1971, they started with three employees and a vision to do the right thing for the buyer, the seller, and the provider.

Tim Ash, CEO of Ash Brokerage, wanted to return his company to its roots in downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was passionate about bringing together the company's 209 employees, their clients, and the community, with a new space that encouraged energy and inspiration, enhanced culture, drove innovation, and supported effective collaboration.

And so, planning for a new headquarters building began, using a guiding quote from Tim Ash to shape the entire project.

"It is important that our people are connected with the work environment. They should be inspired to do their best work in a space that represents who we are."

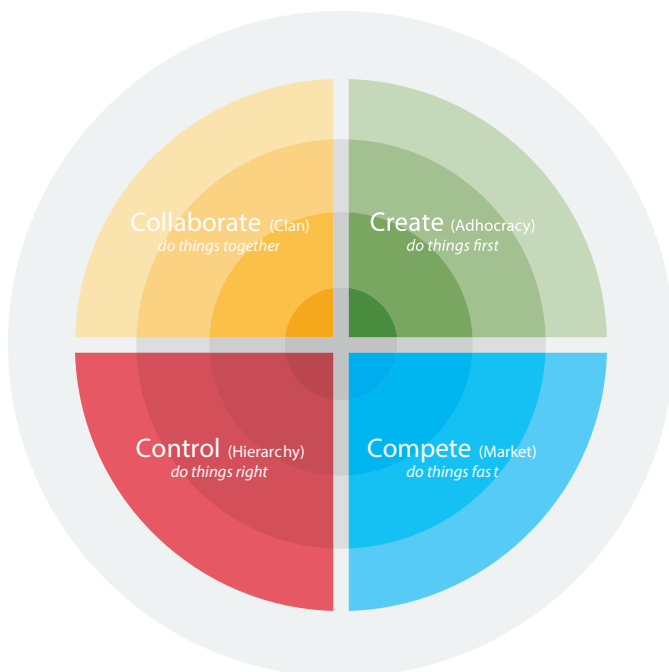
—Tim Ash, CEO, Ash Brokerage

## An Auspicious Visit Sparks a Partnership—and a Solution

At the suggestion of Ash Brokerage’s design partner MSKTD, Tim Ash made a visit to Haworth’s Global Headquarters. Upon arriving, Tim was under the impression that he was simply going to see corporate office furniture and collect ideas for his company’s new building. What Tim actually saw when he visited One Haworth Center was not just furniture, but an entire building that supported a culture of bringing people together.

Tim spent an entire day with multiple Haworth members who shared their passion and knowledge around workplace research and science, as well as the strategy services that allow Haworth to advise clients on developing workplaces that align with their company cultures and support employees in the ways they prefer to work. At the end of that day, Tim better understood Haworth’s culture, people, and services. Highly impressed, he announced that Haworth would be added as a partner on the new office project.

Haworth’s Workplace Strategy services were deployed to collect data and work with the project design team, helping to facilitate and develop concepts for Ash Brokerage’s future workplace, Ash Skyline Plaza. Conducting a workplace assessment to help pinpoint the company’s organizational culture type, Haworth strategists found that the results showed a heavy slant toward the Collaborate (doing things together) and Create (doing things first) culture types, based on The Competing Values Framework™.



To create a workplace that better supports Ash Brokerage’s culture and its Collaborate and Create tendencies, our strategists concluded that the largest opportunities for improvement were:

- Providing access to natural light
- Ensuring work area effectiveness
- Providing access to meeting rooms for collaboration and group work
- Reducing auditory distractions for focus
- Improving furniture quality
- Improving storage capacity and location

Using Tim Ash’s quote as a guiding principle, as well as the Haworth research findings around workstyles and individual satisfaction, the design team created multiple concepts to demonstrate how the workplace could support Ash Brokerage’s culture and people. Each unique concept pushed the boundaries of the traditional corporate office, while embracing the energy and passion of Ash Brokerage’s employees.

## Findings from the Haworth LENS™ Workplace Assessment Survey:

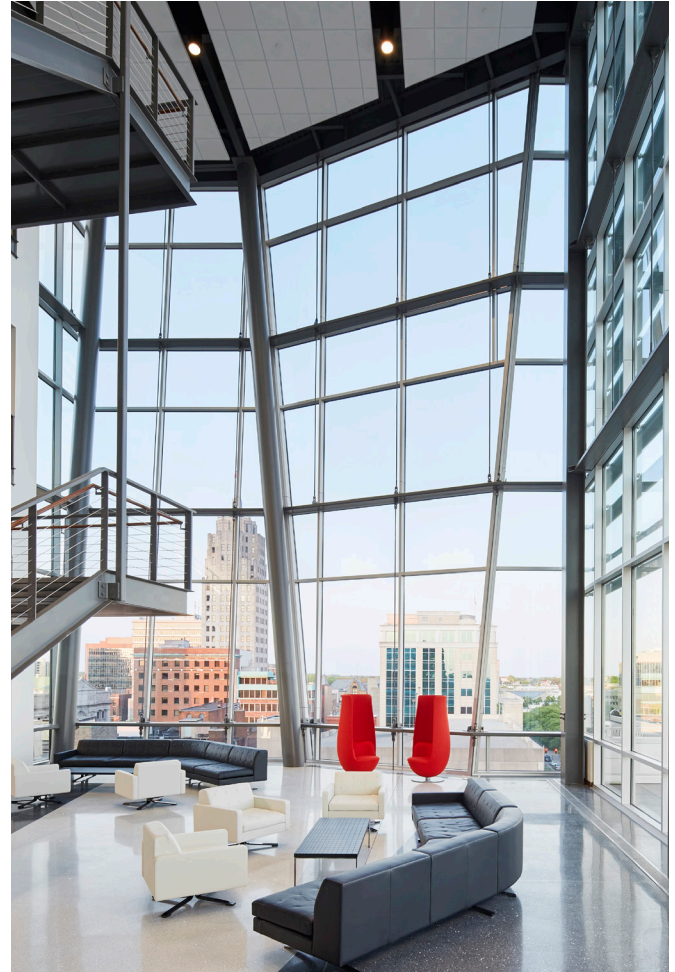
- 53% of employees worked mostly alone on strategic and tactical objectives to solve problems and develop new concepts.
- 47% of employees worked mostly together on projects; more effective collaborative hubs were needed to facilitate teamwork.
- Overhead storage for employees was not needed. Eliminating this feature would give additional access to natural daylight and exterior views for everyone in the space.
- Team Storage was important for all teams. Positioned correctly, it could be utilized as an additional collaborative connection for groups.

## End Results

The chosen workplace design supports Ash Brokerage's culture and supports employees' workstyles with various spaces for individual work, collaboration and team work, and a social hub—all imitating the comforts of home. Some of the spaces were even named with home in mind:

- **The Kitchen:** Just like the heart of every home, the Kitchen is where good times are shared over meals, and where meaningful conversations take place.
- **The Family Room:** This comfortable, intimate space is centered around "family" activities, developing relationships with co-workers, and personal relaxation between meetings and work.
- **The Den:** This secluded space is designed to provide a quiet, comfortable, and informal atmosphere for private conversations, brainstorming, and developing innovative ideas.
- **The Dining Room:** More than just a casual space for shared meals, the Dining Room is also a gathering spot for socializing and informal meetings, as well as a get-away for group or individual focus work.
- **The Studio:** When a small, private space is needed, the Studio provides a retreat for one or two employees to develop ideas, focus on specific tasks, or relax and recharge.

Knowing that people are his company's greatest asset, Tim Ash needed an office that was designed to help employees feel connected with the company, culture, and work environment. He wanted a new workplace that provides people with a variety of inviting, comfortable spaces to choose where they do their best work—spaces that feel like home. With Haworth's expertise and unique culture/workstyle tools, Tim Ash was able to see his vision for the Ash Brokerage office come to life, with a world-class work environment that nurtures culture, enhances collaboration and innovative ideas, and demonstrates its investment in their employees and clients.



### Contributor

John Scott AIA IIDA NCIDQ

As a knowledge leader in Haworth's Workplace Strategy team, John focuses on the translation of workplace research into applied design. His role is to help clients understand the links between design and business performance, and to explore how new ways of working impact cultural and organizational change.

*Haworth Workplace Strategists connect links between workspace design and human behavior, health, performance, and the quality of the user experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments. To learn more about this topic or other research resources that Haworth provides, visit [www.haworth.com](http://www.haworth.com).*