

Designing for a Global Culture

A premier global investment company, headquartered in the Midwestern United States, created a new corporate campus and transformed its organizational culture. The new campus provided many new spaces for employees; they could choose how they wanted to work and find a space that enabled them to produce their best work.

To support this approach, diverse types of connection spaces were added to encourage and enable more collaborative behaviors. Many of these new spaces were located near amenities such as access to natural light, food and coffee. In work areas, the furniture was flexible and user-friendly—such as height-adjustable desking solutions—to support employees' unique work preferences and overall wellness. In addition, electronic seat sensor devices were used to measure space usage, which showed increased uses of space over the older facility.

Problem

Although the cultural shift was successful at corporate headquarters, the many branch offices did not align with HQ. Each branch had a different feel and unique culture.

Company leadership asked themselves an important question: could a new branch office concept be created, based on headquarters' design environments, to foster the same cultural shifts that headquarters' employees experienced?

Process

The company engaged the Haworth Workplace Strategy team to answer this question by providing the insights and data to measure if a branch office space was successful or not.

The Haworth Workplace Strategy team established guiding principles for the project and identified specific success measures. These success measures included:

- Recruiting and retaining talent
- Utilizing branch office real estate efficiently
- Improving the client/customer experience
- Aligning with changing industry standards
- Supporting a unified company culture

The Haworth Workplace Strategy team collected project-specific data by:

1. Using Haworth's workshop tools to map project drivers from both project and local teams' perspectives to understand alignments or disconnects between HQ and branch offices.
2. Implementing an electronic seat sensor program to measure space utilization.
3. Using employee badge data as a comparative data point to validate utilization findings.

Implementing a New Workplace Furniture Standard

Based on the information that they found, the Haworth Workplace Strategy team created architectural, furniture, and branding standards for the branch offices, using the most successful elements from the headquarters campus as the foundation. Special attention was paid to the customer experience; the company wanted its customers to personally connect with their financial advisors in a warm, inviting, friendly environment. Branding and graphics helped support the company's values and ensured that customers understood how the company had changed to better support ever-changing financial marketing offerings.

In the new work areas, branch office associates sat in an open and collaborative environment; only branch leaders had offices. Collaborative spaces were spread throughout the floor, and every associate was only seconds away from a team space or personal phone room. Workstation solutions provided each associate a height-adjustable desk to enable posture changes and movement throughout the day. Individual storage was reduced in the workstation to encourage a migration to the company's electronic storage platform. Personal effects could be stored in a slide-out storage unit that also functioned to communicate to other associates when heads-down, focused work was being performed.

In addition, central storage rooms were reduced and large volumes of older files were scanned to enable associate access to client information regardless of work location.

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End Results

For many companies, just providing a new space and helping employees understand how to use it is enough. Not so for this leading company. To ensure their branch offices offered a best-in-class experience for their customers and associates, they wanted proof the changes were having a true business impact.

To find that proof, the Haworth Workplace Strategy team worked with the project team and implemented digital seat sensors that showed space utilization in real time and mapped overall use of the space. This information was compared to the employees' badge data to validate all information. Subsequently, the team looked at each space and examined which spaces were being used and which were not. This became an invaluable tool for examining design standards, making modifications, and making choices that would create a space that was both efficient and welcoming.

The team developed pre-move and post-move surveys to measure the results from the seat sensors and badge data. Key findings included:

- 96% employee satisfaction (22% above financial industry average)
- Workspace conveys employees are valued
- Employees proud to bring visitors and family to space

The seat sensor and employee badge data provided evidence of employees' newfound pride in their branch offices and proved the spaces were being used more and supporting employees' needs better. Additional findings included:

- Average Workstation utilization increased 12%
- Average Private Office utilization increased 8%
- Average Collaboration utilization increased 19%

Overall, the new branch office spaces are very successful, with a notable result being that employees feel more engaged and valued by the company. The open environment and collaboration spaces work together to give associates the choice of where to work based on their individual position and privacy needs. In addition, customers now come to the space, saving the financial advisors valuable commuting time and allowing them more face time to establish personal connections with their customers. Other project success measures are:

- Employee talent retention up 4%
- 30% reduction of space and notable rent savings
- 45% increase in customer visits
- 10% increase in space utilization
- Customer and employee experiences now align with company's brand
- Employees now aligned with changing industry standards
- Cultural shifts at branch offices now align very closely with headquarters

Haworth's Workplace Strategy team helped the company achieve its goals, save money, and enable associates and customers to engage with the company in a new way. Even now, the branch cultures continue to grow. To answer the original project question: Could a new branch office be created, based on headquarters' design environments, to foster the same cultural shifts that headquarters' employees experienced? YES!

Reference

1. Nauheimer, H. "Taking stock. A survey on the practice and future of change management." *Organizational Development* 24, no. 2 (2005): 81-83.



Contributor

Brad Burrows AIA IIDA LEED AP ID+C® NCARB NCIDQ

Brad is an architect who specializes in high-performance workplace strategies. He is a key link in leading global clients through research data interpretation and analysis, to help shape and give form to viable strategies and design solutions. He provides transformational change and works with clients to translate their organizations' cultures and business visions into overall space concept strategies, and to align project teams toward a common vision.

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.