When one of North America’s top defense contractors decided to create a new workplace on its campus, the project team prioritized making it a space that would support collaboration, appeal to multiple generations of employees, and help bring in new talent. The company, whose primary mission is to develop, engineer, and test the non-nuclear components of nuclear weapons, recognized that the competition for talent in the defense industry is fierce—and that its out-of-date facility and workplace standards were working against it.

Bucking a decade-old habit of simply buying what they could afford, the facilities group embraced a "user informed" approach to planning for new buildings, workspace design, and furniture as they began updating the campus. By enlisting the Haworth Workplace Strategy team, utilizing data-backed research on new ways of working, and listening to user feedback, the project team was able to home in on how their new spaces can support employees’ best work and help make the company attractive to recruits.

**Process**

As a long-term customer, Haworth’s Research and Workplace Strategy groups communicated regularly with the defense contractor’s executive and facilities teams. And while information-sharing is key to a successful partnership, educating the audience is critical to building trust and helping them overcome the established behaviors and practices that can hold an organization back from reaching its potential. The defense contractor’s teams were especially compelled by Haworth’s research around organizational cultures and new ways of working; However, they struggled over how to implement these concepts within a government-run procurement process, so they ignored or tabled the topics for years.

Then the facilities group made a visit to Haworth’s global headquarters to tour the showroom and manufacturing plant, and to meet with the account team. In a session with the Haworth Workplace Strategy team, the project leaders used the time to learn about and map out a knowledge-based approach to design, plan and analyze the user satisfaction in their next building project. With the Haworth Workplace Strategy members on board, the defense contractor’s full project team started working through the complex concerns of a recent past project and opening an innovative direction for the new project.

In its method, the Haworth Workplace Strategy team administered its quantitative survey tools—CultureLENS, OfficeLENS, and WorkstyleLENS—as well as the qualitative translation workshops, to gather data about the organization’s business drivers, and its current and future workstyle and work environment preferences. The Haworth Workplace Strategy team analyzed the data, presented the findings to the project team and organization leadership, and helped to mobilize group consensus on the consistencies and contradictions found in the data. This consensus became the foundation for the success measures that defined the ideal workplace concepts around People, Process, and Place for a newly formed group of engineers working on highly confidential materials.
“The team was able to translate the data and create real solutions that would support our employees and help us achieve our overall bigger goal of attracting new talent.”

—Project Team Director

Results/Solutions/Outcomes

Using the organization’s own data, uncovered by the Haworth survey tools and workshop, the Haworth Workplace Strategy team identified workplace issues that the organization’s employees deal with every day. Understanding the pain-points was vital for the Haworth Workplace Strategy team in order to design and propose a workspace that would help the defense contractor keep and compete for top talent and support a more collaborative organizational culture. Recognizing the consensus on workstyle and environmental preferences in the data aided the team in defining the ideal balance of focus, meeting, and confidential spaces.

The Haworth Workplace Strategy team developed conceptual design specifications that outlined new, never-before-used space typologies meant to encourage and support the organization’s sought-after collaborative activities. The prototype designs pushed the team to better define the differences between private and secure (confidential) meetings, and in turn, to better concepts for the workspaces.

Notable outcomes from this engagement include:

- Together, we were able to define ideal workstation layouts that would help support the need for focus work and the desire for collaboration.
- We were able to define and provide solutions that the architect, interior designer, and build team could use to define the “Design Build” scope document (the document that contractors would use to scope and price the new project).
- We used furniture mock-ups to test proposed solutions, allowing the team to address any negative feedback from users before implementing the final furniture solution.
- We measured employee satisfaction with the new building six months after move-in and recorded satisfactory gains in nearly every category, proving an increase in reported workplace effectiveness.

Contributor
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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.

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