



# The Office of the Future: Making the Workplace Work

BY DAVID MIRMELLI

**W**orkplaces are powerful strategic tools for corporate success. They are much more than places for companies to deliver business and employees to earn a salary. The best contemporary workplaces leverage subtle psychosocial associations to realize important commercial advantages.

In every kind of business, whether it's manufacturing or services, wholesale or retail, the workplace needs to be many things to many people. Therefore, the office design needs to be attractive and functional for the intended audience. It needs to solve for various needs, e.g., human resources (attracting and retaining talent), to marketing (branding), to even sales (as a source for revenue through executive briefing centers).

This is particularly true in the services sector, where people are the chief currency of business success. In the face of stiff competition to attract and retain key talent, employers have to maximize their appeal.

At **BMC Software** – a leading global, 30-year-old software company in the enterprise and mainframe service management sectors – we realized that the office can play an important role in different situations as characterized above. Our offices had

been designed for a past era and were no longer seen as current. Nor was there an inherent strategy to update the work spaces to adapt to the current cultural needs.

In 2010, we started a program called the “Office of The Future” (OOTF). The OOTF program designed the work space by understanding the functional needs of the business and taking into account the workforce demographics of the future. Attracting and retaining talent, branding the work space to give it its own identity, adapting to local culture, and finally, managing to costs were all important factors.

Workforce demographics are changing. The population that's entering the workforce – the Millennials – have work habits that are drastically different from those of the previous generation. They are much more collaborative and very comfortable with non-dedicated space. The issue is to create space that matches today's workforce, which is a mix of Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and the Millennials.

## **Rome, Milan, Tel Aviv, Dublin, Riyadh, Madrid – London**

With a global presence of more than 100 offices in 41 countries, it's a tall order. Early on, it was decided that we would select locations for transformation where the return on invest-

ment (ROI) would be high in a short period of time. Hence, we only considered locations where a relocation of the office was the best option. This allowed us to evaluate locations that had lease terminations or options to terminate. The first office was in Rome and the change was basic. It started with open space, lots of natural light, some color and very few functional closed offices. At the same time, we began to design the OOTF. Since then, the OOTF design has continued to evolve.

We've already completed office redesigns in Tel Aviv, Dublin, Riyadh and Madrid. Our most recent space transformation was our UK office in Winnersh, west of London, which was completed in September 2013.

Against a background of increasing costs, our previous UK offices were out of date; spread over three sites in two locations; lacking in flexibility; and unsuited to changing ways of working. The configuration of spaces meant that staff were prevented from intermingling within offices, let alone across sites, and therefore unable to collaborate. There were a relatively large number of private offices, frustratingly few meeting spaces and a general lack of transparency in operations.

### Strategic Mission

This contrasted starkly to our overarching strategic mission to build the office of the future, where we envisioned a consistent employee workplace experience to engender pride, encourage collaboration and increase productivity. In particular, we wanted to address the mobile-tech-enhanced ways of working.

At the same time, we wanted to unify our portfolio with the intelligent integration of the BMC brand into the furniture, technology and overall design of the spaces. Not only would this serve to remind staff what we stand for, but it would also communicate fundamental BMC values to visitors and clients. Over time, the existing UK offices were no longer connected to the brand.

The final part of our mission was to be smart on costs. In the UK, this involved capitalizing on assigning and surrendering the old leases and negotiating creatively to optimize benefits at our new office.

### Selecting the Optimal Building

Over time, with acquisitions and changing economics in the region, we were in three different buildings in two towns separated by 15 miles. Our workplace review concluded that three offices should be consolidated into one. In addition to serving the real estate mission, this would reduce our carbon footprint, reduce costs and provide capacity for future growth.

We targeted the recently refurbished E2 building, part of the Winnersh Triangle development along the M4 corridor to the west of London. Comprising over 37,500 square feet (3,483 square meters) over two floors – enough to accommodate future growth – the building's good international and commuter transport links and excellent amenities were attractive. Sealing the deal were the healthy net annual savings, sweetened by a significant landlord contribution.



Exterior approach, with BMC Software's cool electric company car in the foreground.

### Commitment to Sustainability

Rated BREEAM (the UK equivalent of LEED®) 'excellent', E2 was born out of a complete refurbishment of a two-story 1980s building arranged around two landscaped courtyards reinvented for the 21st century. This is important, both as part of our environmental commitments and for our customers, who expect high ethical standards from their suppliers. In fact, the sustainability of our relocation was deeply considered. We ensured that old furniture and equipment were disposed of soundly, either to local charities or otherwise recycled. Nothing went to landfill.

### Employee Engagement and Involvement

Of course, change in organizations is difficult, especially office moves. Employees are used to a certain way of working and familiar commutes, and are wary of the extra workload in major relocations. We employed external consultants to oversee the change – one to work with employees, the other to manage the IT work.

We were also keen to engage staff directly and empower them meaningfully, as we had done in previous office moves. We recruited 16 'workplace champions' internally to represent the staff views, encouraging them to challenge our plans con-



The open-plan workspace includes one of several brightly colored fun, but functional, huddle pods.



The client lounge looks out onto one of the serene, landscaped courtyards, letting natural light flood in.

structively. This is about more than just paying lip-service – it requires genuine commitment and, done right, is very rewarding. During the Tel Aviv office relocation, for example, one of our employees was very negative. However, we persuaded him to become a workplace champion, and by the end, he was our strongest proponent.

The effort to take employees along with us didn't stop there. We listened to their input to work out functional adjacencies and furniture choices. There were also consultations on what to name the various meeting rooms, and a staff competition to submit photographs as part of the branding design strategy. The results are very effective, with the rooms named for London Tube stations and the photographs on permanent display. Our enthusiastic amateur photographers' work has given the office a local British touch and done much to inspire pride and a sense of ownership among the staff.

### Aligning the Specification

The fit-out work created improved training and client meeting



A staff competition-winning wall features prominently in the open-plan work area on the first floor.



The communal LINK area for refreshments or, in the background, a quick game of billiards.

rooms on the ground floor, and specified the efficient use of workstations on the first floor. For the open-plan spaces, 70 percent of staff would have an assigned desk, with the rest given touch-down desks, each calculated to serve two people. Meanwhile, private office space allocation was cut from 17 percent of headcount to less than seven. To maximize daylight, the offices are clustered around the courtyards and heavily glazed to promote transparency.

### Style with Substance: the Strategic Fit-out

The reception area is sharp and business-like, but with its material selection and funky furniture promises interesting things to come. In its look and feel, the bold branding of the reception desk is unmistakably part of the BMC family of offices, a key part of our brand unification exercise.

The rest of the ground floor houses a succession of cleverly designed, contemporary and fully connected meeting rooms of various sizes. This overwhelmingly rectifies the shortage experienced at the old offices, made better still by a simple computerized room booking system. Set against a muted palette of



Three rooms in one: Folding partitions allow the tech-enabled ground-floor client meeting space to transform flexibly into a 70-seat auditorium.



Coffee Bar



The sleek reception area integrates the brand, unifying the look and feel with BMC's other offices.

finishes are splashes of vivid color, impactful walls of photographs and brand-engaged markings to the glazed partitions.

Symbols of innovation are all around, from the connected 'phone booths' and the acoustic huddle pods, to the flexible, multipurpose 70-seat auditorium equipped with cutting-edge tech, intuitive controls and 'cable caddies' that make connectivity a piece of cake. With the literal transparency of the walls, the spaces are flooded with daylight.

### Promoting Collaboration

Continuing the brightly daylit, color-accented design of the ground-floor spaces, the open-plan workspaces upstairs are deliberately dominated by a communal area dubbed 'the Link.' In addition to stylishly furnished breakout areas, this contains a place for refreshments and a games room, designed specifically to promote camaraderie between colleagues, collaboration, pride in their work and trust from the bosses.

### Positive Feedback

Is the OOTF having the desired effect? It's very early yet to tell, but the signs are extremely positive. Staff say the new workspace is 'a five star experience' that exceeds all expectations, even if it comes with a longer commute for some. Senior visiting executives welcome the chance now to bump into staff they would not previously have met. A visiting regional HR manager from one of our other office projects commented on how familiar the space felt, confirming that the brand unification is working.

### The Real Estate Portfolio of the Future?

Overall, the project is a huge success. The goal to improve the working culture through office design is blazing a trail across the company, and we plan to take the concept across the globe. With our Zurich and Paris offices due to complete soon, and more on the horizon, including a major project in India, our "Offices of the Future" look set to become a beacon of good practice.



The author (center) poses with the successful workplace project team at BMC Software.

### About the Author



David Mirmelli, MBA, MCR is Director, Global Corporate Services - Europe, Middle East, Africa for BMC Software. He has over 20 years' international experience in Portfolio, Facilities, Technology/Telecom and Project Management, and broad knowledge of how corporate real estate issues and the demands of globalization affect large multinational organizations. David belongs to CoreNet Global, Urban Land Institute and the Institute of Directors, and is an Executive Advisory Board member for Texas Tech University's Office of International Affairs. A dual US/UK national, he lives in the UK with his wife and two children.

For more information on this topic, please search for these titles on our Knowledge Center Online.

- Workflow Mapping and Effective Workplace Design
- Workplace Design Transformed by Research and Big Data