With big plans to overhaul its campus, Campbell Soup Company figured it might be best to try things out on a small scale first. The company moved its Global Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, and Diversity & Inclusion teams into pilot offices in a new employee services building. Campbell plans to apply lessons learned to the upcoming renovation of its headquarters complex.

HermanMiller
Camden, New Jersey, has been the home of Campbell Soup Company since 1869. Located across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, the city has experienced a decline in recent decades—a trend Campbell, its signature employer, watched with concern.

Rather than abandon its hometown, Campbell decided to help rejuvenate it. And where better to start than with its own headquarters complex?

Built in the ’50s and expanded in just about every decade since, Campbell’s Camden headquarters had a vintage air about it—several vintages, in fact. Its old-school approach to interior layout—high-paneled cubicles, big private offices, gray-on-gray color scheme—kept current employees apart and prospective ones away.

“Campbell’s success model is founded on the belief that to win in the marketplace, we must win in the workplace,” says Carlos del Sol, a Campbell vice president. “Our headquarters wasn’t working hard enough to create the type of work environment where employees could thrive.”

NEW FACE OF CAMPBELL

Campbell started thinking about a new building, but soon realized it could do even more to help reshape the community. In cooperation with state, county, and city government, Campbell set out to revitalize the area surrounding its campus, known as the Gateway District.

Campbell bought adjacent property, demolished abandoned buildings, and worked with the state to remediate environmental issues. Meanwhile, government entities reworked the tangle of roads around Campbell’s campus and upgraded infrastructure to support redevelopment.

The showpiece of the entire effort is the new Campbell Employee Center, an 80,000-square-foot employee services building designed by Philadelphia architects KlingStubbins. Intended to be the “new face of Campbell,” the highly visible building houses a fitness center, credit union, company store, café (with the world’s best soup bar, of course), and training area.

What about offices? Yes, but only enough for about three dozen people. Campbell reasoned that its Global Talent Acquisition staff is most responsible for putting the company’s best foot forward with prospective employees—exactly what the gleaming new Employee Center does.
As for just about everyone else, they'll stay put in the existing headquarters building, moving out just long enough for it to be renovated. Exactly how that renovation takes shape is being determined partly by lessons learned in the Campbell Employee Center.

“We’re using the offices in the Employee Center as a pilot space to inform how we approach our headquarters renovation,” del Sol says. “Eventually, more than a thousand people will have a better work environment because we tried things out first with a few dozen.”

**NAVIGATING THE PILOT**

Campbell’s longtime headquarters layout did little to encourage a collaborative culture, something the company was determined to correct in the pilot space.

“It’s critical to create a corporate culture that engages and values people,” says Doug Conant, Campbell’s former president and CEO. “A big part of that is creating a workplace that inspires and motivates employees.”

How to pull it off? Fewer private offices, more open space, lower panels, and plenty of informal areas that draw employees together. What’s more, private offices are all the same size—no more assigning square footage based on job title. The same holds for open workstations.

“We have a high-engagement culture at Campbell,” says President and CEO Denise Morrison. “The new Campbell Employee Center and the additional renovations will help us create a more collaborative culture, spur innovation, and convert our high engagement into high performance.”

Workplace decisions were made under the guidance of Herman Miller and architects KlingStubbins.

“We drew on feedback from employee focus groups and surveys,” says Deborah Tjan, a Herman Miller global account manager. “The project also entailed executive involvement from Campbell’s Doug Conant and Herman Miller Chairman Mike Volkema.”

Workstations in the pilot space are configured in two typicals—a 90-degree setup and a 120—both using the Vivo interiors (forerunner to Canvas Office Landscape) frame-and-tile system, Meridian filing and storage, and Aeron chairs. Vivo, Meridian, and Aeron also anchor the private offices, arranged in three typicals to compare the virtues of different layouts.
The pilot space also incorporates a quartet of quiet rooms—small spaces for focused work outfitted with an Aeron chair and Avive table. Plus, a handful of collaborative spaces encourage employee interaction. The furniture within is mostly Herman Miller, including Avive tables and Setu chairs. In addition, mobile whiteboards from The Intersect Portfolio float throughout the space.

“The pilot space is designed to accommodate different ways of working,” says Amy Manley, a workplace strategist with KlingStubbins. “Collaboration can occur pretty much anywhere.”

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

To pave the way for workplace change, Herman Miller’s Performance Environments group conducted a pair of Change Management workshops—one before the move into the pilot space; a second as Campbell weighed plans for the headquarters renovation.

Herman Miller’s Change Management service helps clients embrace change and transform it into an opportunity for organizational improvement. The program is part of Herman Miller Performance Environments, a bundle of services designed to help clients control real estate costs and make more productive use of their workspace.

As part of its Change Management work, Herman Miller provided input on a communications plan to smooth Campbell’s transition. Among the elements: information sessions for employees, panel discussions hosted by change leaders, and a café fair—employees visited booths set up in the cafeteria to learn about services in the new Campbell Employee Center.

“The change communications helped to keep everyone informed and engaged,” says Beth Jolly, communications director for Campbell North America. “Instead of resisting change, our people became ambassadors for it.”

Adds Tracy McMichael, a Herman Miller Performance Environments consultant: “Campbell used the pilot space to prepare for the headquarters renovation from both a design and change management standpoint. Successful change on a small scale bodes well for the much bigger changes in store.”

Photo credit: Jeffrey Totaro