When Deere & Company began a major facilities upgrade, they turned to Herman Miller and its dealership Pigott, Inc. Their award-winning World Headquarters building was designed by Eero Saarinen, and they wanted to maintain its architectural integrity while creating new furniture standards that supported collaboration and mobility and reflected the global nature of their business.
Deere & Company and Herman Miller go back a long way. Opening its doors in 1964, Deere & Company corporate headquarters was designed by architect Eero Saarinen, friend and colleague of long-time Herman Miller designer Charles Eames. Who in fact, designed the Eames Executive Chair for Deere’s executive offices and boardroom. The headquarters also features a 180-foot mural created by Alexander Girard, another Herman Miller designer.

When Deere & Company began making plans to update their headquarters, they turned to Herman Miller for help. Deere wanted create a work environment that felt “timeless” and also respected the Saarinen-designed architecture. Pigott, Inc., the local Herman Miller dealership, stepped up to help them achieve their goals.

“Most of their buildings had the same furniture they’d purchased 40 years ago, so this was going to be a big change for them,” says Jeannette Smith, Pigott’s General Manager, noting that many of the private offices and enclosed walls would be going away.

“We needed layouts and workstations to support the way we work today, which is more collaborative and interactive,” explains Craig Mack, Manager, General Office Facilities.

They felt, too, that their work environment didn’t really represent or support the growing global nature of their business. “We wanted it to be more welcoming to visitors and be able to adapt to changes we might want to make in the future,” he adds.

**LETTING IN THE LIGHT**

Deere is located on a beautiful 1,400-acre site that overlooks a nature area including several ponds. Unfortunately, private offices blocked the views for many employees. As part of the renovation, those offices were moved to the interior corridor and replaced by low modular work stations, making the area light and airy, and giving everyone a view to the outside. “We really wanted to bring the outdoors into the building,” explains Smith.

**DEVELOPING STANDARDS**

Another important element of the project was to develop furniture standards for Deere. “We worked closely with Pigott to come up with layouts that would work everywhere. We
wanted people to have a sense of privacy, but wouldn't feel as though they were inside a

cube," explains Mack.

To accomplish this, the team designed three standard size Vivo interiors (forerunner to Canvas

Office Landscape) workstations which included glass panels.

“They really liked Vivo’s aesthetic and its relaxed, comfortable feel," says Smith. “They also

appreciated the front primary surface combined with its secondary surface in back. And we

used glass tiles so that people would have privacy while seated, but when they stood up, they could see and talk with other people. Vivo is a good value, too, which also made it

attractive," she adds.

My Studio bookcases were added to the mix, giving the spaces a more residential feel. The Eames sofa and Aluminum Group lounge chairs were used in the conference room

waiting areas.

“We wanted the furniture to blend in with our unique building and not stand out or look too
trendy," explains Mack, noting that they’d rather have their people and their artwork be the

focal points.

PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS GROUP HELPS MANAGE CHANGES

To help manage the cultural change, Deere took advantage of Herman Miller’s Performance

Environments group, who provide a wide range of services designed to improve the performance

of an organization’s people and spaces, while controlling real estate costs at the same time.

The group developed a start-to-finish Change Management plan for Deere, from the strategic
to the tactical. The team begins with what’s called the Jump-Start, where they:

· Create key messages for all communications
· Develop a theme and graphic identity for the change
· Assess stakeholders to determine how to best support their unique needs
· Build a robust communication and change management plan considering which
  vehicles would be best for which audiences before, during, and after the change
· Share best practices for the process (FAQs, protocols, etc.)
“One of the things that helped make this project so successful was the fact that there were so many cross-functional team members from Deere involved early on, which really helped get a consistent message out to all the various departments,” says Tracy Brower, Director of Performance Environments, who headed the Change Management process.

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVER FURNITURE? REPURPOSE!

Deere faced a dilemma when getting their new work environments—what to do with their old furniture? “When we upgraded, we didn’t want to send it to a landfill,” says Mack. So he was extremely pleased to learn about Herman Miller’s rePurpose program.

“Our rePurpose program is designed to keep furniture out of landfills,” explains John Kim, Herman Miller’s Better World Marketing Manager. “And it’s a completely turnkey operation. Green Standards, Herman Miller’s partner in the program, finds local non-profit organizations that can use the furniture, and then arranges to have it picked up and delivered to the new site.”

Green Standards subcontracted with Pigott to handle the logistics. “It was a very seamless process, and it gave us great peace of mind knowing that the furniture was going to someone who could really use it,” says Mack.

In all, 1,020 items were donated to eight local non-profit organizations with a total value of approximately $72,120. And 106 tons of waste was kept out of landfills.

“It’s a wonderful program,” says Smith, “a real win-win for Deere and the local organizations who were thrilled to receive their leftover furniture, which was still in very good shape.”

Deere & Company is thrilled with its furniture, too. “Our employees like the new set up, being able to see who’s around them,” says Mack. “And because of the standards consistency, we can swap inventory from building to building as needs change. We also created a lot of casual work areas around our atrium and in our cafeteria, and those spots are very popular, too.”

The furniture will also allow for quick, easy reconfiguration, so future changes can be accomplished with little cost or disruption. And it enhances Deere’s brand, one of the most well-known in the world, while creating greater pride, satisfaction, and productivity among employees.
CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

Mack continues to work with Herman Miller’s Performance Environments group and is currently looking at ways to create shared work areas for the future growth. “We have more and more employees working from home, who only come one or two days a week and don’t require their own work areas. We also have people from our international offices who need temporary places to work. So we’re looking to create alternative workspaces that can better meet those kinds of needs.”

He notes, too, that Pigott was very instrumental in helping them figure out exactly what they need, right from the start. “The relationship between dealer and the customer is a very important one. They worked closely with our team throughout the entire process and really got to know our people and understand each group’s needs. And they continue to work with us on a daily basis. If we have a question on anything, they’re right there with the answer.”

The feeling is mutual, says Smith. “Deere & Company is a great client. This was a very dramatic change for them, and we’re all very happy with the way everything turned out.”