Navy Federal Credit Union

Navy Federal Credit Union's Florida campus began as a one-building contact center in 2003, and from the start, their goal was to create an "employee-focused workplace." Today it is a large business operational organization comprised of four gorgeous, light-filled, sustainable buildings with flexible furniture solutions that help them grow and fosters a happy workforce.

FINANCIAL/BANKING SERVICES;
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

Topic:
Efficiency
People
Sustainability

Application:
Call Center
Collaboration/Team
Open Office
Private Office
Training

Project Scope:
1,600 occupants, with space available to grow to 3,000 by year-end 2013; 1,850 workstations; Building One 58,000 square feet, Building Two 155,000 square feet, Building Three 165,000 square feet, Building Four 224,000 square feet

Herman Miller Product:
My Studio Environments™
Resolve® System
Geiger® Tablet® Casegoods
Aeron® Chairs
Caper® Chairs
Celeste™ Seating
Mirra® Chairs

Year Completed:
2003-2011

[left] Navy Federal's large Pensacola campus has grown from one to four buildings since 2003.

[right] Resolve workstations maximize space in high density environments, such as the contact center.

Navy Federal Credit Union is the world's largest member-owned credit union, with $44 billion in assets, 3.5 million members, more than 200 branch offices, and 7,600 employees worldwide. It serves all Department of Defense military—Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force—as well as civilian personnel.

Their campus in Pensacola, Florida, began in 2003 with one building—a contact center (handling calls, IMs, emails, etc.). But it has since evolved into a large and extremely successful business operational organization.

It has also become a shining example of what happens when a company does things right: They get happy employees who want to do a good job; their business grows; and they attract more employees who thrive in the environment.

"The whole idea was to create an employee-focused workplace where people would want to get up and go to work every day," explains Jamie McDonald, Assistant Vice President, Projects and Analysis, Greater Pensacola Operations. The campus, which now includes four buildings, "is beautiful, a delightful place to be, with lots of views of the wetlands, or our 'backyard,' as I call it," says McDonald. "We also offer many creature comforts, including great furniture."

IDEAL CONTACT CENTER SOLUTION

Herman Miller's Resolve system was originally chosen for Building One, the contact center, and it proved to be such an ideal solution that it was also selected for Buildings Two, Three, and Four. As Ms. McDonald explains, "Aesthetically, it's very appealing—open, contemporary, vibrant, and energetic—which is the feeling we wanted for our employees.

"As space manager, I appreciate its flexibility," she continues. "We've been growing so much, we are constantly rearranging things, but we can reconfigure our workstations very quickly. That's one of the things I love most about Resolve. And we're not limited in our layouts; we use all kinds of configurations, from pods to zigzags."

[left] Rows of large windows let in lots of natural light, benefitting both the employees and the buildings, which are LEED Gold-certified.

[right] Resolve screens offer privacy where needed and are customized with images of Navy Federal branch locations around the world.

In fact, Building One has changed uses twice. It's currently housing the real estate lending team members, and they were able to repurpose all the Resolve that was there just by using different parts and pieces. For example, they simply used higher screens and larger work surfaces to support the kind of work those teams perform.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

All the buildings on campus are LEED Gold certified, a reflection of the company's commitment to the environment. "Our people really appreciate our sustainability efforts, which include a recycling program and energy-efficient HVAC system," says Ms. McDonald.

ATTRACTING EMPLOYEES

Thom Williams, principal at ASD, the Atlanta architectural firm that's worked with Navy Federal from the start, describes their four-building campus as being, "simple, flexible, open, economical, sustainable, and inspired." Having worked on numerous call/contact centers—from their very inception—he's become a knowledgeable expert on the subject. Here's what he feels Navy Federal did right, design-wise, to become the employee magnet that it is today:

They value their employees. "Treating people with respect is critical," says Mr. Williams, noting all the amenities Navy Federal offers, from a fitness center for stress relief, to a quiet room for personal computer use. Jennifer Cook, Account Manager at Office Environments, the Pensacola Herman Miller dealership that provided the furniture solutions, agrees. "Navy Federal practices what they preach," she observes. "Employees know how hard they've worked to give them a comfortable, ergonomic, supportive environment, and they appreciate it."

There's lots of natural light. "This may be the most important feature; light has a huge impact on employee comfort," says Mr. Williams, who used lots of glass and gorgeous atriums to flood the buildings with Florida's natural light.

There's a sense of outdoors, indoors. In addition to the outside views of nature, Resolve screens were customized by Navy Federal's graphic department and personalized with images of the company's various locales, including Pensacola, with beach and dune grass scenes surrounded by soothing color palettes.

High ceilings compensate for high density. "We've found that with high density environments, you need to have higher than normal ceilings to give people a sense of space so they don't feel compressed," explains Mr. Williams. "It also helps with acoustics."

Raised floors hide technology. Air, electrical, and venting all come through raised flooring used throughout the buildings; this also lets individuals control their own air flow, another plus for personal employee satisfaction.

[left] Glass partitions with open views of the park-like setting, seen here from a training room, enhance the contact center's overall ambience and add to employee satisfaction.

[center] Glass-enclosed conference rooms throughout the buildings provide plenty of spaces for private meetings.

[right] My Studio workstations proved to be an ideal fit for non-contact center activities, such as IT support.

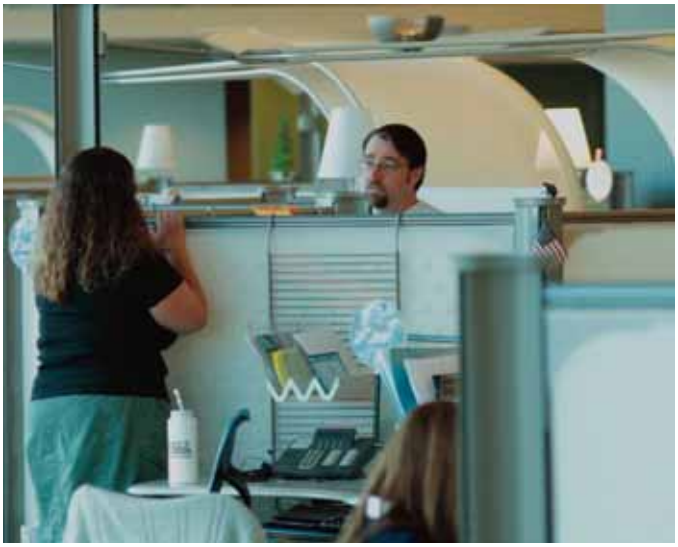
DEALING WITH ACOUSTICS

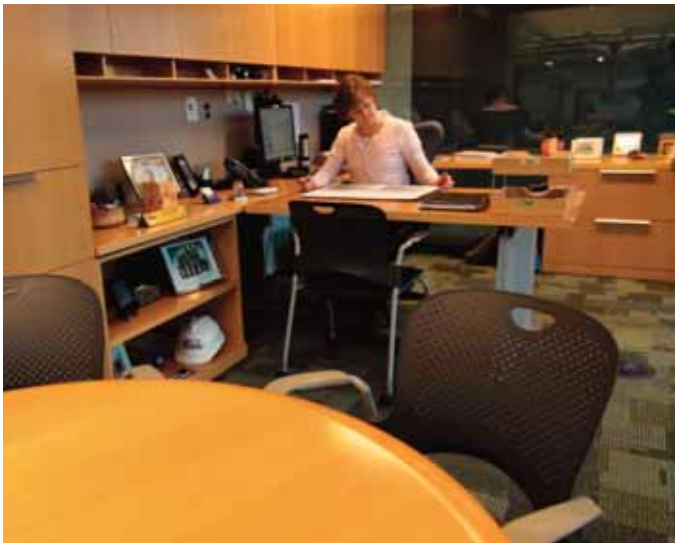
While acoustics sometimes can be an issue in open environments, it isn't a problem for Navy Federal. "I am always amazed at how quiet it is when I walk through there," says Cook. "I think it's because with Resolve you can see that there's someone next to you, so you tend to speak more quietly, versus a traditional panel separations where you can't see the person and sometimes forget they're there."

Noise was a concern initially for managers, whose offices changed from private to open when they moved from Building One into Buildings Two and Three. A sound masking system in the floor and sound panels in the workstations solved the problem.

PRIVACY ISSUES

"Some of our managers were also skeptical about privacy with Resolve's open plan: How are we going to have confidential meetings?" says Ms. McDonald. "So we put small, glass meeting rooms on each end of the buildings, where private conversations can take place, and that's working out really well. One of our learning lessons from Building One is that we just didn't need enclosed offices anymore."





Adds Cook, “The supervisors can also use Resolve rolling screens to close themselves off when doing ‘heads down’ work and people know not to disturb them, then open them up to signal they’re available.”

Geiger Tablet casegoods were selected for upper management level offices, including Ms. McDonald’s, who likes the fact that her desk moves back and forth to accommodate different tasks. “It’s on a track, so it provides great flexibility,” explains Cook, adding that Geiger was also a good choice for LEED certification because of its mild finishes.

In the IT area, Herman Miller’s My Studio About Face™ proved to be a good fit. “They really like the glass windows and doors that open for quick collaborations,” says Cook. “And the work surfaces are deep enough so the technicians can spread out their large blueprints and still have plenty of work space.”

COMFORTABLE SEATING

As for seating, Mirra chairs are used in the Resolve workstations “and everybody loves them,” says Ms. McDonald.

“Mirra is a great choice because it’s very durable for 24/7 use and also because it’s a ‘universal fit’, meaning it’s made to fit 95 percent of the people, but the front edge of the seat can also be adjusted up or down to fit an individual’s legs,” added Cook.

The Aeron workstool was chosen for the entry areas because of its comfort, adjustability, and earth-friendly features, including GREENGUARD® certification.

Caper chairs were put in training rooms, where their stackable feature is much appreciated. “If there’s a big crowd, they can grab as many as they need and, if not, they can stack them out of the way. We also use the Capers on wheels in our computer training rooms because they go up and down for keyboard adjustment,” observes Ms. McDonald, adding that her own personal favorite is the Celeste chair with tablet arm. “Good chairs are really important,” she adds. “We want our people to be comfortable.”

[left] Employees can easily converse and collaborate over partitions when not doing “heads down” work.

[right] Geiger casegoods, paired here with Caper chairs, were chosen for upper management; work surfaces move back and forth on a track to accommodate different tasks.

Comfortable they are—and it shows. “I give tours and I hear comments all the time that ‘people seem so happy’ here,” says Ms. McDonald. Indeed, employees have become proactive ambassadors for their company, enthusiastically telling their friends and relatives what a great place it is to work. “We get about 1,000 applicants a month, so we can choose the best of the best, which is a really nice situation to be in,” she adds.

“Happiness,” she says, “just seems to be part of our culture now.” And that’s what happens when you do things right.

Photo credit: Steve Whitehead of Navy Federal Credit Union (page 2 left)
Brian Robbins (page 2 right, page 3 right, page 4 left and center)

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