



eBay

London, Berlin, Paris, Luxemburg, Geneva, and Zurich



As a dynamic, multinational ecommerce company eBay needed offices across 15 European countries for over 1,500 employees to respond to the growing, evolving needs of their business. According to Derrick Bock, eBay Head of Workplace Design, Berlin, the company wanted its people to become more flexible in how they worked and to nurture a culture of collaboration and naturally flowing communication. Based on high expectations and careful consideration, eBay and Herman Miller developed a relationship that was all about “generating a spark of innovation” through a new workplace design.

A Universally Personal Solution

Research undertaken by eBay showed that they needed to embrace change in order to attract and retain a flexible and vibrant workforce. They recognised that a new generation of employees had a different idea of the workplace: it should be an adaptable and democratic space that improves and increases output naturally. Every single one of eBay’s employees was united by the feeling that they can only work their best if they’re given the right physical space for them. This indicated that a universally personal workplace solution would increase efficiency by making employees feel at home, at work.

Case Study

This research led to the implementation of a pan-European program called WorkPlace eVolution (WPe) to deliver space-efficient and stimulating workplace environments. This new workplace solution needed to create more movement and more opportunities and, crucially, to “evolve over time, and continue to evolve as technology evolves”.

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Derrick Bock

Bock indicated they wanted to “bring a sense of scale down to the teams to make them feel more at home”. He stipulated that the workplace had to be more than just a building as, after all, “work is not a place you go to, it’s what you do”. Thus the solution had to be “attractive and flexible, and provide a holistic support function for all of the actions that you have throughout the day.”

This is where Herman Miller contributed by providing much more than just a furnishings solution. Workplace insight, process development, and core product deliverables started the conversation. The ability to deliver these services globally led to a close working relationship founded on a thorough understanding of eBay’s workplace ‘personality’.

Understanding Work

For over 70 years Herman Miller has researched how, why, and where people work. The company has noted that in businesses around the world the workforce is changing, as are the expectations of workers. How work gets done is changing, the tools of work are changing, the work itself is changing. The result is a new landscape of work.

In this new landscape, today’s offices need to put people in positions where they can succeed. They need to be places where people want to make meaningful contributions, where they feel valued, and have a clear purpose. A successful office connects people to their work and to each other. Workplaces must emphasise more than what can be accomplished on a screen or device, and feel like a community worth belonging to.

It was clear that eBay shared this philosophy. Bock expressed this as a focus on “creating different environments... promoting collaboration, promoting communication between individuals and keeping it human”.



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Case Study

Realising a Solution

To meet their objectives for more fluid working, eBay teamed with Herman Miller to choose multi-functional desk systems that allow sit-to-stand height adjustability to meet the changing ergonomic needs of the office. Informal, 'break out' settings were implemented to encourage collaboration and the impromptu 'collisions' that now take the place of scheduled meetings to maximize opportunities for innovation. The openness of a multitude of workplace settings allows employees the freedom to be inspired; they are no longer 'landlocked' to their desks and spontaneous communication is rife. As Bock surmises, it is "a solution that takes care of the entire experience throughout the [work] day".

As a result, eBay has achieved a key objective: their employees are working more efficiently and are happier to come to work. As Bettina Vaupel, Senior HR Director, confirms, their new workplace "really opens a totally new perspective of how to work and how to bring people together... combining our values – everything that our culture is based on – with the work that we want them to provide and achieve".

Breaking down barriers in their offices significantly improved how employees at eBay worked. Tanya Lawler, VP Trading, eBay.co.uk, Marketplaces UK Executive, commented that people have "started to work together as a team" and they now "feel that they have the freedom to do their work better every day". And Kelly Ford, Marketing Director, PayPal, specified that improvements in productivity were due to "a lot more immediate decisions being made".



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In fact, eBay are so happy with the results of their new workplace solution that they aim to not only use it in all their new offices but retrofit already established ones too. They also continue to draw on Herman Miller's expertise for ongoing assessment of the success of WPe and how they can develop the concept for their offices in Asia.

The eBay philosophy for workplace design aligned perfectly with the adaptability and versatility that Herman Miller offers. Bock confirms that "finding a partner that's willing to work with us and continuously help us to evolve a solution for our customers was an absolute joy".

Industry Ecommerce	Herman Miller Products Abak™ Environments Aeron® Chairs Setu® Chairs
Topics Collaboration	Abak Environments Exchange (AE Exchange™)
Application Open Office	Year Completed Ongoing
Project Scope 1,000+ workstations, 1,500+ employees, 15 countries	