Height-AdjusTables CASE STUDY

Chevron U.S.A. Inc.

There was nothing especially *unusual about Chevron's original goal: Reduce costs by shrinking the overall footprint of its space while consolidating its workforce – spread across diverse facilities in the Houston area – into three Houston sites. Thousands of other companies had done much the same in the face of rapidly increasing real estate costs over the past 15+ years. So while the primary objective was hardly startling, several key side benefits were largely unexpected.*

Not only did the company realize the consolidation savings, but it also found:

- Even greater team collaboration throughout the facility
- An enhanced ergonomic workstation structure that should pay dividends in reduced medical claims and improved worker productivity
- A controlled process to manage and reduce the costs of employee churn

Of course, it didn't "just happen."

In 2002 Team "A" – Facilities and real estate people, corporate ergonomists, architects, financial planners, IT experts, and change management consultants – about 20 people in all, first met to begin the process of developing standards for the new space and a plan for every facet of the move.

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The key Chevron team

Mark Bartkowski (l), Team Lead Move Logistics (previously Chevron's Health & Safety Specialist and Team Lead for the Ergonomics Team and Internal Consultant).

Ron Gallo (r), Manager, Global Portfolio Optimization, Workspace and Service Standards.

Roy Shaw, Steelcase Workplace Consultant, sat in with Team A during the process. He recalls that over the course of a year the team conducted interviews with key people regarding work style, work space, location, flow, and collaboration. It led to a standard footprint based on how individuals work, not on an org-chart pecking order. Yet the question of precisely how to outfit each workstation was a nagging matter, especially since the workforce was moving from mostly private offices into a more open plan environment.

As a result of this shift Chevron took a number of measures to "ease the pain" and help people adjust to the new environment. Ron Gallo, Chevron's Manager, Global Portfolio Optimization, Workspace and Service Standards, noted that Chevron gave all employees LCD monitors, headsets and, most notably, electric height-adjustables as opposed to crank adjustables. Gallo said, "The Corporation has an extremely robust RSIP (Repetitive Stress Injury Prevention) Program and realized it's not just about making where I sit more comfortable, but it was also about movement during the day. So we recognized that we want to get people breaking up static posture while they work. And then we came to the realization that if I've got to sit there and crank it every time I want to stand up, what's the chance I'm going to stand up? So it was very apparent early on that if we wanted a true sit-to-stand and we wanted people to use it, it had to be electric."

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It's hard to imagine a company more focused on safety. All Chevron meetings begin with a "safety minute." And the company's safety standards and tracking system are documented and precise. Safety is a way of life at Chevron, not merely a program du jour. Mark Bartkowski, Team Lead Move Logistics recalls that Chevron decided to "shoot for the moon" when it made the decision to go with electric height-adjustables. He recalls that "The 'moon' meant a fully adjustable electronic sit-to-stand… not just height-adjustables from 24" – 40" … we're talking about 24" to 52" so we could meet the 5th to 95th percentile."

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Typical workstation.

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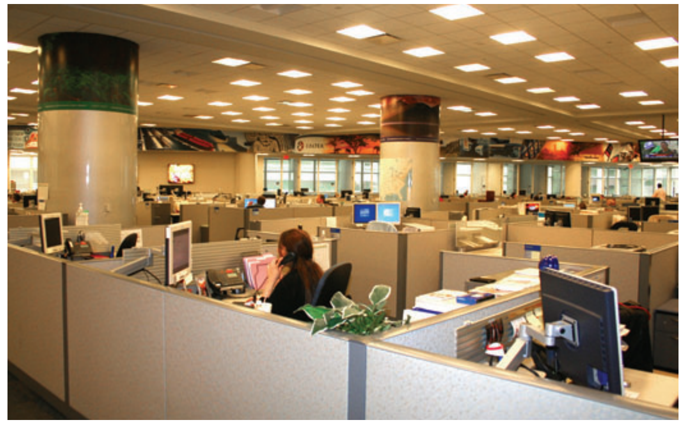
Kim Bishop, Senior Account Executive, the Energy Team McCoy, Inc. (the Houston-based Steelcase dealer who worked with Chevron) pointed out that Chevron's commitment to the new facilities permeated the entire company. "There will be a total of 8,000 employees affected by the project. It was decided that everyone, from senior executives on down, would use an electric sit-stand. That's walking the walk and talking the talk."

The McCoy team

The key group at the Steelcase Dealership in Houston who helped to plan and implement the move.

Yet it was more than safety and even more than space consolidation that drove the design. Chevron wanted an environment in which employee teams could regularly get together on an informal unscheduled basis. So in addition to pooling like groups together on the same floor, Chevron built "town centers" – a series of café-like gathering areas – into the central core space of every floor throughout the new facility.

Chevron is measuring the response to the new facility with follow-up employee surveys, but one bottom-line measurable is the savings the company has already realized from its "crate moves."



A fully open environment with electric height-adjustable workstations and flat panels on adjustable arms.

Our average churn rate was right around 30%," Ron Gallo explained. "That basically meant that every 3.3 years you were going to move." Since electric height-adjustables are a common component of every workstation the company no longer moves furniture that was designed

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or fitted out for one particular individual. Now, when individuals move they simply call the C-BRES (Chevron Business and Real Estate Services) support line and tell them what workstation they are in and where they're going. The employee packs their belongings into a crate and since it's such a churn-friendly environment C-BRES can actually mirror their workstation in the new location without having to adjust the furniture. "We now find we can actually move those people for around 75% less per seat," Gallo concluded.

Space savings, an ergonomically enhanced workstation, a more collaborative culture and greatly reduced churn costs. The entire planning and implementation process has clearly paid dividends. ■

Objectives:

- Consolidate over 8,000 workers spread across seven different facilities into three primary locations
- Improve worker safety via enhanced ergonomics in the workstation
- Increase teamwork
- Reduce the cost of worker churn

Results:

- Workforce is currently in three facilities; further consolidation continues
- Cost of worker churn reduced 75% per move

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