

Accelerating Collaboration

French multinational Engie uses its new Italian headquarters to bring together new teams and foster a culture of collaboration.

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With companies today feeling the pressure to innovate at an unprecedented pace, there's no question that collaboration is crucial. A recent [Steelcase study](#) found that people spend more time working together (54%) than alone (46%), while 97% of the more than 3,000 global respondents said collaboration is vital to their work.

When French multinational Engie — one of the world's largest energy providers — wanted to establish its new Italian headquarters in Milan to propel innovation, it needed to bring together approximately 700 employees from two offices, including an Engie subsidiary, to work under one roof. Many of those people and teams had never worked together or even met. So the challenge was to create a new company culture that fosters collaboration, breaks down silos and helps everyone easily and quickly connect.

"Employee engagement was a key factor in enabling the organisation to become an industry leader in the zero carbon emission transition" says Claudio Sposato, head of general services, real estate & security at Engie Italia. "Creating a work environment that supports teamwork and drives towards our central strategy was critical."

Prior to moving to the new headquarters, the teams worked in enclosed shared offices, while senior leaders had private offices. Desktops and landline phones were standard, tethering people to their desks. Teams had access to formal meeting rooms, however, no digital tools were made available to help them collaborate. And the only spaces available for spontaneous interactions were.

THE PROJECT TEAM

The company's senior leadership worked with [Tétris](#) and Steelcase to create a space that cultivated a collaborative, fluid culture where people could have informal interactions and build trust to better work together.

The Steelcase and Tétris teams conducted interviews and facilitated workshops with Engie's senior leadership to better understand their needs and identify priorities. Together they came up with a design concept that would help them achieve better collaboration and higher employee engagement and wellbeing.

THE NEW SPACE

Located in the Biococca area of Milan, the new 11,000 sq m headquarters includes 670 workstations designed to support focus work. It also includes 24 meeting rooms and a state-of-the-art glass control room displaying a map of Milan and real-time data of Engie's services throughout the city.

The workstations today are located in an open area and feature height-adjustable desks and ergonomic seating. Screens provide visual and territorial privacy for individuals, but the open design of the space promotes communication and ambient awareness. Senior leadership have private offices that can be used as meeting rooms that can be used by others when the space is unoccupied. Larger, more formal meetings rooms are outfitted with both digital and analog tools allowing people to easily display their work and collaborate.

“Today employees can choose to use different spaces according to their needs,” says Sposato. “The office is not just one work area where you have to spend your entire day anymore. Instead there’s a diversity of spaces that can be used depending on the activity someone has to accomplish.”

The space also includes more relaxed and inspiring spaces including café and lounge settings that foster informal and spontaneous interactions. Not only do those spaces help employees connect, they also serve as settings to host customers and remote workers, making the most of their space.

THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Integrating the right technology was essential in allowing the space to be used to its full potential.

Wi-Fi is available throughout the entire building and every employee now has a laptop and mobile phone, enabling work to happen anywhere. A web-based room scheduling system, also makes it easy for teams to find a meeting room and work together. People can now book a room on demand, depending on the type of task they’re doing.

CULTURE SHIFT

Nearly six months after moving in, the teams feel right at home, saying its improved how they work. The space helps people get to know each other, connect and work more efficiently together. The increased collaboration is nurturing creativity.

“Employees appreciate the new solutions that make our new headquarters more flexible and comfortable,” says Sposato. “This not only contributes to a more approachable work environment, it also supports the teamwork and alignment critical to working towards the same objective.”

CREDITS

Design: **Tétris**

Steelcase Dealer: **Office Solutions**