*Culture + Talent*

# Vodafone: Fostering a New Work Culture

## Orchestrating the transition to a new organizational culture and work environment.

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### Orchestrating the transition to a new organizational culture and work environment

Companies everywhere are scrambling to adapt to a more global, mobile, and collaborative business model. Few companies, however, are taking advantage of these changes like Vodafone, the world's leading international mobile telecommunications group. A critical factor is how they're creatively using space to nurture a new work culture.

When planning to move its Netherlands headquarters to Amsterdam, Vodafone leadership wanted the workplace to exemplify a mobile workstyle, leverage the power of place for collaborative knowledge work, attract and retain top talent, and demonstrate the company brand.

Vodafone partnered with Steelcase Applied Research & Consulting (ARC), the global work and workplace consultancy, to assist them in this major transition in their work culture and in embracing alternative work strategies (AWS). These changes would be implemented at a new workplace in QPort, a beta site where they could refine their workplace strategies in preparation for building permanent offices in Ode, another part of Amsterdam.

AWS address mobility, wireless technology, and knowledge work in ways that both maximize real estate and help workers be most effective, but these new approaches drive major changes in the organization and raise a critical question: how much change is the organization ready and able to make?

**"We needed to make a big step forward in our work space to break out from traditional offices to something fresh, new, even heretical,"**

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**JENS SCHULTE BOCKUM** | CEO of Vodafone NL

"Many companies are not ready to redefine or transform the essence of their organization. But for those organizations who truly want to make changes of this magnitude, there are four prerequisites," notes John Hughes, ARC principal and member of the engagement with Vodafone. They are:

- leadership actively engaged in the process
- staff involved at all levels
- a workplace solution validated before implementation

- an effectively managed transition

Working with Vodafone management and staff, the ARC team used a series of proprietary diagnostic and user engagement tools to measure the company's readiness and willingness to embrace change in work processes, technology, human resources, and work space.

A key part of the planning process was gathering employee input through a series of ARC-led interviews, surveys, and workshops. "Involving staff throughout the organization gave us a kind of sanity check on what we were proposing," notes Paul Smits, director of human resources, property, and security for Vodafone NL, who led the project. "Even more important, once we determined our design strategy and transition plans, it helped build buy-in throughout the company for major changes."

ARC also detailed the company's culture, or "personality," as viewed by various stakeholders in the organization, to define their preferred culture, and to identify any gaps between management and staff perceptions. Both Vodafone leadership and staff desired more emphasis on innovation, placed a greater value on effectiveness than efficiency, wanted to encourage more teamwork, and placed less emphasis on a market-driven culture. At the work environment level, this translated into space that would:

- encourage communication and collaboration
- live the brand by showcasing Vodafone products and mobile work
- create a neighborhood atmosphere
- offer social spaces for interaction
- provide more color and light
- support a healthy lifestyle
- deliver a "wow" factor

Using the insights gain through the ARC tools and processes, Vodafone's global space standards, as well as learnings from the global real estate group the team created a new workplace strategy—and a remarkable new workplace.

"Changing a workplace and trying new ways of working is a journey, not a destination," notes Billy Davidson, Vodafone Group property director. "Our operating companies learn from each other. What works best in Amsterdam might be different from what works in the Germany or the Czech Republic, etc. We collect all of the learnings from our global real estate portfolio and leverage them in each individual project, and in that way everyone benefits."

Our new space is both a working office and a test facility for our permanent Amsterdam workplace opening in two years,says Smits.

Knowing that effectively managing the transition is critical to transforming an organization, Vodafone's transition plan was a major effort, and included a variety of tactics:

- www.IamGoingToAmsterdam.com, an employee web site with regularly updated news about the move to Amsterdam
- an all-staff visit to the city

- relocation assistance for staff
- a temporary work site, opened 8 months prior to the move, and open to all workers to help familiarize them with mobile work concepts
- a soft opening one month prior to the formal opening
- a launch event for all staff and families
- “speed dating” sessions with leadership that gave staff an opportunity to meet briefly with leaders
- technology training on videoconferencing, smart boards, electronic scheduling devices, and new software
- orientation tools such as building tours, a booklet for staffers on Amsterdam, and an intranet site with downloadable information on a variety of company and workplace topics

A major marketing campaign for the company coincided with and supported the work transition program. “Hallo Amsterdam” promoted Vodafone’s presence in the city by saying “hello” to specific Amsterdam icons such as the Vondelpark, Anne Frank House, Paradiso, Leidseplein, etc., and to individuals: “Hallo innkeeper,” “Hallo top talent,” etc. The campaign helped establish Vodafone’s presence in the country’s capital, attracted new talent to Vodafone, built internal staff morale, and created a lot of local buzz.

Vodafone’s transition efforts prepared workers for QPort’s dramatically different approach: no assigned workspaces, an open, collaborative layout, and everyone —from leadership to the newest workers— working from the same workspace layouts.

“What really surprised me was that working here was easy from the start. It felt good, almost natural, much more quickly than I would have thought,” says CEO Bockum, who operates from the same type of space as every other employee.

“People are closer to one another, so it’s easier to have a quick chat about issues. People are communicating informally more than in previous environments and I think that adds to productivity. Mission critical information is passed between people more easily and people have the feeling that they’re on the inside rather than struggling to keep up with what’s going on.”

**“It all comes to down to the moment people set foot in the office. Within a day or two we knew how well it worked. We had a good, well thought out plan and a good change management process.”**

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**JEROEN HOENCAMP** | Director Business Unit Enterprise, Vodafone NL

QPort delivers on the issues most important to employees, from a more open and interactive space to a desire for colorful, well-lit workspaces, and an overall “wow space.” Yet the QPort work environment, with an average density of approximately 13 square meters per person, significantly reduces the Vodafone NL real estate footprint.

The new offices have drawn much attention from both the local business community and the international facilities industry. Global commercial real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle gave the QPort office its Winning Workplace Award for 2011, calling it “a progressive and innovative” work environment.

Outside validation is reaffirming, but QPort has an even larger internal role as a test space in preparation for the company’s move to its permanent home. “We’re observing the new behaviors at QPort and nurturing the changes in our culture. We listen to the staff and collect their ideas for ways to carefully enhance our new offices in Ode,” says Smits.

“Our learnings in QPort, combined with learnings from our global Vodafone real estate portfolio will inform the Ode space when we move there. But we’re finding that the underlying principles and philosophy are very sound. The changes will be minimal.”

**“Involving staff throughout the organization helped build buy-in throughout the company for major changes.”**

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**PAUL SMITS** | Director of Property, HR & Security, Vodafone NL

## PUSH TO TALK: VODAFONE REDEFINES THE CALL CENTER

Vodafone recently created another inspired workplace, this one for its call center operation in Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom. It brings together the operations of three formerly standalone call centers into one location, and uses approximately 10% less overall real estate.

But even more remarkable are the dramatic differences between this facility and a typical call center. While most contact centers of this type are built with an emphasis on space compression, Vodafone created a space-efficient center that reflects their brand, facilitates collaboration between teams, and can easily adapt to future business needs: a vibrant, stimulating workplace that helps employees work better, and in turn delivers better service for customers.

Steelcase Applied Research & Consulting worked with the Vodafone team by observing staff work processes, gathering input from employees, and synthesizing their findings to inform the workplace strategy. “We held a number of workshops with our customer advisors at Stoke asking them to talk about, draw, and even build physical models of their ideal workplace.

The finished work environment is very much a product of their feedback and ideas: whether it’s the style and layout of the desks, the chill room as a sanctuary from work, or the coloured portals that employees now walk through every day as they enter the building,” says Zoe Humphries, ARC team member.

Currently 900 people use the building, and up to 1,200 can be accommodated in this facility, which includes:

- open plan workspaces that allow for quick reconfiguration

- workstations, offices, and training rooms with raised accessed floors
- ergonomic seating that adjusts to users of any size and shape
- acoustics controlled via a perforated metal roof liner, acoustic balcony balustrades, and
- workstation screens
- two types of breakout spaces
- a variety of small to large meeting spaces
- communal kitchen areas and a restaurant
- an average density of just over 8 square meters per person, with density of around 6 square
- meters on the ground floor of the call center operations

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