

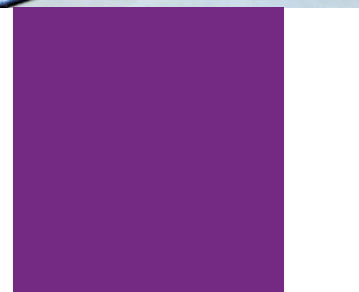
Human Resources and Finance, Reimagined

A look at how Steelcase's HR and finance teams changed their space, got creative and transformed the way they work at the Learning + Innovation Center (LINC) in Munich



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“Ideas are the currency of the new economy.”

– Richard Florida, economist and social scientist
The Rise of the Creative Class, 2002

The Future is Creative

Over 15 years later and Richard Florida's words are more relevant than ever.

Today's business landscape is unlike any we've seen before. In an economy with fierce global competition, new disruptors are challenging status quo business models, while leading organizations are constantly trying to find ways to stay ahead. In addition, the rise of emerging technology like robots, automation and artificial intelligence has many worried about whether their jobs will exist ten, twenty, fifty years from today.

Our innate creativity as humans is vital in a world where tomorrow's problems are so different than yesterday's ... or even today's. And as those problems become more complex and new ideas even more necessary for innovation, the shift to creative work is vital – especially for traditionally task-oriented teams usually found behind closed doors like human resources and finance.

Likelihood Job Will be Taken Over by Computers*



90%

HR Assistants



31%

HR Specialists



6%

HR Managers



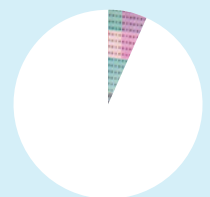
23%

Financial Assistants



33%

Financial Specialists



6,9%

Financial Managers

So, when Steelcase started designing its first LINC in Europe, the question was: how can we create a space that intentionally fosters creative problem-solving and prepares our teams for tomorrow?

It's a New Day

The Steelcase LINC opened in 2017 to transform the way the teams in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) work. Home to over 250 employees from around the world, the space brings together previously regional teams under one roof and breaks down silos to propel growth, foster innovation and support continuous learning. Designed as an ecosystem of interconnected and interdependent environments, it provides different spaces – meeting rooms, team spaces, individual work stations, video conferencing technology, etc. – for different work modes.

Today, our teams are more agile, more diverse, more innovative ... and more creative than ever before.



Becoming Better Business Partners

“There’s a lot of talent and knowledge that needs to be made accessible. Everyone needs to feel comfortable asking for our help, and it won’t happen if we’re behind walls or closed doors.”

– Sven Moeller, Sr. Business Analyst

THE OBJECTIVES WERE CLEAR.

The HR and Finance teams wanted to get away from task-oriented work and become more effective business partners.



TO DO SO, THEY AIMED TO:

- 1 Be closer to the day-to-day business
- 2 Be more in touch with the Steelcase community
- 3 Be more agile

To help them achieve those objectives, both teams needed a space that was *easily accessible* and *physically closer* to their colleagues, a space that fosters transparency and a culture of trust.

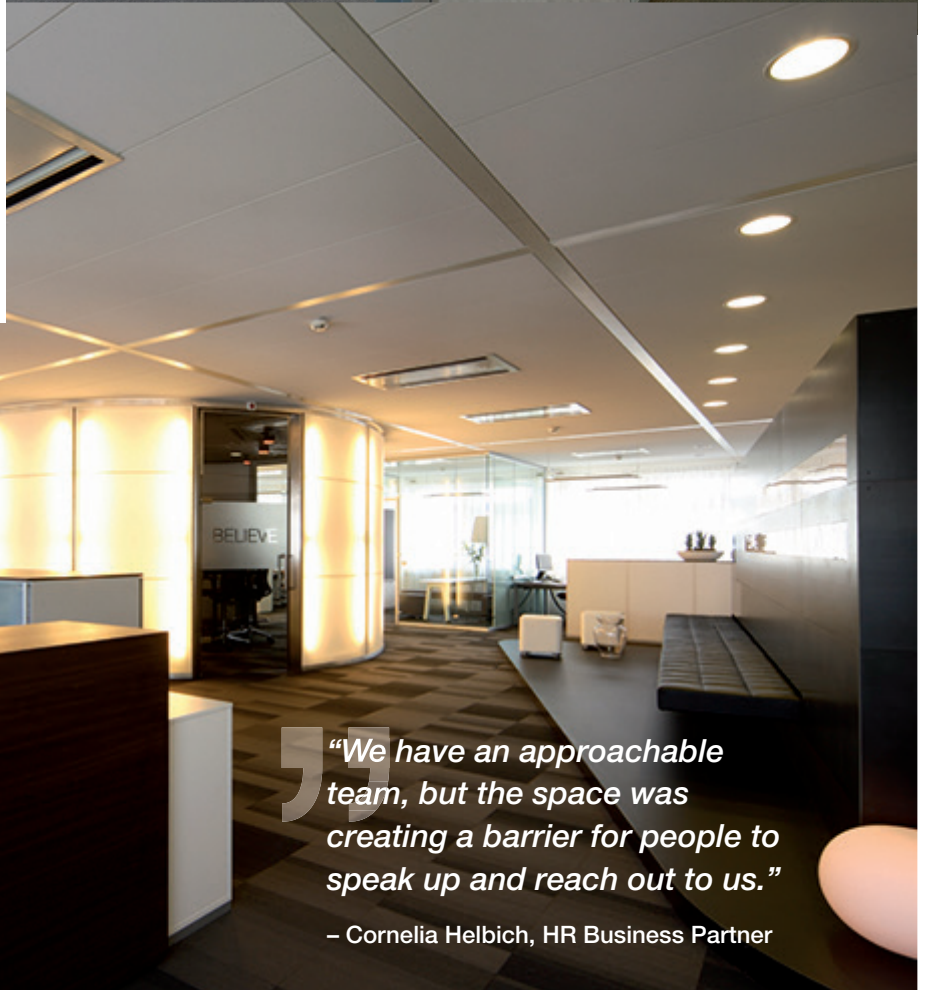
They needed to be strategically located to have a better sense of what’s happening around the company.

Before...

Having already adopted the open space concept prior to moving to the LINC, the HR and finance teams were one step ahead of their counterparts at other companies.

Located on different floors, both teams worked in open, dedicated spaces with assigned desks. Even though the spaces were technically accessible to their colleagues, they were separated by stairs and doors. Daniel Brecheis, the HR director, had a private office. Aside from videoconferencing meetings and lunch, he often found himself in his office the entire day. Christian Westebbe, the finance director, sat with his team in the open space.

Both teams were successful in effectively collaborating within their department, but the interaction quickly became formal as soon as they connected with others. Colleagues only visited the area if they had a meeting to attend or a formal topic to address. Both teams stored their files and documents in paper form, contributing to piles of paperwork on their desks and less flexibility when it came to where they can work.



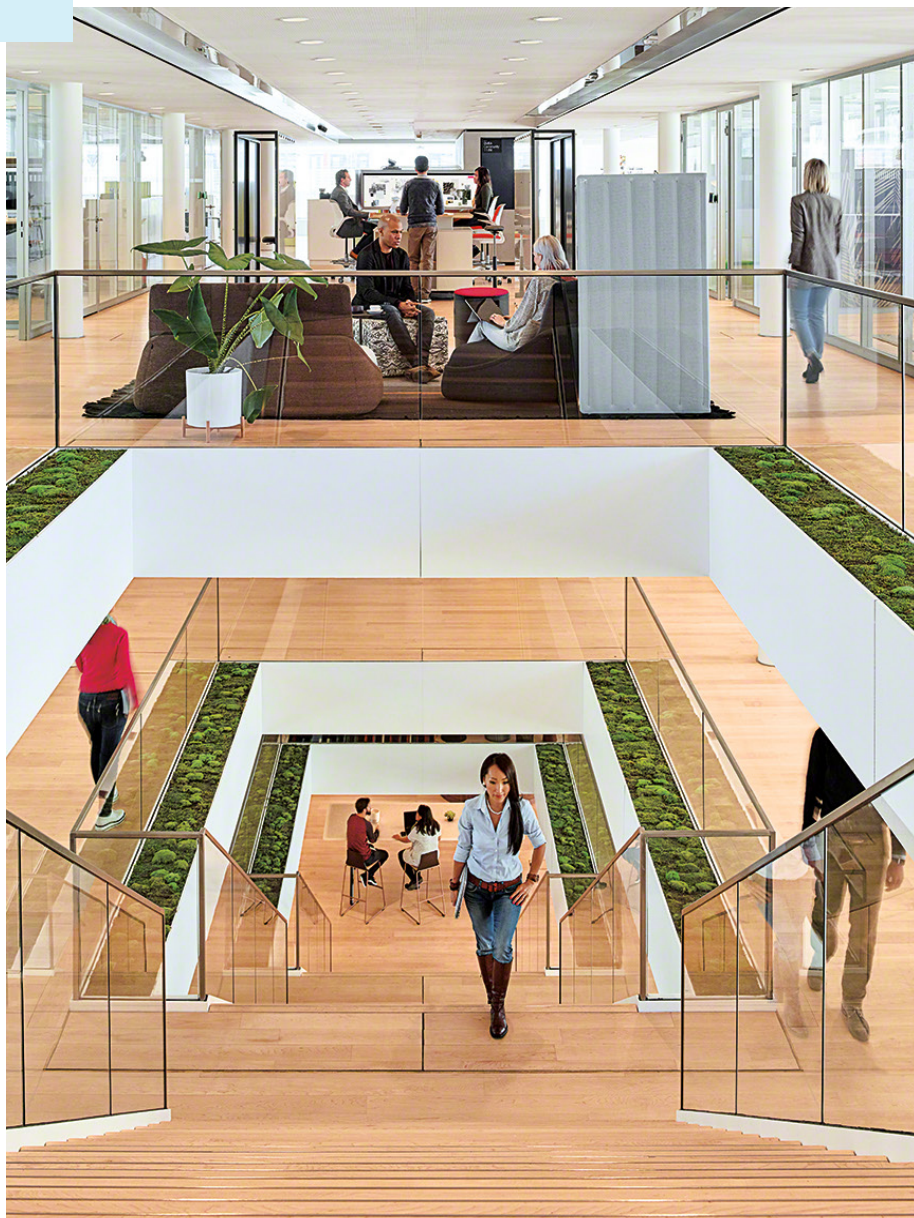
“We have an approachable team, but the space was creating a barrier for people to speak up and reach out to us.”

– Cornelia Helbich, HR Business Partner

...After

“We chose the location on purpose. We didn’t want to be in the most remote part of the building, we wanted to be in the middle of the action to have more interaction with other colleagues. The new space changed the way we collaborate with others. You couldn’t have accomplished that with a training.”

– Christian Westebbe,
Finance Director



When planning their move to the Munich LINC, the teams took it as an opportunity to rethink their space and use it as a tool to accomplish their objectives:

- 1 To be closer to the day-to-day business...**
They chose a central location in the client-facing building right in the middle of the customer foot path.
- 2 To be more in touch with the global Steelcase community...**
They adopted a hot desking policy and transformed their hub into an open team space – no more doors and walls – easily accessible to all employees (including those visiting from other locations), helping foster spontaneous interactions.
- 3 To be more agile...**
The teams went digital and got rid of nearly all of their paper files.

Results

Today, the HR and finance teams have shifted away from task-oriented work and are considered strong business partners to their internal Steelcase clients. More connected to regional and global leaders, they are frequently asked to join other departments' team meetings and have more input in the decision-making process.



“I wouldn't feel comfortable today if I work in a room where I can't see anyone. It's not our culture.”

– Daniel Brecheis, HR Director



- ✓ **Be closer to the day-to-day business**
- ✓ **Be more in touch with the Steelcase community**
- ✓ **Be more agile**



“We have a seat at the table. We're consulted by directors, managers and employees. Leaders see us as experts and often bring us in the conversation before making a decision.”

– Cornelia Helbich, HR Business Partner

“We wanted to feel more connected to the business and we’ve clearly achieved that. In the past, we had to chase colleagues to get updates or information. Today, with daily sales and customer interactions, we have a much better pulse on the business – and we managed to achieve that by where we sit.”

– Christian Westebbe, Finance Director



Be Closer to the Day-to-day Business

With a strategic and central location, both teams encounter sales colleagues and customers daily – an interaction that benefits both parties. As sales colleagues bring customers through the HR and finance areas to show firsthand how the space has changed the way they work, the teams are regularly exposed to the day-to-day business.

“Because we’re so central, our sales colleagues ask us to participate in customer visits to share our expertise on topics from change management to attracting and retaining talent. Since the customer groups often include HR representatives, it gives us the opportunity to exchange and connect even after the visit. The customers also find it interesting to learn from our experience – including our mistakes and lessons learned.”

– Daniel Brecheis, HR Director

Be More in Touch with the Global Steelcase Community

In their previous space, the teams' interaction with other colleagues was limited to pre-scheduled, formal or telepresence meetings. Today, the LINC encourages spontaneous conversation, information sharing and business cross-pollination – terms not typically thought of when it comes to HR and finance. The hot desking policy also encourages the team members to branch out and sit outside of their team hubs. This behavior fosters trust between colleagues, allowing the teams to be more in touch with the needs of their internal “clients.”

“The finance team’s location and space design reflect what we’re supposed to act like as business partners. Because it’s easily accessible and near the other departments, the space encourages random encounters, resulting in a more connected and communicative organization.”

– Sven Moeller, Sr. Business Analyst

“We can see the talent in a big picture. You may recognize someone in engineering and move them to marketing, or someone in finance who would be a good addition to the sales team. We wouldn’t have been able to do that if we were only sitting in the HR nest.”

– Helena Sanchez, HR Business Partner



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Becoming Agile

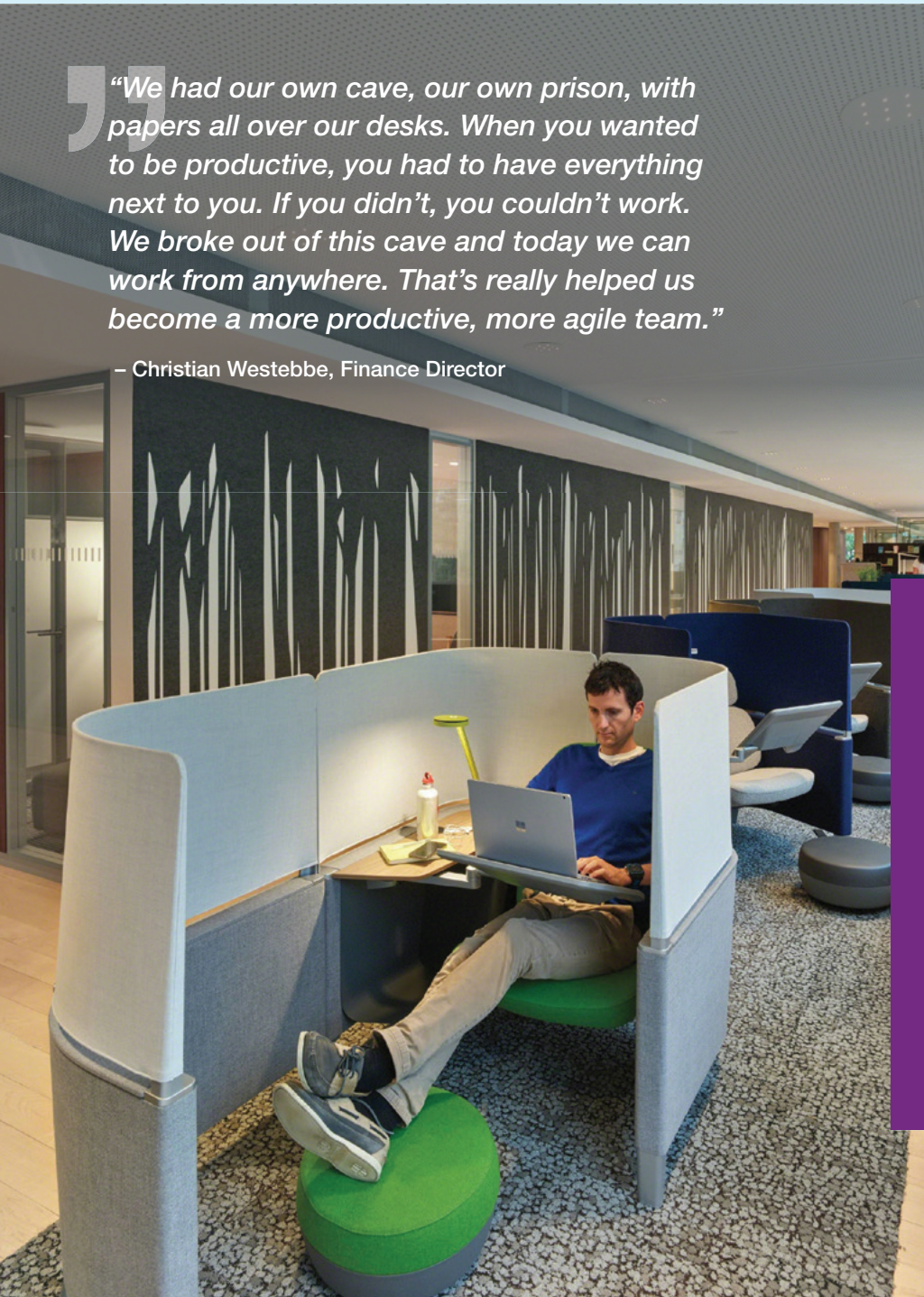
Going digital enabled the teams to get rid of piles of paper work and slow processes. Instead of accumulating resumés, personnel records and financial reports in storage units or on their desks, the teams digitized their files. This allowed them to better collaborate and be more flexible in where and how they work. Ultimately, this led to a type of agility not possible with cumbersome stacks of paper.

“We had our own cave, our own prison, with papers all over our desks. When you wanted to be productive, you had to have everything next to you. If you didn’t, you couldn’t work. We broke out of this cave and today we can work from anywhere. That’s really helped us become a more productive, more agile team.”

– Christian Westebbe, Finance Director

“I’m always on the move, so I can’t have all this paper with me. Today, whether we’re at work, home, the airport or commuting, we can easily access data wherever and whenever we need it. It completely changed the way we work and helped us become a more sustainable team.”


– Cornelia Helbich, HR Business Partner



Lessons Learned

The switch to an open space and hot desking policy takes some time to adjust to – especially for teams accustomed to dedicated spaces and desks. We learned that a good **change management process** and **intentional space planning** are essential in the transition.





“At the beginning, I was in shock from not having my own desk. But now I proactively try to sit in a different area each day.”

– Helena Sanchez, HR Business Partner

Change Management

As humans, we tend to resist change. So when an organization shifts to an open office plan, the transition is often not easy. The steering committee must approach leaders and middle management first to bring them on board. The leaders then need to have an open conversation with their teams and explain why the changes are taking place and how the new design offers even more freedom than before. Whether its workshops, formal meetings, or one-on-one conversations, it's best to involve employees from all levels from the start and establish a feedback loop.

“In the beginning, it's important to just listen and not offer solutions. You have to take the time and involve people, and you have to make clear why you're doing this.”

– Daniel Brecheis, HR Director

Designed with a user-centered approach, the LINC is a product of highly-skilled architects, designers and employee input. In the early stages, Steelcase's Applied Research and Consulting team (ARC) assessed the workplace needs, conducted employee surveys and held multiple workshops with the campus' future residents. The design team also worked with the employees to help them rethink how the new space can not only complement, but rethink the way they work. This design-thinking approach ensured that employees from all levels felt valued and that their needs were met.

An Ecosystem of Spaces

“When companies take away individual work stations and focus on space consolidation, it ends up being less space for everyone. In many cases, it is a step back. The LINC is successful because it offers areas for focus work, confidential work, meetings, private phone calls – you name it. There's nothing missing. You just have to get used to the fact you won't be doing everything in the same place.”

– Christian Westebbe, Finance Director

Another critical component to build a successful open office plan is intentional space planning that gives workers choice and control on where and how they work. An ecosystem of spaces – individual desks, meeting rooms, space to rejuvenate, white boards for creative collaboration, etc. – and up-to-date technology are key to accommodate different work modes and employee needs. When the teams realized that the new space gave them more freedom in where and how they can work, the level of adoption skyrocketed.

What about Privacy?

Often the finance and HR teams – two departments that handle sensitive and confidential material – are asked about how they deal with privacy in an open space plan. After taking a closer look, both teams found that only about 10-20% of their work is so confidential that it requires full privacy. Whether it's a financial contract, a confidential job offer call or an emotional conversation, as long as they can easily and spontaneously book a private space, the need for privacy is met.



“I think sometimes we took ourselves too seriously. The idea that finance and HR need to be hidden behind a wall is an old-fashioned way of thinking. It’s not necessary.”

– Daniel Brecheis, HR Director

People



DANIEL BRECHEIS
HR Director



CORNELIA HELBICH
HR Business Partner



SVEN MOELLER
Sr. Business Analyst

CHRISTIAN WESTEBBE
Finance Director



HELENA SANCHEZ
HR Business Partner



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