



From chaos to collaboration, company brings employees together in new environment

Case Study | ACCO Brands Project

Project Specs:

Location: Lake Zurich, IL

Space: 189,092 sq. ft.

Floors: 3

Employees: 6,000

As one of the world's largest suppliers of branded office products, ACCO saw its move to a new headquarters as an opportunity to unify its brands and encourage collaboration among the 450 employees residing in the new space. But the move to an 180,000+ square-foot space set in the middle of a golf course would not be without its challenges.

ACCO Brands Corporation might not be a household name, but some of its brands probably are. The 6,000-employee company has grown to be the largest office products manufacturer in the world through various acquisitions in a slow-growth industry, to help bring its vision to life. With budget top of mind, ODP Business Solutions™ Workspace Interiors recommended a comprehensive ancillary package for lounge seating, an executive suite and conference rooms. Ancillary furniture such as fabric-covered lounge seating enhanced the open plan design and promoted a collaborative environment. Power and audio visual technology were integrated with all conference room tables, providing quick connections during meetings.





Creating the ideal environment for innovation.

Ancillary furniture such as fabric-covered lounge seating enhanced the open plan design and promoted a collaborative environment.

“Because of growth through acquisition, we placed new employees in workstations wherever there was available space,” said Mike Molinaro, vice president of strategic initiatives with ACCO. “Single departments were housed on separate floors and scattered throughout the old space.”

In its new space, ACCO Brands wanted employees to not only support the brands they worked on, but to also feel a part of the ACCO family. After considering current office design trends and what would be most beneficial for its employees, ACCO Brands elected to create an open plan workspace minimizing personal space and maximizing collaborative space. Company executives were excited about the new work style, but it would take a little longer to get employees on board with the transition from high-walled cubicles and private offices to an open, collaborative environment.



After a bidding process, ACCO Brands selected Workspace Interiors to help bring its vision to life. With budget top of mind, Workspace Interiors recommended a comprehensive ancillary package for lounge seating, an executive suite and conference rooms.

Workspace Interiors recommended furniture from a variety of manufacturers, including Coalesse, Enwork and Source. Each of the three L-shaped floors is anchored by a centralized cafe designed to bring people together. Collaborative furniture allows employees to connect with each other and technology.

Huddle spaces were scattered among the workstations, offering employees various options of where and how to work if they weren't in a formal conference environment or at their desks. Some spaces had lounge furniture with pull-up laptop tables. Others offered higher tables with stools, a style favored by industrial designers.





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The new location afforded ACCO Brands five times the conference space of its previous location. Chicago-based architecture and design firm Harley Ellis Devereaux kept the conference spaces traditional but tried to provide an array of spaces, sizes and rooms. Conference areas sat anywhere from four to 70 people — two-thirds of the space was reservable, with the rest available for drop-in use. Workspace Interiors recommended Enwork for all of the conference room spaces because it offered customizable table sizes and heights. It also met ACCO Brands' requirement for tabletop technology availability, enabling for quick connection during meetings.



Conference rooms were kept traditional in look but were available in a range of sizes and spaces, designed to hold anywhere from four to 70 people.

The transition to an audio/visual-intensive environment was a challenge for ACCO Brands. A/V decisions were made late in the design process, and Workspace Interiors kept the teams at ACCO and Harley Ellis Devereaux abreast of project status and worked with the general contractor and A/V installers to ensure that power and A/V integrated with all conference room tables.

“Conference rooms not being ready would have been a big issue,” said Gloria Henderson, senior manager, facilities and office services at ACCO Brands. “Workspace Interiors worked with us every step of the way to ensure we made the right decisions and everything was finished on time.”



Color was used to define specific areas on each floor. Using the same seating fabric in different colors provided an attractive, creative and cost-effective solution.

“Workspace Interiors helped us identify lower-cost alternatives that didn’t sacrifice design intent,” said Leonora Georgeoglou, IIDA, LEED® AP ID+C, EDAC, Harley Ellis Devereaux.

Color was used to identify different wings of each floor. Although more fabric usually increases costs, Workspace Interiors suggested the more cost-effective option of using the same fabric in different colors. This and other creative decisions helped the project come in under budget.

An additional challenge emerged surrounding the proposed April 5 move-in date. ACCO Brands is a public company. A move at the end of a quarter would have been disruptive to its accounting and finance departments. Workspace Interiors worked with all parties to accelerate accounting and finance move-in by two weeks. The goal was reached with the help of some construction being completed prior to move-in.



Each of the three floors is anchored by a centralized café with a variety of seating options — all designed to bring people together.



“We asked Workspace Interiors to meet this early challenge, and they did,” Molinaro said.

Employee reaction to the new space has been positive. Departments are finally together on the same floor. Noise isn’t the issue employees thought it would be. Low sightlines allow for what Molinaro likes to call “casual collisions” — employees can see across an entire floor, easily spot co-workers and go talk with them. “The open space plan created the collaboration we wanted,” said Molinaro.



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"Workspace Interiors helped us put the right furniture in the right places."

Mike Molinaro
Vice President of Strategic Initiatives,
Acco Brands

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