

New Headquarters for NEW WORK SE: *NEW WORK Harbour* Opens its Doors

Hamburg, Germany, September 16, 2021. Getting new ideas while playing the drums, cooking together in the event kitchen and finishing the office day in the firm's own homey bar: all of this will be part of everyday working life for more than 900 employees of XING parent company NEW WORK SE. To create an ideal working environment at its new headquarters *New Work Harbour*, the group has involved its employees closely in all decision-making. At the former Unilever building in Hamburg's Hafencity (the harbour district), this approach has created a work environment providing room for leisure and hobbies in addition to state-of-the-art office space. The planning and conversion work took two years. It was closely supervised by the experts on construction and the working environment at Stuttgart-based consulting firm Drees & Sommer. The building was completed on schedule, despite Covid-related changes to the planning.

'Especially after the changes brought about by the pandemic, we want to offer our employees a place where they have everything that working remote from home can't provide,' explained Kai Hollensteiner, Project Manager at NEW WORK SE. 'Although to a certain extent this new world of work has been reality at our company for a long time, we have now gone along this path even more rigorously. We want to create a motivating, high-energy work environment that enhances the post-Covid workplace – an office where we feel at home.' What this means in practice is shown by the company in NEW WORK Harbour: a modern working environment for the ideal workflow in open-plan space.

No Working *by the Book*

The design is far removed from traditional open-plan offices, in which desks are lined up unlovingly. Instead, it involves an open landscape with different zones: anyone who needs open space for creative work can use the project rooms or the creative areas on the sixth floor. This is where modular and flexible furniture can be re-arranged to create work environments for specific needs in next to no time. Employees can work alone to focus on a particular task or make a confidential telephone call in separate retreat rooms and soundproof boxes. Meeting rooms equipped with the very latest media technology are available for videoconferencing. And for those who need a break during the day, there are a number of options for regeneration. You can get some fresh air on the rooftop terrace while doing open-air yoga and gazing over the city and harbor.

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Inspiration is also provided by the in-house library with a range of books and magazines to browse, or the Sound Bar with a record collection and instruments to play. But that is not all by any means: if you get pangs of hunger in the course of the day, you can even try your hand at cooking together with your team in the event kitchen. 'NEW WORK Harbour is a prime example of how we will work in the future,' explained Arne Sebastian Fritz, Associate Partner at Drees & Sommer. The real estate expert has long observed a trend reversal in the design of office space, which has been accelerated by the Covid pandemic. 'Employees spend most of their day in the office. In the vast majority of cases, the focus at the workplace so far has been on practicality rather than on feeling comfortable. There is a need to catch up here, since the office of the future will transition from a simple place of work at which you are required to stay, to a networking-based feel-good oasis that can compete with the amenities of working at home. And this is best accomplished if the staff members are closely involved in the design of the office.'

Having a Say Has Impact on Satisfaction and Productivity

Employees still have little say in most companies when it comes to new working environments. With NEW WORK SE as a model, employers should attach great importance to the wishes of their employees if they want to enhance their satisfaction and productivity. There is still a lot of room for improvement in this respect: a recent Gallup poll suggests that only 17 percent of all employees in Germany have a high emotional attachment to their company. The rest work 'by the book' or, in the worst-case scenario, have already resigned on an emotional level. It's quite different at NEW WORK Harbour: 'The employees themselves always know best what kind of work environment they need in order to be productive and creative, and where improvement is needed,' said Kai Hollensteiner. For this reason, NEW WORK SE involved the entire workforce closely in the planning process. Arne Sebastian Fritz believes that this does increase the amount of work in the early planning stages and leads to the need to create space for recreational activities. But: 'By creating space for retreat, creative development or sports, you get productive, creative and satisfied employees. Not only that, but they can identify much more strongly with their work environment. Especially in times when there is a shortage of skilled workers, companies can stand out positively from their competitors.'

Coronavirus Crisis Caused Change to Plans

Although there was no change to the vision of a motivating work environment, the Covid pandemic did leave its mark on the conversion of the former award-winning Unilever building.

Mobile work has become an established part of everyday office life over the past few months and will continue so in the future. This has had an impact on the layout of the space: 'Increasing the mobile work ratio enabled us to raise the desk-sharing ratio in the building. This reduced the need for conventional workstations. With the space that we freed up, we were able to convert an entire floor into a number of different creative spaces,' explained Kai Hollensteiner. 'To achieve this, we did have to adapt the entire technology infrastructure and our furniture within a short timeframe,' said construction expert Arne Sebastian Fritz. However: 'The work has been worth it, because what has emerged is a space that is radically different from office designs up to now.' And this will remain so in the future, because NEW WORK Harbour is not a closed space. External *New Workers* can contribute and develop their ideas and methods for the new work environment in the public *New Work Pier* showroom on the first floor, at events in the multifunctional event space, or as temporary guests in the lab on the sixth floor.

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