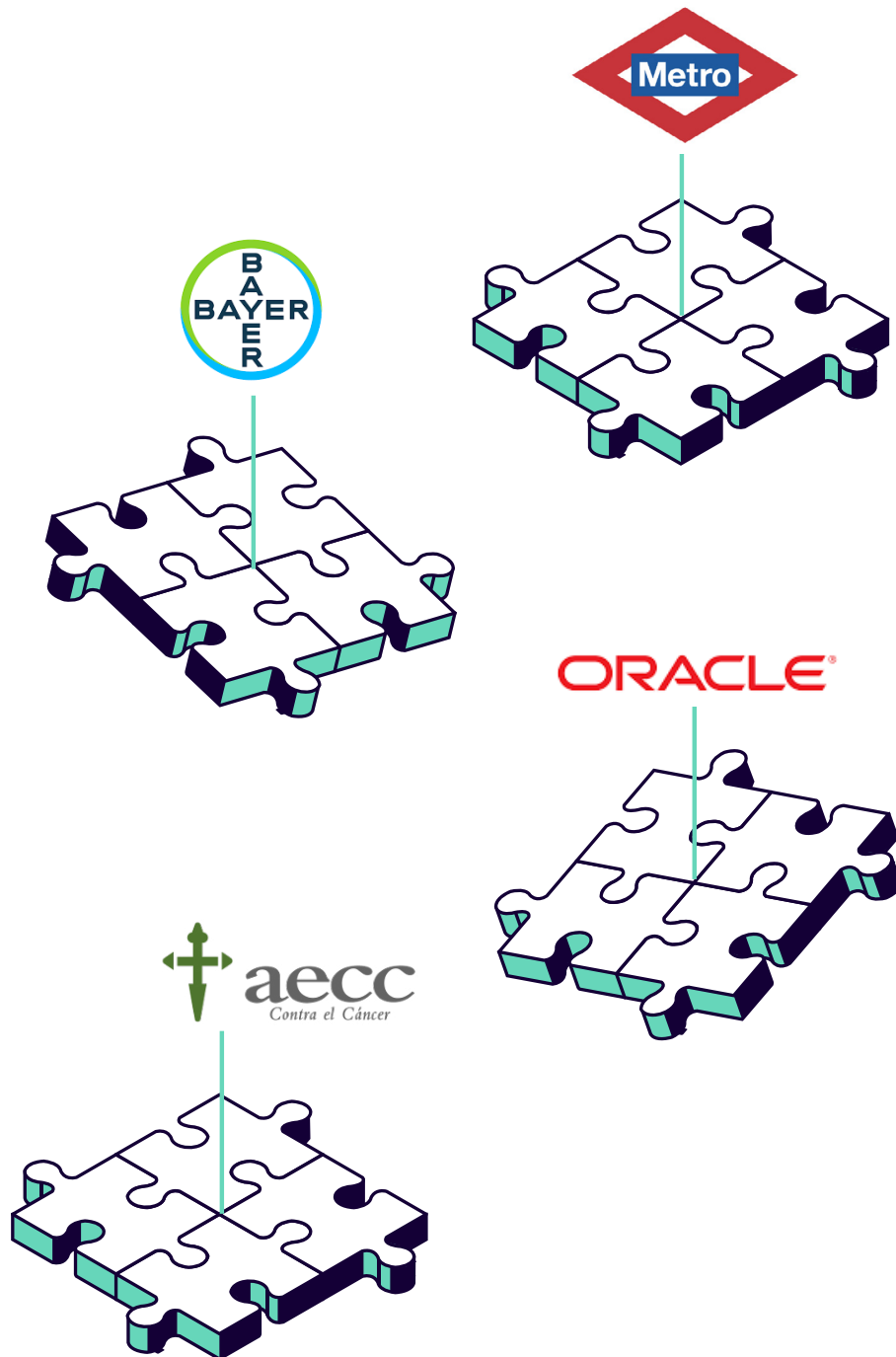


# A Sustainable Work Model: Towards Remote and in the Office Work

## Business cases



# Metro de Madrid



## Background and Start Date

<b>Sector:</b>	Transportation. Public enterprise.
<b>Location:</b>	Madrid, 1919. Century-old company.
<b>Number of employees:</b>	In the office: 979 (total of 4,000).
<b>Operating area:</b>	12,000 m <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Initial location:</b>	Four branches at different locations in Madrid.
<b>Final location:</b>	Single corporate headquarters on Avenida de Asturias (Madrid).
<b>Project year:</b>	2018
<b>Motivation for project:</b>	<p>To bring together all its premises or branches in Madrid in order to occupy a single newly built headquarters with a unique architectural design.</p> <p>Adoption of new forms of work and a new office model based on optimization, efficiency, cooperation, communication, added value, and sustainability.</p> <p>To increase its employees' level of autonomy and reinforce their strong sense of belonging to the organization.</p>



## Qualitative Analysis

Actions carried out	Main conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twelve interviews with senior management.</li> <li>Workshops with 14 middle managers.</li> <li>Online questionnaire sent to 890 people (45% response rate).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to focus on approachability, communication, and cooperation.</li> <li>Elimination of departmental silos.</li> <li>Need to promote a culture change.</li> <li>Strong commitment to company's values and strong pride of belonging.</li> <li>Coherence of the messaging: a workspace that represents employees.</li> <li>Aspirations for an open, transparent, diverse space which reflects a horizontal organization. Minimalist yet vibrant and dynamic.</li> <li>Focus on innovation and technology.</li> <li>Migration to a digital paperless office. A space that provides employees with well-being and health.</li> <li>Transfer of the positive, effective, innovative user experience to the employee experience.</li> </ul>



## Quantitative Analysis

Actions carried out	Main conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of the current space in the four sites.</li> <li>• Comparison with benchmarking, services.</li> <li>• Occupancy study (24 measurements).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupancy ratio 10.8 m<sup>2</sup>/workstation (WS), lower than best practices and different situations in different sites.</li> <li>• Office size: 12.5%, 5.5% over the standard size. Office occupancy: 74%. Sixty-five percent of the time they are occupied by more than one person, and 38% of offices are occupied with the door open.</li> <li>• Meeting room size: 6.8% compared to 11% of the standard size. Thirty percent average occupancy, always under capacity. Few meeting rooms, with ineffective sizes and locations.</li> <li>• No areas for collaboration and informal meetings.</li> <li>• No added-value areas except for cafés, which show 71% occupancy.</li> <li>• The storage and paper levels per person are six times the average in the services sector.</li> </ul>



## Approved Model

Key data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From 102 offices to 13 (87% reduction).</li> <li>• Remaining workstations in an open area (standardized size and greater efficiency).</li> <li>• Workstations in the open area not assigned, and clean-desk policy.</li> <li>• Correction of the occupancy rate to 11.6 m<sup>2</sup>/WS, close to the standard.</li> <li>• Ten percent of the area for meeting rooms in a variety of configurations and capacities.</li> <li>• One collaborative/informal meeting area per 20 employees.</li> <li>• One private/concentration space per 30 workers.</li> <li>• Work coffee and inclusion of added-value spaces.</li> <li>• Paperless office.</li> </ul>



# Interview with Teresa Sancho

## Head of Internal Communication, Metro de Madrid

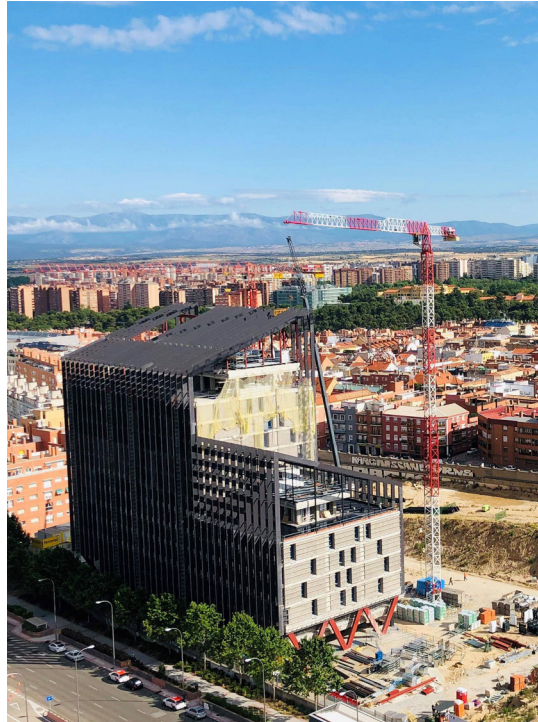
### How did the need to update the Metro de Madrid workspace arise?

The idea for the project stemmed from a practical need, given that our many offices had become too small and obsolete. Plus, there was a real estate opportunity to build a new headquarters. To get an idea of the size, of the almost 7,000 Metro de Madrid employees, 2,000 are in offices scattered across seven different sites located far from one another. All of this led to inefficient ways of working, lots of siloed work, a lack of digitalization, excess bureaucracy, and different cultures in each branch. So the project emerged as an opportunity to build a new headquarters in order to unify and centralize the staff, and to lower costs.

### How has the pandemic affected the way you work, and what changes has it brought about, if any, in the conception of your workspace? What has changed compared to before COVID-19 in terms of the offices?

The project has evolved and changed radically, turning into a golden opportunity for us to not only redefine the spaces and physical environment but also change the organization's model and ways of working, to change its culture. Although it is true that the physical environment is not the only factor that defines a corporate culture, it does contribute to it and is part of daily life in a company. In our case, this was much more pronounced than in other companies due to our age and the fact that we're a public enterprise.

**“Metro de Madrid thought the sky was the limit when designing our new headquarters, where we could all be together and work in a different way”**



For example, in many companies, having an office is part of an employee's status and professional rank, and this is very strongly anchored in our culture. That's why getting rid of hundreds of offices and shifting to open, unassigned, collaborative spaces is more than just an aesthetic or physical change. It runs much deeper. That's why it's more than office design for us—although it is that, too—but instead a project to change our culture, to become a more horizontal, approachable company with more collaboration and communication; a company that focuses on innovation, technology, and sustainability.

We are taking advantage of the physical and aesthetic change to make a profound change in the work culture. It's a huge challenge!

### What does flexibility mean for a company like Metro de Madrid?

Once again, we believe that the word flexibility is part of this unprecedented culture change.



Because of our idiosyncracies, resistance to change in our organization is considerable.

Our staff is comprised of employees with an average seniority of 30 to 35 years, an average age of 48, and a system where you clock in and out, even for breaks. Without a doubt, COVID-19 has helped us by serving as a point of departure for this change we have to make. Without the pandemic, we wouldn't have been able to do it as quickly; we wouldn't have been able to create the current narratives on flexibility and culture change.

**What do you think the future of in-person and remote work will be once the health situation is back to normal?**

I think that the change we have started will gain momentum, and that Metro de Madrid will definitely have to move to a hybrid model that combines the in-person work needed with remote work depending on the different departments and responsibilities. The new building will help us in this huge change that we have to manage and promote.

**In your project to transform the spaces, and in this entire phase we are going through, have you learned anything that surprised you that you'd like to share with our readers?**

Managing the emotional part has been a major challenge during the pandemic. We have also learned how important it is to get the people affected by the change involved in it; in this regard, creating groups of ambassadors to share everything with excitement and responsibility is essential.

**“If the pandemic hadn't struck, remote work at Metro de Madrid wouldn't have happened in less than 10 years”**



# Oracle



## Background and Start Date

<b>Sector:</b>	Technology. Multinational.
<b>Location:</b>	California (United States), 1977.
<b>Number of employees:</b>	Madrid branch: 850.
<b>Current operating area</b>	8,500 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Initial location:</b>	Corporate headquarters at the Tripark Business Park in Las Rozas, 19 kilometers (about 12 miles) from the center of Madrid.
<b>Final location:</b>	Paseo Castellana, 81 (center of Madrid), floors 16 to 19 (3,055 m <sup>2</sup> of operating area).
<b>Project year:</b>	2020.
<b>Motivation for project:</b>	<p>Strategy based on the following drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer-centric: to reposition and promote the value of the business by being close to customers and offering them an updated, fresh, innovative image with unique services in a more central location.</li> <li>• New work model based on agility, flexibility, collaboration, and innovation.</li> <li>• Development of a strong sense of community and pride of belonging with the idea that a better employee experience will translate into a better customer experience.</li> </ul>

## Process of Managing the Change (Underway):

### Acciones realizadas

- Eight interviews with senior management.
- One workshop with 19 people.
- Online questionnaire sent to 850 people (49% response rate).
- Actions with worker group (kickoff, workshops, specific sessions, etc.).
- Mock-up visits to the construction site.
- Naming/logo/claim contest.
- Contest for names of reservable spaces.
- Periodic communication (mailings, site, Slack).
- Specific community site.
- Town hall / all hands meeting.
- Video with key messages.
- Farewell to old office.
- Weekly construction update in photos.
- Training sessions.
- User's guide.
- Welcome pack.
- Help desk.
- Post-occupancy questionnaire.



## Approved Model

### Key data

- From 11 offices to none (open-plan model for everyone).
- Operating workstations: 260 for 800 people (flexibility rate higher than 65%).
- Customer hub on specific floor to invite them to work alongside employees.
- Amount of informal collaboration spaces in the open: 11%.
- Amount of the area for closed meeting rooms, offering a variety of configurations and capacities: 5.5%.
- Amount of concentration and privacy spaces: 3%.
- Amount of specific spaces for welcoming and attending to customers ('wow' factor): 5.2%.
- Amount of added-value spaces (work coffee , innovation, and learning spaces): 7%.
- Paperless office and clean-desk policy.
- Pioneering, innovative model based on flexibility, goal-oriented work, and trust in the organization's maturity.



# Interview with Albert Triola

## Country leader, Oracle Spain

### **Please tell us how the need to update the workspace for Oracle emerged.**

The project dates from prior to the COVID-19 crisis. The need arose to relocate the headquarters, which was on the outskirts of Madrid, to a more central location in order to be closer to customers and partners. Based on that, we identified a project to update the workspace to make it more collaborative, that is, not only as a physical space for employees but also as an environment and meeting place for all our stakeholders as well.

We made a purposeful decision to focus on flexibility by implementing 40% of workstations and leaving most of the available space occupied by areas that encourage gathering, collaboration, learning, outstanding customer service, and added value. In this sense, the project was planned as an opportunity to achieve two objectives: looking inward, the headquarters was planned to be an exciting place for employees, while looking outward, it was to be perceived as a flexible, attractive space for our entire network of customers and partners.

### **What things have changed compared to before COVID-19 in terms of the offices?**

To us, the pandemic and the reflection on workspaces that came in its wake have been like a kind of double-check or confirmation of the model we had chosen for our headquarters. The COVID-19 crisis has confirmed that the model we had been focusing on, with goal-based management and work, hybrid and focused on flexibility, was the right one.

In terms of leadership, for years we have been working to define smart goals that cascade down and adapt to each organizational level with the assistance of the right processes and technologies. They are reviewed every quarter and half-year to create a flexible team management model that is very open



to working from anywhere. In this sense, the pandemic has accelerated and consolidated this work culture and has signaled a shift—yet without disruption—which has made working and achieving goals even more important, not going to the office for its own sake.

In fact, personally, I don't like the word *office*, because we should actually be looking at the importance of being in person at work from the standpoint of a club, the Oracle club, which encompasses employees, managers, and all our customers and partners. Informal or structured conversations, chance meetings in hallways or when having coffee are all valuable. We have to stop thinking about going to the office as an obligation, and focus more on the concept of being present with and for each other.

**“In a project like ours, what COVID-19 has done is simply reinforce it”**

## **“You have to create a solid culture of commitment and trust, which doesn’t mean being connected 24/7”**

To me the underlying debate is not “office vs. no office” but rather how to create efficient companies where what matters isn’t the office or the timetable or the start or end of the workday but being efficient in line with the goals.

It is also true that technologies and tools were already available at Oracle; that is, they were already in place for the flexibility that COVID-19 brought about, around which we had rethought our offices and workspaces. So that helped confirm we were already heading in the right direction.

### **How do you create a culture that fosters this hybrid model?**

I think that leaders are the ones who can generate this culture. When the leader of the organization defines and communicates its overarching goals, they are guiding and defining priorities. All of this shapes the culture. Managers have to understand how to manage their teams by goals and using this vision. You have to trust managers, avoid micromanagement, stay away from regular reviews, foster a culture of commitment and trust, and not ride your teams or allow them to be connected 24/7.

The word *office* evokes an archaic, somewhat inflexible, hierarchical concept. Companies are facing a different challenge, so our corporate spaces should help generate work models and cultures based on trust and flexibility associated with the efficacy that tools and technology provide nowadays. If we talk about more junior employees in our company, it is possible to implement this culture of commitment and flexibility with transparency and approachability through good leadership in middle management, by evaluating and designing what needs improvement.

We are convinced that this culture brings value, helps us to be much more competitive, and better fits the environment in which we live, where technology and the online world meet the physical environment.

### **In your project to transform the spaces, and in this entire phase we are going through, have you learned anything that surprised you that you’d like to share with our readers?**

Yes, we’ve learned a very important lesson: you have to lead by example, and you have to get employees involved so that they are part of and actors in this change. You also have to manage the transition in the change.









## Background and Start Date

<b>Sector:</b>	Pharmaceutical industry. Multinational.
<b>Origen:</b>	Germany, 1863.
<b>Número de empleados:</b>	477.
<b>Superficie operativa:</b>	9,800 m <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Ubicación:</b>	Sant Joan Despí (Barcelona).
<b>Año del proyecto:</b>	From 2017 to 2021.
<b>Motivación del proyecto:</b>	<p>Global guidelines which have implemented the WORKLIFE project and initiative in countries around the world (Chile, China, etc.) are now being applied in the Barcelona branch.</p> <p>WORKLIFE is a project that will take three years to implement and is based on workspace flexibility to make it a catalyst of culture change.</p> <p>Some of its goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote a work atmosphere based on trust.</li> <li>• To foster communication among business areas.</li> <li>• To eliminate silos and increase flexibility.</li> <li>• To motivate co-creation, creativity, innovation, and efficient processes.</li> </ul>



## Qualitative Analysis

Actions carried out	Main conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven group interviews with 22 people at all levels.</li> <li>• Twenty-three individual interviews with senior management.</li> <li>• Four workshops with 75 people.</li> <li>• Online questionnaire sent to 477 people (51% response rate).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current Bayer offices are confined, hierarchical, and formal.</li> <li>• A highly individual work style predominates.</li> <li>• Important values for Bayer, like trust, are not noticed in the workplace.</li> <li>• There was a particular lack of spaces to gather informally at the office.</li> <li>• Employees feel prepared to adopt flexibility policies, but the corporate culture doesn't foster them enough.</li> <li>• Workers wanted a space with a stronger presence of natural elements more aligned with a sustainable vision.</li> <li>• Employees identified the need for concentration spaces at the office.</li> <li>• There is a need for tech support to facilitate processes and the work style in an innovative, agile atmosphere.</li> </ul>



## Quantitative Analysis



Actions carried out	Main conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of the current space on seven floors.</li> <li>• Occupancy study (300 measurements on 10 workdays).</li> <li>• Comparison with benchmarking, services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupancy rate 16.3 m<sup>2</sup>/WS, four points above best practices, sending an alarming message that has little to do with efficiency and optimization.</li> <li>• Office area: 36%, 4.5 times the standard. Such a high presence of offices distorts the occupancy rate. There are different office sizes and configurations, with a direct correlation to the company members' career status and progress.</li> <li>• Meeting room area: 14%, compared to 11% in the standard size. The majority are very large. They are occupied 94% of the time, but the meeting spaces within offices are not, so they are redundant as they are occupied only 34% of the time. Efficiency of the reservation system under 50%.</li> <li>• No areas for collaboration or informal gatherings.</li> <li>• Amount of added-value areas: 2.5% (exclusively in kitchen or coffee vending areas).</li> </ul>



## Approved Model



Key data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From 106 to no offices (open-space model for everyone).</li> <li>• From 40% to 83% of the area set aside for open spaces (individual work, collaboration, innovation, interaction).</li> <li>• From two types of meeting rooms to eight types of different gathering spaces, which allow for different meeting formats and dynamics.</li> <li>• The area used for the archive and paper storage was cut in half.</li> <li>• From no concentration spaces to almost 500 m<sup>2</sup> set aside for this use in the overall implementation.</li> <li>• Inclusion of healthy spaces and areas for social interaction.</li> <li>• What began as a project that encompassed all seven floors of the building that Bayer owned became an implementation on five floors for the sake of a flexible and more efficient model, and after COVID-19 it has become a three-floor corporate space with an additional floor for co-working, while the rest will bring in revenues and be rented to a third party.</li> </ul>



# Interview with Jordi Llargués

## Strategic facility manager, Bayer Barcelona

### How did the need to update the Bayer workspace arise?

We began the project in 2017, with a technical-economic approach driven by the necessity to renovate the building due to its inevitable need for updates and machinery, which meant that our organic costs were high.

What was initially planned as a discourse on costs evolved to its current narrative of transformation, overcoming cultural resistances, and managing change. We sought a space that reflected our values of flexibility, efficiency, innovation, and a focus on creativity. The project also came in the midst of a merger with another part of the company, so both dimensions had to be shaped and co-created. This posed interesting challenges.

The project began by seeking to create efficient spaces from the operating standpoint so that they were both profitable and cost-efficient. Now it has evolved toward viewing the space as a strategic catalyst which seeks to create values and culture. Now it's no longer an architecture or interior design project but a shift in management and leadership.

### How has the pandemic affected the way you work, and what changes has it brought about, if any, in the conception of your workspace? What things have changed compared to before COVID-19 in terms of the offices?

COVID-19 has led us to continue evolving the initial model and planning. We have become even more flexible in adapting our workspace transformation process. We want our Barcelona headquarters to reflect what we have learned from a time like this, with all the changes brought about by the pandemic in terms of both our employees and at a regulatory level with the new law. This has led us to evolve the approved model and continue tinkering with it even further.

In Barcelona, we have traditionally had a seven-floor corporate headquarters in Sant Joan Despí measuring 9,800 m<sup>2</sup>, with a total of 477 employees at the beginning of the project, in 2017. From the initial plan to occupy five of our seven floors, ultimately we are occupying just three and earning profits on the others from third-party renters and setting up some as coworking spaces.

### What does flexibility mean for a company like Bayer?

Flexibility was already a value in our corporate culture. Today it is just further reinforced. The way we have set up the different work categories and formats according to the mix, as well as the combination of in-person and remote work, reflect this. There are different levels of hybridization which encompass everything from the concept of the home office, with four or five days spent working from home (30% to 35% of employees); to a flexible concept, where employees are estimated to be at home 2.5 days (60% of employees) and the remaining days at the office; to a full-office concept, where employees will be at the office four or five days a week (5% to 10% of employees). Logically, this has to come with contractual compensations and adjustments, as well as the proper conditions to work in each place, and of course it adapts to each job, profile, and responsibility, and the unions and workers' committees play an important role in this.

Flexibility opens up new doors and opportunities in attracting new talent as well.

**“Space is finally understood as a catalyst for many other things”**

## **“Focusing on a flexible model means focusing on empowering employees, with all the responsibility and commitment this entails”**

### **How do you create a culture of flexibility?**

Before COVID-19, we had a work-balance strategy which we have now renamed smart working to introduce new aspects that we’ve learned and come to value through the pandemic.

Nobody questions whether there are preassigned workstations anymore, because the discourse among the managers and their teams is not about stations or spaces but about employee responsibility and empowerment, so they can work autonomously, asynchronously—even in timetables—from their supervisors. It is a discourse that has become about trust, not micromanagement. Even time flexibility has enabled more and more employees to participate in transversal projects with other teams from other countries. It’s as if management has lost its importance from the control standpoint and taken on a dimension of true leadership and trust, as well as responsibility.

We have digitalized jobs at all levels, from the app to reserve our spaces to the tools and technologies that allow for remote work. And this is no longer about job profiles but ways of working and work cultures. In this sense, the office space is more a meeting point than a place you are obligated to be.

### **In your project to transform the spaces, and in this entire phase we are going through, have you learned anything that surprised you that you’d like to share with our readers?**

Our pilot project is being extrapolated at other branches in other countries, and we’ve learned a lot. One of the most important lessons is adaptation and flexibility. Another has been managing all the parties involved in the change processes. Something that’s been a reality check is the importance of seeing how, when transforming spaces, the same human concerns arise, and that sometimes there is a need to approach people and explain the changes and transformations not only from the operational standpoint but also from a psychological and emotional point of view.







## Background and Start Date

<b>Sector:</b>	Nonprofit association to combat cancer.
<b>Location:</b>	Spain, 1953.
<b>Number of employees:</b>	126.
<b>Operating area:</b>	12,000 m <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Initial location:</b>	Amador de los Ríos, 5; and Fortuny, 3 (Madrid).
<b>Final location:</b>	Teniente Coronel Noreña, 30 (Madrid).
<b>Project year:</b>	2018.
<b>Motivation for project:</b>	<p>The former headquarters of the Spanish Association Against Cancer (AECC) was a building donated by a private individual which had become too small and its installations obsolete over the years, so it no longer represented what the entity wanted based on its mission: to be a close, welcoming, transparent space that inspires trust and represents the shared home of everyone from the branches all over Spain who often travel to the central headquarters.</p> <p>With closeness and austerity as the engines driving the project, it was decided to look for a new site in an industrial-style building which was totally overhauled, where the importance of the work that employees do with cancer patients and their families could be highlighted.</p>

## Qualitative Analysis

### Actions carried out

- Five strategic interviews with senior management.
- Online survey sent to 121 people (74% response rate).

### Main conclusions

- The provincial branches had already undertaken a transformation of their spaces to become friendlier, more open, closer, and more transparent. The central headquarters should give off the same vibe.
- The workplace should represent AECC's values (and the current one clearly doesn't) and be a place where people want to work.
- It should convey calmness and extraordinary transparency.
- All of us together in a single building. The shared home where we all come from. A space envisioned as open, which helps us feel like we're a team and we work as one.
- A warm, friendly space. The association has been fighting cancer for 65 years, and it shouldn't look like a start-up.
- A focus on technology, innovation, new methodologies, and sustainability. A coherent, future-oriented message.



## Quantitative Analysis

Actions carried out	Main conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of the current space in both buildings.</li> <li>• Comparison with benchmarking, services.</li> <li>• Occupancy study with six measurements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupancy rate 10.2 m<sup>2</sup>/WS, which means discomfort and a lack of space.</li> <li>• Office area: 12%, twice the standard. Office with uneven sizes, and disproportionate offices. The building poses many limitations to an effective layout.</li> <li>• Meeting room area: 8%, lower than the standard 14%. The majority are large and poorly equipped. Almost all the meetings host two to three people, and there is no appropriate place for them.</li> <li>• No areas for collaboration and informal gatherings. Very bulky reused furniture which doesn't help efficiency. Noisy, dark space filled with cabinets and excess paper and documentation.</li> <li>• Amount of added-value areas: 8%, particularly an audit space which is almost always empty and rented out to third parties.</li> </ul>



## Approved Model

Key data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space for 190 workstations and a 75% reduction in offices, keeping the minimum for the sake of representation.</li> <li>• Collaboration spaces: 6.2%, where there were previously none.</li> <li>• An amount of 11.6% of the space was set aside for meeting rooms, an increase from the previous space prioritizing small meeting rooms which better meet users' needs.</li> <li>• An amount of 6.5% of added-value spaces used to welcome visitors from branches, along with areas for socialization, interaction, and innovation.</li> <li>• Inclusion of spaces for learning, training, and sharing knowledge, which are very important given the association's educational mission.</li> <li>• Drastic reduction in paper and storage, and a focus on sustainability.</li> <li>• A space more in line with the AECC's values and message, focusing on coherence with the work of the provincial branches and a simple, transparent, approachable, and updated image.</li> </ul>



# Interview with Noema Paniagua

## Directora general, AECC

### **How did the need to update the AECC workspace arise?**

The change in workspace emerged from the review of one of our founding objectives: patient treatment. The shift in the concept of patient care based on a holistic, multidisciplinary vision led us to also reconsider our workspaces to make them more approachable, and consequently to also review the way we work.

This was coupled with the need to seek a larger corporate space that could fit our larger staff, which has grown in recent years. The association has tripled its activity and income in the past four years, and this also meant that we needed new office space.

Furthermore, reputation and image have conditioned and defined this process of changing our workspaces, since we believe it is very important for there to be coherence between our offices and our mission of being close to our patients and our entire network of partners, who encompass everything from employees to doctors, along with medical centers, the entire healthcare network, patients, and volunteers.

### **How has the pandemic affected the way you work, and what changes has it brought about, if any, in the conception of your workspace? What things have changed compared to before COVID-19 in terms of the offices?**

Prior to the pandemic, we had strongly focused on digitalization, and this really helped us during this period. However, a large part of what we do is definitely hard to do digitally.

COVID-19 also helped us see that perhaps the initial design of our workspaces required some tweaking, since many of the open spaces we had first planned as spaces of collaboration and closeness were underused. It's true that the current health protocols have come into play here, but even when the situation goes back to normal I think that the dynamic of smaller groups will continue to be important, and large open spaces

are not always appropriate for certain meetings or projects.

What's more, the pandemic opened up new opportunities to reconsider how we did certain things; for example, our presence on the street, our large corps of volunteers (which total more than 30,000), and the different prevention and information campaigns can be done in other ways. And although it's true that digitalization opens doors, it also requires a great deal of training and preparation for our volunteers.

### **What does flexibility mean to an organization like the AECC?**

We didn't have flexibility policies in the association, and actually we still haven't formally defined them. What we have done is create protocols to adapt to the pandemic, but we haven't yet established a clear policy in this regard. We think it's better to wait until the situation goes back to normal and then consider flexibility in the format that best fits the way we work.

We know that flexibility is here to stay, and that what we've learned about working remotely and investments in technology are the future. However, our challenges will be to find a balance between in-person and remote work bearing in mind our activity, and our priority of caring for patients in all their dimensions. We will have to appropriately calibrate what it makes sense to extrapolate from the digital sphere and what it doesn't. There are physical things like having a coffee, human contact, conversations, and a sense of belonging and unity whose intangible value is difficult to offset and transfer to the virtual format. We believe that a sense of belonging and connection

**“Working remotely gives us specificity, efficacy, and optimization, but the human part is missing”**



with our organization is very important, and this is also achieved through physical spaces, the surroundings, collaboration, and the closeness that comes from a shared environment.

**Do you think there is a given employee prototype or profile for this hybrid work model? And for a leader? What characteristics do they have?**

This question is difficult to answer in our case, since we have so many different profiles; as I said before, our network of partners is extremely extensive. Our almost 1,100 employees are joined by our more than 30,000 volunteers, with a mean age of 60, along with patients, doctors, and others. What I do consider important is learning how to lead differently in a context of greater flexibility, and that trust entails responsibility. And we have to train ourselves for this.

**In your project to transform the spaces, and in this entire phase we are going through, have you learned anything that surprised you that you'd like to share with our readers?**

We have learned so much, and perhaps the most important thing is how difficult it is to compensate for informality and closeness, and all their value, in remote or virtual formats. We have also learned how important our stakeholders' qualifications and training are, so digitalization and all its positive effects gain importance in an organization like ours. Finally, internal communication has been and continues to be crucial throughout this entire change and adaptation process.

**“Keeping up the ties with an organization when everything stops being tangible is a factor we have to pay attention to”**



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New York  
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A Way to **Learn** . A Mark to **Make** . A World to **Change** .