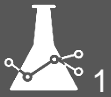




Mozilla's Open Source Workplace: Failing Fast, Creating, Succeeding

10 wise takeaways from a proven collaborative approach

In an entrepreneurial era, hacking the system, creating disruption and failing fast are key to improving results, increasing communication and creating rapport with change makers and leadership. We sat down with Rob Middleton, Director of Workplace Resources at Mozilla, to discuss what he's learned over the years on how grassroots initiatives improve real estate, workplace services, and employee experience. Mozilla views real estate as a continuous feedback loop of hacks and disruptions, a process full of lessons applicable to all workplace re-strategizing. Applying a fail fast philosophy to real estate and facilities unhinges traditional corporate programming mechanisms to allow for impactful workspace decisions.



TAKING POST-MOVE CHANCES

For workplace projects, Mozilla provides a budget cushion that enables Rob's team to take chances. "If a newly built space fails, that's OK. We build our budget so we can repurpose space based on post-occupancy research – to see what works and what doesn't." *Takeaway: Rob suggests allocating 10% of the budget for post-move adjustments – for "fail fast" in the new space and for finishing touches that make the space as welcoming and productive as possible.*



BUILDING VITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Here's how Rob describes his team's mission: "As a workplace services team, our contribution is to empower Mozilla be a more productive and fulfilled open-source community," bridging the gap between physical space and community building. *Takeaway: Refocus the traditional office or facilities manager role to encourage community connections within the workplace and build occupant relationships.*



INCREASING OCCUPANCY AND ACTIVITY

Staff in the office, as well as colleagues working from home, will have suggestions that can improve spatial and community considerations. Rob developed a desirable "opt-in" program through which occupants volunteered to "hot desk" if they came into the office less than three days a week. As a result, occupancy and activity increased. *Takeaway: If the workplace is flexible and appealing, the space will be filled out appropriately with a strong mix of people who want to be there.*



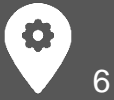
COLLABORATING PRODUCTIVELY WITH SUPPLIERS

Instead of calling for a time-consuming and costly RFP process with a "beauty pageant" approach, Mozilla goes another way. Example: For furniture and work-space design, Rob's team selected one vendor, based largely on its ability to collaborate. The result: an efficient procurement process, which, after a few rounds, produced products perfectly tailored for Mozilla. *Takeaway: You can save money and time by incentivizing collaboration, which generates a pool of new ideas and resources for both parties.*



CONNECTING THE BEST WITH THE BEST

Rob believes that strong technological connections are particularly important in a globally distributed organization. “Because we hire the best, without much regard to proximity, it’s really important to have a seamless video connection, to get as close to in-person productivity as possible.” *Takeaway: Connecting widely distributed teams, especially with high-quality video conferencing, is crucial for creating a vibrant community where all employees feel they belong.*



BEING WHERE YOU’RE MOST EFFECTIVE

At Mozilla, the staff chooses where to sit in the office. Rob says it’s designed to avoid top-down decision making about seating and space allocation. To make sure this can work effectively for everyone, the environment includes a variety of space types, and each space can serve many functions, providing the greatest flexibility. For example, Mozilla has created zones, from a research library with little ambient noise to a coffee shop with music where you can make phone calls. *Takeaway: With the right space design, employees or teams will choose to go where they will be most effective.*



GENERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING

Rob’s approach is to try a lot of different things for new workplace projects, knowing he has the resources to make modifications. “I’d rather do it, test it and move on, rather than think I have the perfect answer, spend three times the money and time, and figure out no one is going to use the space the way we envisioned it.” One caution: Don’t move too quickly, since any change requires adjustments, and it takes some time to see what’s working. *Takeaway: Try plenty of new things, and fix ones that don’t work. Admit defeat quickly so you can move on to a new idea.*



TURNING YAMMER INTO AN IDEA GENERATOR

Mozilla used the platform to solicit new ideas from users, then acted on what they heard. They had a ready-to-go, built-in social network to share opinions and advice – and to find new ideas that they may not have thought of otherwise. *Takeaway: By leveraging two-way tools, you not only avoid the risk of being “tone deaf,” but you become fully aware of what employees actually want and need.*



ENGAGING FOR NEW IDEAS

Rob says conversations with occupants inspire great new ideas. “I may think I know what the answer is, but if I engage people in the office, they will figure out something I haven’t thought about yet.” Example: Mozilla asked its staff in London and Toronto to consider sharing desks, which helped leadership think from the user’s perspective. *Takeaway: Engaging users directly and often can reduce friction and align decisions with user needs.*



FINAL TAKEAWAY: FAILING MEANS LEARNING

“As a tech company, we recognize the needs for scalability, growth, flexibility, experimentation, and the ability to fail fast,” Rob said. “We are expected to fail at Mozilla. If we don’t fail we don’t learn and if we don’t learn we aren’t pushing the envelope.”

At PLASTARC, we find ourselves at the intersection of people analytics and building design, supporting clients who are thinking differently about the future of work and place. With two architects, a sociologist, an anthropologist, an environmental psychologist and a data visualizer, we pretty much have the bases covered for innovative thinking.

Mozilla draws passionate coders committed to building an open source internet - one not owned by individuals or corporations, but created collaboratively and shared publicly. At Mozilla, taking risks in the design-build process is expected and encouraged.



PLASTARC

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