



## Mars Drinks

West Chester, Pennsylvania, US



**Mars Drinks has an established culture of openness, transparency, and “being human.” Now, with the completion of its redesigned headquarters, that culture is being celebrated and strengthened.**

When Xavier Unkovic, Global President of Mars Drinks, says, “We are 100 percent focused on the workplace,” he’s talking about the workplaces of the customers that Mars Drinks serves and its goal of making them better places to be—with the help of freshly brewed individual cups of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. But he’s also talking about Mars Drinks’ own workplace and the attention the company is giving to the redesign of its global headquarters and business campus in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Now, after nearly three years of on-site research, study, experimentation, and implementation, the results of this redesign are there: a working example of a “Living Office” in action.

## Case Study

“It was completely natural for us to want to engage with Herman Miller on this,” says Unkovic, “and to become a partner with them to better understand our workplace together. We feel a strong connectivity with Herman Miller.” Tomi Lyle, Mars Drinks’ former Global Director of People and Organization, says that this connection is largely the result of similarities between the two. “We were aligned culturally from the very beginning,” she says. “Our companies have similar cultures in terms of how we value people, our commitment to product quality and sustainability, and the impact we want to have on the workplace environment.”

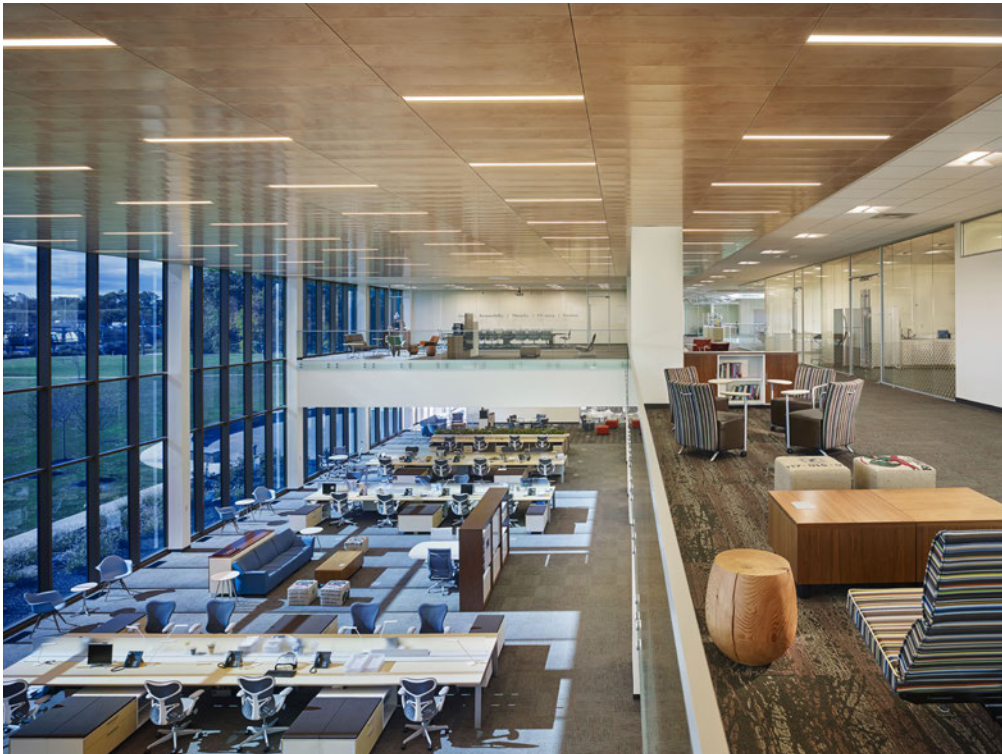
“Herman Miller was very intentional about understanding our culture, the way we work, and how we want to transform our ways of working,” says Unkovic. “They also realize the impact that our products can have in other offices and how our products can be used in conjunction with theirs.”

Lyle notes that the two companies’ goals for the campus redesign project were also aligned. “We wanted to create an environment that would drive collaboration and productivity.

Herman Miller’s objective was to ensure that we were able to create this kind of environment. Our conversations were driven by what we both were trying to accomplish.”

The redesign of Mars Drinks’ headquarters provided the opportunity to accomplish a lot. As one of Mars Incorporated’s six segments, Mars Drinks is growing and prospering, with a presence in North America, Europe, and Asia. With 100 percent dedication to serving people in the workplace, Mars Drinks is positioned for further growth. To grow its business, it prioritized its own workplace as a strategic asset, building upon its even greater asset, its people.

“Many decision-makers—owners of companies, CEOs—are very focused on the product they make or the brand they have,” says Unkovic. “They need to be, obviously. But they also need to focus on their people and understand that nothing happens without them. Attracting and retaining is critical. The types of companies that use our products in their offices typically value their employees. They see providing such an environment as a way to demonstrate that appreciation.”



A basic tenet of the Mars Drinks Workplace Policy: “We strive to eliminate all barriers to open communication.”

## Case Study

Mars, Inc., the third largest food company in the world and one of *Fortune's* 100 Best Places to Work, has an established culture of openness and accessibility to management. Family-owned, it is a decentralized organization, so although each segment (Food, Chocolate, Petcare, Wrigley, Symbioscience) has its own decision-making process, the broader cultural imperative is to share best practices. Like the other segments, Mars Drinks follows a Workplace Policy that states, “We strive to eliminate all barriers to open communication.”

Such openness has been manifest in terms of office layouts at Mars for years. “We are a story-telling culture,” says Lyle. “We’ve had an open environment for 60 of our 100 years.” Building on that foundation, Mars Drinks wanted to design a new solution, something as forward-looking as the company itself. “Herman Miller helped us to see our office of the future,” says Unkovic, “one that fits the culture of the company.”

### A Bridge into the Future

Mars Drinks knew it wanted to take openness to new levels in the redesign of its global headquarters. “We wanted a new place, beyond what we had before,” says Unkovic. “The goal of the campus project,” Lyle explains, “was to take the foundation of Mars’ Five Principles and the open office concept and enhance it into what it would look like both now and into the future.” Those principles—quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency, freedom—are the foundation on which the Mars family has built their business. “The Five Principles are the DNA of the company,” she says. “They offer a link with our traditions and a bridge into the future.”

The redesigned headquarters represents a bridge to a fresh way of looking at work and the needs of those who perform it. “We needed to better understand how we were working and how we wanted to work differently according to our corporate goals and our commitment to transparency, communication, and creativity,” says Lyle. “Based on a platform of looking into the future, we are partnering with Herman Miller and others to create an environment that supports and enhances collaboration and productivity, a place where all our associates can contribute and participate. We share knowledge through relationships and communication and we need spaces that help those things happen.”



When Mars Drinks' associates need a place for individual, heads-down work, the new environment offers a variety of options.



Mars Drinks' Living Office provides plenty of opportunities for people to connect and collaborate.

## Case Study

The question was, how could they help those things happen? How could they even know how much and how often such “things” take place? This need to know led to a Herman Miller research project on site at the West Chester headquarters. There, in December of 2011, Brian Green and Ruth Visser of Herman Miller’s Insight and Exploration Group observed and documented how and where the associates at Mars Drinks meet and work throughout the day. They paid particular attention to their collaborative behaviors: what happens when they collaborate? How and where and for what purpose do they collaborate? “There’s a healthy curiosity at Mars Drinks,” says Green. “They wanted to apply specific knowledge as a basis for an approach to their design, and this helped initiate that process.” It also signaled the beginning of the on-site Living Office work that would culminate with the completion of the headquarters project.

“The beauty of working with Herman Miller,” says Unkovic, “is that they’re thinking beyond products, just as we are. They have a perspective on how the workplace will evolve

in the future, and they understand people’s changing expectations of it. They helped us see these trends. For example, most of us who are leading this company are over 40 years old. We need help with 20-year-olds. What do they care about in terms of the office? What are the elements of the workplace that are important to them? Herman Miller helped us understand these kinds of things and the importance of supporting new ways of working that are more collaborative and productive.”

“Our discussions were not product based,” says Lyle. “They were driven by what it was we were trying to accomplish. Herman Miller brought research resources to help solve our problems and create holistic solutions. As we got deeper into the project, every step of the way, Herman Miller, its dealer, and designers worked together with us.” CreativeScale served as the interior design firm for the campus-redesign project.

The new working environment features the same freshly brewed coffee, tea, and hot chocolate that the company provides to its customers worldwide.



## Case Study

### The Importance of Being Human

In terms of an open office environment, Mars Drinks sought to further the transparency it has always espoused. “We want our associates to look, watch, and talk,” says Unkovic. “We want them to be human.” He cites, as an example, bypassing technology for real human contact. “Instead of sending an email to a colleague in a far corner, we want to encourage delivering that message in person. In addition to getting an immediate response, who knows what else might be shared, or who else you might meet along the way?”

Another way to “be human” is to sit down with others over a cup of coffee, tea, or hot chocolate. Mars Drinks knows a lot about this, as its designed-for-the-workplace drinks and brewing machines are serving people at work across the globe. “Coffee, tea, and hot chocolate play a critical role in workplace behavior,” he says. “They help people engage, they help them listen better. It’s a beautiful act, having coffee with someone. It creates connectivity and collaboration that drives productivity.” He notes that drink environments are migrating from the back room pantry to the center of the office. “They’re becoming a new focal point, the oasis of the business environment.”

Creating such an oasis at Mars Drinks has been part of the overall development of a Living Office at the redesigned headquarters. That process has been ongoing, with input and insights coming from the associates who are living and working there. “We decided to keep all associates on site during the entire process,” says Lyle, who has led the change management initiative. “We have spent two-and-a-half years living and working in the Living Office environment as it has developed and progressed.” With this ongoing involvement, Mars Drinks associates were able to experience and critique their new spaces firsthand. This included living in settings and using products that Herman Miller developed specifically for the campus redesign.

Experiencing the redesign was part of the strategy to create a place where employees would want to be. Lyle cites studies showing increasing numbers of workers returning to the office environment and away from mobile, nomadic work modes.

“They want to be closer to the action and their colleagues,” she says. “It’s really important to us to make the office a place where people want to be.” Millennials, especially, are recognizing the benefits of being there, at work. “They’re a community-based generation,” she says. “Our redesign is itself community based.”

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– Tomi Lyle

Of course, millennials are just part of the story. At Mars Drinks, the work force spans all generations. All are involved, working together in cross-functional teams, bringing their own experiences and expectations to the table. “Our office redesign is about creating different environments within our campus that are conducive to different types of working relationships,” she says, “whether a meeting between two people, a presentation made to customers, or an individual working alone—all the different types of work we do on a daily basis. Our campus is designed to support all that goes on.”

She sees the new environment “helping to mold our culture and working behaviors such that we can increase collaboration and productivity and build the essence of our brand and product into the hearts and minds of our people, our customers, other Mars associates, and anyone else who might visit. Ultimately, we want this to spread across all of Mars, to become part of the Mars culture.” Unkovic agrees. “I think there’s a good chance that this concept will be duplicated.”

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### A Growing Partnership

Mars Drinks and Herman Miller are teaming up in a way that might make others want to duplicate it. The two organizations are continually seeking ways to learn together and to share that learning as part of their broader conversations about the work environment and its effects on people. For example, Frank LaRusso, Vice President of Business Development at Mars Drinks, and Tracy Brower, Director of Performance Environments + Placemaking at Herman Miller, presented “Mars: A Great Place to Work,” at the 2014 convention of BOMA, the Building Owners and Managers Association. Also, Brower and Global President Unkovic presented at the 2014 CoreNet North American Summit, showing how Mars Drinks brought its culture to life through its workplace redesign and how that culture is reflected in the new work environment.

“Our relationship with Mars Drinks has gone beyond the typical customer/supplier relationship and has become the definition of a true partnership,” says Brower. “Even beyond the work at the Mars Drinks headquarters, we are working together on other efforts. We are committed to each other’s success and are continually taking action to support each other’s goals.”

“We see this as a partnership that will continue to grow,” says Lyle. “We’ve worked with Herman Miller across three countries now—Japan, Canada, and the US. We definitely see our businesses as being able to align across more countries. There’s great potential for a global relationship.”



Groups of people can meet in this open, tiered presentation space that’s suffused with natural light and panoramic vistas.

# Case Study

## Industry

Food

## Topics

Brand  
Collaboration  
Engagement  
Performance

## Applications

Collaboration  
Open Office

## Living Office Settings

Cove  
Forum  
Haven  
Hive  
Jump Space  
Landing  
Meeting Space  
Plaza

Workshop

## Project Scope

45,000 square feet

## Herman Miller Products

Canvas Office Landscape®  
Mirra® Task Chairs  
Setu® Chairs  
Swoop™ Lounge Furniture  
Eames® Meeting Tables  
Everywhere™ Tables  
Sense™ Desks  
Tu® Storage  
Herman Miller Collection

## Programs/Services

Space Syntax Analysis

## Year Completed

2014

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Architect: JacobsWyper Architects

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Mars Drinks (page 4)

The redesign of its global headquarters and business campus in West Chester, Pennsylvania, allowed Mars Drinks to further its commitment to its people, its products, and its focus on sustainability.

