

AccessOne's HQ space puts writing on the wall

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This company profile is part of CBJ's special report on corporate culture — Creating culture by design: How these Charlotte companies are designing HQ spaces to maximize employee engagement. Start here to read the complete feature.

THE CULTURE

Fort Mill-based AccessOne is a rapidly growing health-care finance company working with clients such as Atrium Health in Charlotte. AccessOne partners with hospital systems, but it works directly with patients to provide financing for large medical costs. As high-deductible health-care plans have become more prevalent, patients pay greater out-of-pocket medical costs. Many often need help paying the large bills over time. We are, without question, a purpose-driven organization," says Bob Meyer, chief marketing officer for AccessOne.



The open space at AccessOne includes large graphics with company values.

Employees in AccessOne's call center often speak with patients who are under significant stress with medical problems and financial strain. AccessOne's primary mission is to make paying the medical bills easier so patients can focus on their health.

"We are here to help patients who are sick and people who need our help," Meyer says. "We show them empathy for their situation. Often they are upset or mad. We deal with people who have a lot of stress, and we are there to help diffuse that situation."

THE SPACE

The Charlotte office of architecture firm ProgressiveAE designed AccessOne's new space with that mission in mind. In April, the company moved into a new 20,000-square-foot office in Kingsley Park.

"They were on top of each other in their last space," says Kim Marks, a principal and workplace practice leader for ProgressiveAE.

Along with a call center, the space includes more typical office environments. There's a large break area that brings staff together and includes an air hockey table, games, a large TV, a family table and good coffee.

"They really branded the space with big nice graphics throughout the offices," Marks says.

"The open space enables employees to communicate and work together."

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When AccessOne was preparing to move into its new office in Kingsley Park, employees were included in the design process.

large wall graphic that says, "We are patient advocates."

"Everyone considers the external brand," Meyer says. "What people fail to recognize is the internal brand is more important than the external brand. I have to get employees connected to our brand and how their job is connected to that brand."

Meyer says he believes employees feel good about the new space and where they work and understand the driving purpose of the business. That's especially important for call-center workers, who spend much of the day on the phone and need a positive environment.

Inside the call center, a large wall graphic says, "Make someone smile today."

"I really do believe our space screams culture when you walk into it," Meyer says. "That's a great end result."

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Meyer says the best way to ensure a headquarters space reflects the company culture is to include employees in almost every step of the design process.

"The Nos. 1, 2 and 3 piece of advice is listen to your employees," Meyer says. "It's not that you are going to build out a space customized to every employee whim. But as executives, we sometimes lose sight what it was like to sit in a workspace at some point in your career. I remember my first jobs in a cubicle farm. If they are comfortable walking into work, they are going to perform better."

Meyer also tells companies to buck trends and listen to their instincts.

"Just because it works for Google doesn't mean it works for you."

Employees were included throughout the design process. An employee competition was used to name the conference rooms, and employees chose the lounge-area game table.

Employees visited the furniture showroom and offered their opinions on desk and chair configurations.

WHAT THEY ACCOMPLISHED

Visitors and employees stepping off the elevator are met with a