

HAWORTH

# A Better, More Connected Work Environment

March 2018

**Case Study**  
Dairy Farmers of America

**Location**  
Kansas City, Kansas

**Project Type**  
Corporate Headquarters

**Design Firm**  
HOK

**Construction Firm**  
JE Dunn

**Dealer Partner**  
encompas



How do you design a headquarters that improves collaboration and communication for both leaders and employees within an organization?



## Overview

Formed in 1998, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) is a leading milk farming and marketing cooperative that has grown to serve and empower more than 12,000 dairy farmer members nationwide. With this growth, came the need for a new space to house its Kansas City headquarters. DFA pride themselves on being member-focused, smart, responsive, forward-thinking, and reliable. For their new office, they wanted to create a modern, interactive, and collaborative environment that would help build these points of pride into their culture, bringing them to life for current employees and job seekers, alike.

This meant leaving their leased Kansas City, Missouri property, crossing the river, and constructing a brand new three-story, 110,000 square-foot building in Kansas City, Kansas. And of course, this impressive, state-of-the-art facility needed employee amenities, flexible workspaces, and unique furnishings to match.

## Specifications



- Area: 110,00 square feet
- Levels: 3 stories
- Indoor/Outdoor eating area
- Private patios
- Outdoor basketball and bocce courts
- Walking trail

## Objective

Create a modern work environment—with collaborative spaces and flexible workstations—to support what today's employees want.

## Solution

Together, leadership and employees generated ideas to bring headquarters to life in a way that supported DFA's forward-thinking, community-oriented culture.

## Results

A future-proof, modern headquarters with an open floorplan that supports collaboration and communication—while paying homage to farmer members.

## Objective

# Moo-ving DFA Forward

DFA had outgrown their leased office space in both size and purpose. Their previous headquarters occupied seven floors of a tall, dark building, with no room to expand, limited access to daylight, and no real opportunities for employees to work outside. DFA simply needed a new space of their own, with room to grow—a space tailored to their collaborative needs and the culture they wanted to promote for the future of the organization.

By reducing the number of floors from seven to three, DFA's new building eliminated the inherent disconnection of employees being separated by floors. The new building also maximizes the use of its open floorplan with shared space, scaling back the number of private offices to just 10 from the original 175.

## Natural Light

New workstations with access to abundant daylight were designed to facilitate easy, natural communication and collaboration between employees.



## Objective

# Engaging Employees in the Redesign

DFA wanted their new headquarters to be reflective of a modern work environment and what today's employees want from their workplace. They created about 15 different engagement committees, providing all employees the opportunity to participate in research, discussions, and recommendations for the new office. Each committee had a unique focus, concentrating on topics such as branding, workstations, alternative workspaces, collaboration, meeting areas, and outdoor spaces, as well as amenities like the fitness center and café. The committees generated ideas to bring the space to life in a way that actually supported DFA's forward-thinking, community-oriented culture, rather than working against it.

## A Connection to Nature

Outdoor spaces with access to Wi-Fi create areas for employees to work, meet, eat, play, or relax in a recharging environment with access to nature, fresh air, sunlight, and comfortable furniture.





Set on the new headquarters reflecting their forward-thinking culture, DFA treated the project as a long-term investment. They intended for their space to have the ability to evolve and change to meet their organizational needs for the next 40 years—and still have the look, feel, and function of a modern office. With this in mind, raised access flooring was installed in the entire building to house heating and cooling ducts, as well as wiring, allowing for easier moves and space reconfigurations when needed.

“One of the important aspects of future proofing the project was Dairy Farmers of America’s desire to treat this as a 40-year investment. That ultimately changed the dialogue intensely, and we thought about everything from sustainability to making sure that they had a platform that allowed them to move, add, and change as easily as possible.”

**Peter Sloan**  
Principal at HOK

## Modern Workspaces

With input from the people who use them, DFA's new workstations were designed with the total employee experience in mind. The benching system with lower wall panels allows team members easy access to one another, while offering just enough of a perceived barrier to provide personal space. "Now you can easily take a look around and see folks are right there," said Darren Brehm, DFA Senior Director. "You can see conversations happening. You can see an opportunity to run down and ask an easy question. That's incredibly valuable." Workstations also have multifunctional pedestal storage units that double as temporary seating for people dropping by for those quick questions or impromptu conversations.

### Flexible Workspaces

Workstations have been designed from a standard kit of parts that can be assembled in different ways to create multiple configurations depending on need.



“We really tailored what we offered based on feedback from [employees] on what they needed, not just, ‘Oh, this looks really nice,’ but what would be functional in their space.”

**Kristen Coady**

Vice President of Corporate Communication, DFA

The new workstations better support the comfort and workstyles of the teams using them. Pull-out pantries provide added privacy, access to power for charging mobile devices, as well as display and storage for personal items. Ergonomic seating, height-adjustable desks, and accessories—such as monitor arms for their new dual monitor setup—allow for more user control and personalization for a variety of workstyles.

DFA has strong ties to the dairy farming families they serve, so they wanted to honor them in the office design. The branding engagement committee concluded that office design should reflect the entire scope of DFA—from farms and milk production, to plants and processing facilities, to the dairy products people around the world use every day.





## A Desirable Collaborative Community

DFA set out to create a new, engaging headquarters space that supported employees in their jobs and as people—a place they really wanted to work, and where they could do their best work. With their new building, DFA was no longer limited by a leased space and they were able to create a future-proof, modern office with an open floorplan that better supported the collaboration and communication their employees needed, while paying homage to farmer members. Common spaces, like the grand stair area with its pouring milk sculpture, and the Milk Bar have quickly become favorite places for people to socialize—facilitating communication while bringing DFA employees together as a team.

Even the individual workstations are bringing people together by making it easier for them to communicate and get work done. Collaboration and communication just started happening naturally. There is still space for employees to do focus work, but the new workstations are also helping with workflow and productivity.

### Dairy Décor

Textiles, patterns, and unique design elements like cheese graters, cow tags, and milk bottles form three-dimensional patterns on accent walls.





Fully supporting their employees' well-being with modern, world-class amenities and giving them flexibility in their work schedule, DFA has become a more attractive company for today's workforce. And of course, the entire office and grounds are rooted in DFA's culture and brand—from farm to table. Everything brings together the forward-thinking community culture and heritage DFA wants its employees to experience every day.

“As you walk around, you'll see branding that showcases our food, milk, and ice cream business by reflecting back to the plant and the farm. That was a key driver from the employees, saying they wanted to tell all of DFA's story throughout the building.”

**Kristen Coady**  
Vice President of Corporate Communications, DFA



### Customer Profile

Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) is a leading milk marketing cooperative and dairy food processor that serves and is owned by nearly 13,000 members nationwide. It was established in 1998 to unite smaller regional cooperatives and help farm families survive in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. This combined cooperative offers programs and services that make it easier and more profitable for members to farm. Today, DFA has become one of the country's most diversified manufacturers of dairy products, food components, and ingredients.

### Featured Haworth Products

- Belong® Slat Tiles and Accessories
- Beside® Storage Pantry
- Compose® Panels and Storage
- Enclose® Moveable Walls
- Ginger™ Chairs (HC)
- Hi Pad™ Stools (HC)
- Hop Height-Adjustable Tables
- Immerse® Ledge Tables
- Planes® Collaborative Tables
- Suite™ Casegoods
- X Series® Storage, Common Tops, and Lockers

*HC indicates Haworth Collection products.*