ENGAGING EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS TOGETHER

Mike Herud is a managing partner of Scope Architekten in Stuttgart, Germany, a firm he cofounded in 2010. Scope's Innovation Center in Potsdam for SAP won a Bund Deutscher Architekten (BDA) prize in 2016. We began by asking him about what clients request, and what he wants to know about a client before starting down the path to a design.

"There are many issues at the beginning of a project," he said. "It is important to understand a company's creative DNA, its age, the philosophy its employees ascribe to, what they identify with, and even what kind of materials they prefer. And one must understand the conceptual idea behind the request as well as the ways in which people work."

With respect to the design, Herud continued, "The key is not just to have nice colors and nice furniture and a good 'landscape' in the office, but rather to make sure that the space is right for the work. Often, architecture responds far too little to the different needs of users."

We asked how this perspective played out in designing the Innovation Center for SAP in Potsdam. Herud began by explaining the motivation for SAP. The company, he said, was looking at the world in which it does business and seeing that beyond products and markets, there were big changes happening in the world of work.

Today, employees are much more flexible about where and when they work. Their priorities are different; they are social, and cultural, and often about achieving work-life balance. SAP wanted a place that, among other things, would attract Millennials to work for the company. Hasso Plattner [a cofounder of SAP] brought a lot of ideas from Silicon Valley, inspired by startup companies, and also was willing to allow a culture of being wrong. It was clear to him that not everything has to be perfect from the start, but rather that it was more important to start doing something.

Herud explained the challenge his firm faced.

From the beginning, SAP had a business idea but no idea about how to translate it into architecture and space. So, first we developed some branding— meaning architecture as the embodiment of a business idea and a corporate culture, with the specific space representing the company's creative identity. This conceptual idea reflects the DNA of the company. The idea was based on the idea of the startup that emerges from a garage and wants to recapture those days of the garage.

From a design perspective, Herud said, "This means the buildings could be reduced to an absolute minimum. Functionality is the main thing, and that employees can identify with the space. It should be a place where they are comfortable in terms of materials, the feel, and the environment. To achieve this, you even have to include potential users who don't even yet work for the company."

Preceding page, above: a flexible "design thinking" space supports that aspect of the SAP Innovation Center process.

Below: team space in an open, flexible office landscape.

SAP Innovation Center, Potsdam, Germany.

Working with young people was an advantage, Herud reported. "We spoke with people fresh from college who had never worked in a corporate structure. That made it easier to implement such a new concept. We interviewed groups along with the site manager. Our questions were aimed at increasing how they might identify with the space. What they told us has been implemented in the space concept."

What kind of "innovation" is being promoted in the space, we asked.

SAP is working on its own product ideas at the Innovation Center along with partners from business, science, and medicine who help advance the product development. In other cases, companies bring specific problems to SAP, looking for a special solution. A small team of staff, programmers, and people in other technical disciplines—a very mixed team, even including creative designers from different disciplines— come together with people from the client company and work together in a 'design thinking' process to ideate a solution, still in the abstract and still without any programming. In this space, the problem itself is illuminated from different angles, as are the considerations for how it might be tackled.

Herud explained how the connection between this process and the Innovation Center space.

There are encounter rooms for when a company first brings its problem. That is the first phase. For the second phase, the creative idea phase, there are large 'design thinking' rooms that are flexible, that can be made more open with sliding walls, and that have whiteboard surfaces and appropriate media and lighting. These spaces can accommodate different team sizes and projects. This space must work as a multifunctional flexible room for different team sizes, and should engender collaboration.

And what about the "garage"? For the third phase of the process, software prototyping, Herud said, "there is a large area and flexible group rooms with folding walls. The space allows no noise from the outside to penetrate. Programmers can set up here for however long they need to and create the total environment they need—as in a startup environment. The space belongs to them: they can set it up with refrigerators, multiple monitors, PlayStation … whatever they need to make a 'home' for a certain period so they can create. The time can vary widely before a first software prototype is developed."

Then, Herud described, there is space for the fourth phase. "That requires a completely open, flexible office landscape—conceived for classic software development to take place, after the prototype, but more quickly and in an unconventional environment."

Summing up the achievement represented by the SAP Innovation Center in Potsdam, Herud spoke about the same kinds of behaviors we introduced in chapter 3. "If you want to work creatively," he said, "communication is essential to momentum. You have to promote movement, interaction, and collaboration. Architecture can support this. Companies need to understand and let that happen."

CLIENT	**SAP SE**
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Above: a "garage-like" room provides a startup-type environment for creative work. Below: initial meetings on projects are held in an "encounter" room, corresponding to the first phase of the creative process.