

Business case

# Royal HaskoningDHV

Creating an optimal and sustainable working environment by putting the user needs at the centre

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When the lease on the Amsterdam branch of Royal HaskoningDHV expired, the company mission ‘*enhancing society together*’ became the guiding principle in the search for a new building.

In the past, square metres and level of services would have been the deciding factors when looking for a new office location in Amsterdam. However, on this occasion, Royal HaskoningDHV’s company mission, ‘enhancing society together’, was at the centre of its relocation. Business development manager Martine Verhoeven, one of the initiators of this new approach, explains: “In the context of ‘enhancing society together’, we looked at the projects Royal HaskoningDHV was working on for its client as a starting point – for example, projects that focused on the density and liveability of the city, climate adaptation, sustainable mobility and so on. In short: themes that are about ‘society’ and the urban challenge.” She also explained the connotation of ‘together’: “We wanted to work with more people than just our colleagues, so we were keen to seek out a building which was also occupied by start-ups and other organisations.”

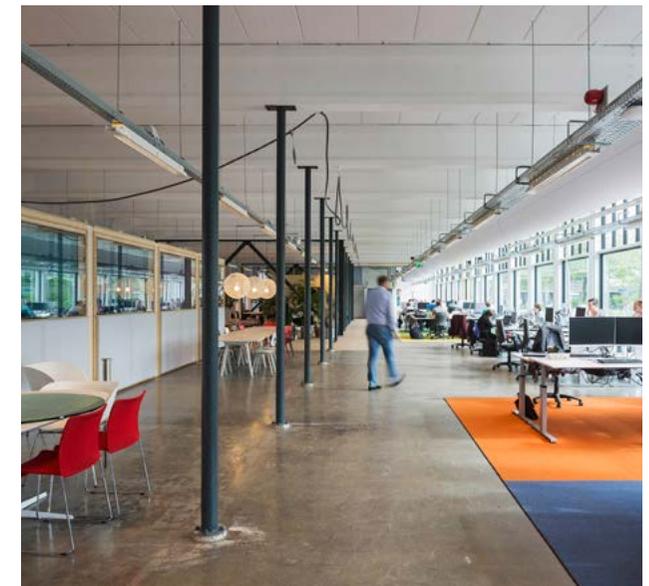
### Objective image

Once the Leesman pre-occupancy examination had taken place, the building search began. The project team wasn’t necessarily looking for a standard office that was completely finished. In the end, they selected a former garage near Amsterdam Sloterdijk. Martine explains: “The building was rather bare, which offered the opportunity to fulfil our ambitions and our additional requirements: one open floor, energy neutrality and circularity.”

Following the renovation and after Royal HaskoningDHV had moved into the building, Marieke Oosterbaan was brought on to the project as a built asset management & sustainability consultant. Her specific focus in this role was to measure the extent to which the original relocation goals have been achieved and where there was still room for improvement and optimisation. To measure employee wellbeing, the WELL Business Standard was used. Marieke says that “WELL offers an objective yardstick to measure the level of a healthy office”. The team used this measure alongside a Leesman Post-Occupancy evaluation, which gave them an opportunity to compare with their Pre-Occupancy evaluation to understand how far they had come. “We believe that it’s essential to know what employees think and what is important to them,” says Marieke. “By asking them to fill in the Leesman survey, we were able to create an objective picture of where we are now. This helps us to prioritise further improvements.

“Both methods examine productivity relating to health, happiness and the working environment, and gaps emerged from both studies,” adds Marieke. “The question then is: do you consider the employee’s perception to be important, or do you want to be able to say that you have the most scientifically sustainable building? We have combined the power of both methods. For us, it really has added value that Leesman reflects employee opinions and provides an additional level of detail. Their well-being is paramount so getting their feedback gives a detailed view of how healthy the office is, in accordance to a certified methodology.

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## Employee experience

The Leesman Post Occupancy evaluation showed some promising results, with an Lmi score of 69.9. This was a 23.3 point increase from the Pre-Occupancy Lmi score of 46.6 Martine describes it as “a huge amount of progress, and only just below the Leesman+ score of the ‘top 6 percent’ of organisations that have been measured”. It is a result, she says, the organisation is very happy with.

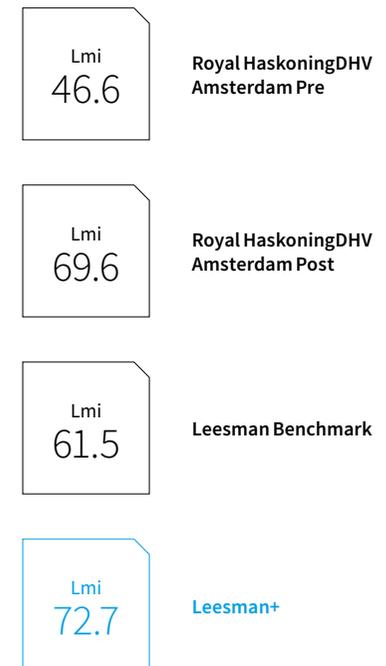
Pride scores were also impressive. The meagre 14.4 percent of the past has risen to an almost Leesman+-worthy 71 percent. Martine says: “An interesting outcome, especially because we now work in such a distinct, industrial environment. However, because we included everyone in the goals in advance and communicated them well, it makes sense that people are now proud. I also believe that pride is very much connected with the question: do I recognize the identity of the organisation and the workplace?’ And we know that both employees and customers believe that this environment now fits with who we are as Royal HaskoningDHV.”

‘This building is an example of a building that is never finished or needs to be: we continue to optimise’

The employees in Amsterdam are now all on one floor with eight centrally situated quiet zones. Thanks in part to this variety, the productivity agreement score increased from 43.2 to 73.1 percent. “We were previously distributed across five floors, which means you wouldn’t know everyone. When, in fact, for healthy collaboration it’s important that you work together in the same space and get to know each other,” says Marieke. “The quiet zones help productive working; it’s a place where you can make calls or have discussions. People want to work in a very concentrated way, but we also need to work together a lot more. Organising that requires a very good design.”

Royal HaskoningDHV also scored well on satisfaction with noise level, which has been proven to be a strong predictor for employee productivity. “91 percent of employees indicate that individual focussed work is important to them. Enabling this individual focused work has been made possible due to the measures we have taken to create good acoustics. The spacious layout of the workstations also contributes to this,” Martine explains.

## Leesman Lmi comparison



Thinking about the work that you do, which of the following activities are important and how well are they supported?	Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Post		Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Pre			Leesman+	
	% Importance	% Support	% Importance	% Support	% Support difference	% Support	% Support difference
Private conversations	28.0%	84.6%	30.2%	28.9%	55.7%	65.0%	19.6%
Individual focused work away from your desk	17.2%	87.5%	17.5%	31.8%	55.7%	82.1%	5.4%
Telephone conversations	83.9%	84.6%	84.1%	33.0%	51.6%	77.8%	6.8%

The level of support for the **activities** ‘Private conversations’, ‘Individual focused work away from your desk’ and ‘Telephone conversations’ have all increased tremendously, each by over 51 percent. “The fact that the eight inter-zones are close to the workplaces helps enormously,” says Marieke. “They are proper rooms, no more uncomfortable chairs that are uninviting for people making calls. The space where start-ups and other companies work is also easily accessible.”

Thinking about the work that you do, which of the following physical features are important and how satisfied are you with them.	Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Post		Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Pre			Leesman+	
	% Importance	% Satisfaction	% Importance	% Satisfaction	% Satisfaction difference	% Satisfaction	% Satisfaction difference
Variety of different types of workspace	46.2%	72.1%	57.1%	8.3%	63.8%	63.1%	9.0%
General décor	78.5%	69.9%	82.5%	6.7%	63.2%	72.0%	-2.1%
Informal work areas / break-out zones	54.8%	60.8%	61.1%	7.8%	53.0%	70.1%	-9.3%

As for the support of **physical characteristics**, most progress has been made on ‘Variety of different types of workspaces’, ‘General decor’ and ‘Informal work areas/break-out zones’. Marieke explains that human dimension was used to look at the design, while employees were able to contribute ideas. “The height of the ceiling also plays a part; it feels spacious here,” says Martine.

Thinking about the work that you do, which of the following service features are important and how satisfied are you with them?	Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Post		Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Pre			Leesman+	
	% Importance	% Satisfaction	% Importance	% Satisfaction difference	% Verschil - Ondersteund	% Satisfaction	% Satisfaction difference
Hospitality services	60.2%	58.9%	54.0%	4.4%	54.5%	73.6%	-14.7%
Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities	81.7%	73.7%	80.2%	28.7%	45.0%	78.0%	-4.3%
Audio Visual equipment	31.2%	82.8%	37.3%	44.7%	38.1%	65.2%	17.6%

Focus has been paid towards the **service facilities** within the workplace, too, especially in regard to 'Hospitality services' and 'Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities'. Martine claims that this is thanks to the way they are presented – in the communal space and with an authentic coffee trolley.

## Continuing improvement

Of course, the Leesman Post Occupancy survey also highlighted points for improvement, and the project team drew up a priority list of areas based on these results.

Toilets, for example, were rated as the most important facility by the employees, but satisfaction with these facilities was not as high as it should have been. “The problem with regard to the toilets has now been resolved by bricking up the walls and installing full length doors.”

The same applies to accessibility via access routes and stairs. “Structural improvements are needed in that regard,” Martine admits. “In terms of access, previously if you parked on the roof, you couldn’t go straight down. However, a staircase has been fitted this week and there is a wheelchair entrance at the front of the building, although it looks somewhat provisional.”

Another notable finding from the surveys focusses on individual desk-based focussed work. Support in this has risen from 51.7 percent in the old building to 68.2 percent in the new one, but there is certainly room for improvement. “We suspect that this is not due to a wrong design or bad acoustics, but in particular because people who make longer phone calls stay at their desk,” says Marieke. “We will check this and provide additional communication.” On this point, she sees a good opportunity for even higher employee satisfaction and, as such, a higher score on the Leesman Index.

## How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your current workplace?



### It's a place I'm proud to bring visitors to

Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Pre	14.4%
Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Post	71.0%
<b>Leesman+ benchmark</b>	<b>81.1%</b>



### It enables me to work productively

Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Pre	43.2%
Royal HaskoningDHV Amsterdam Post	73.1%
<b>Leesman+ benchmark</b>	<b>74.2%</b>

## Sustainable building

Royal HaskoningDHV considers sustainability to be of paramount importance. The four requirements that were set for the new building in this case study were:

- 1 Energy neutrality – normally and in accordance with standards, this only relates to the building, but the consultancy and engineering firm also encourage user behaviour on this point.
- 2 Circularity – reuse of materials. This even resulted in a guaranteed financial residual value which is at this moment unique.
- 3 Health – initially focused on comfort, ensuring good acoustics and air quality, daylight and sufficient variation. Areas such as movement and relaxing are still being developed further.
- 4 Smart use of space – realising multi-functionality and extension of opening hours to evening and weekends. That is why a creative hotbed, with 40 workshops for creatives and a podium, has been developed.

This ambition has been well translated and is evident from the fact that 79.6 percent of employees believe that the working environment has a positive influence on the sustainability of the organisation, as compared to 36.8 percent previously.

### Royal HaskoningDHV

Royal HaskoningDHV has been a leading engineering consultancy and project management firm for more than 135 years and is a global leader in innovation and sustainable development. From offices in more than 30 countries, 6,000 professionals work with customers, partners and knowledge institutions on smart solutions for future-proof cities, water, transport and industry. These projects help customers to use their resources more efficiently and contribute to a better society. The reason: *enhancing society together*.

### Leesman

Leesman provides organisations with business intelligence tools to understand how effectively the work environment supports an optimal employee experience. The Leesman Index, the world's largest employee experience database in the world, with more than 395,000 employee responses across 3,050 workplaces, provides organisations with unrivalled benchmarking opportunities.

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Delivering insights that drive better workplace strategies