Innovative Office: what Silicon Valley Entrepreneurs aspire as their corporate HQs

by Bastian Burger
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Digitalisation led to the greatest revolution since the steam machine. Thousands of entrepreneurs see their chance to improve our every day life. Although most of them fail, some become the new corporations. Many many of them set up their first headquarters in quite usual garages. From Amazon to Zappos they soon outgrew their first resort rather quickly. On the road to success, they where looking for innovative office spaces to drive their businesses to new levels. As one would expect, the startups where creative in their search. Zappos for example currently employs the old Las Vegas city hall. Others went even more radical. Hiring world class architects and making virtually everything possible for their employees. But why do some companies seem to race for the most extravagant campus? Is it really worth it from a business point of view? Or is it just a matter of ego? On the example of some of the most innovative companies we will examine the motives behind their corporate headquarters.

The Pixar Campus is a great example for an innovative office
Can an innovative office make a successful company?

For the movie studio Pixar, the answer is yes. When the company outgrew their old office, the management was aiming for a creative work environment. In his must-read “Creativity Inc.” Pixar CEO Ed Catmull describes the process of creating a new headquarters. Steve Jobs took the lead and crafted every detail of the new office building. The building is now even called “Steve’s movie” by the employees. One key aspect of the innovative office is to encourage random encounters. There are central meeting places and spaces for creative freedom. Employees are encouraged to decorate their workstations. Almost everything about the building is designed to boost the creative output. Pixar shares some impressions on its [webpage](https://www.pixar.com).
to bend glass to the rounded corners of the building had to be invented. On 260,000 sqm Apple will fit 12,000
people in one single building. This shall improve communication. The open structure moreover aims for
better collaboration.

**Apple Campus 2 Construction Progress**

Facebook Campus - A social working place for a social
network

A good 20 minutes from the Apple headquarter lies the central of Facebook. This innovative office was
opened in 2011. It has space for 9,000 employees. The area it covers are mere 24 ha. From the outside it
appears like a gigantic colorful storehouse. It follows the trend of great open spaces and opportunities for
random encounters. In addition, it lays more emphasis on short distances than the Apple-UFO. For the
outstanding architecture Facebook employed star architect Frank Ghery.
Googleplex - Mother of all headquarters

Google opened a new office in 2004 in Mountain View. Formally this was Silicon Graphics grounds. The legendary workstation creator founded by Jim Clark. During the rebranding in 2015 it was one of the first buildings using the new Google logo. Since the structure already existed, Google put quite some effort in making it an innovative office. The redesign of the old buildings appears now like an amusement park. Google goes for diversity and initiatives on the campus. There are bikes, pools, gyms, solar panels, 18 canteens among others. The office space is “only” 47.000 sqm so it is slowly outgrown by the company.

How does a great campus support success?

To hire star architects is an expense only few companies can justify. To defer cubicles is a risk. On the other hand, to ask for out-of-the-box thinking is quiet a lot if employees are put into them for work. Surely skilled personal and superior management also contribute to company success. An innovative office space is not to make everything colorful. An innovative office enables innovative thinking. Aspects of that are the encouragement of communication. Facilitate random encounters. Allow employees to work in different environments. But also simple things like good lighting and noise reduction. To plan an innovative office is a lot of work. To manage it is as well. There is no single recipe for that. From clean Apple to wild Facebook architecture it has to support the company goals. Office space is the single biggest value statement of a
company. Especially in Silicon Valley where the war for talent is tense an extravagant office can also serve as a recruiting measurement.