



PHOTOS: Dave Southwood and Lucienne Myburgh

INSPIRING COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY AND WELL-BEING

By Gill Gernetzky

Discovery Limited is the poster child for health and wellness in South Africa, so it makes sense that their new green offices in Century City would create an environment that is centred on occupants' health and well-being.

IN May this year, the company moved their Cape Town employees to the new Sable Park development, which was certified a 5-star Green Star building by the GBCSA in March. Discovery is the main tenant of one of the two new office blocks, housing roughly 900 employees.

An improved working environment

Like 1 Discovery Place in Sandton, Johannesburg, these offices were designed to provide optimal space for collaboration, creativity and wellbeing, and inspire innovation, uniting all employees under one roof. The Cape Town employees were moved from two offices across Cape Town into this one work space as part of the company's commitment to keeping all their people together and to creating open spaces that closer align to their values.

David Pierre-Eugene, Head of Discovery's Group Facilities says that, apart from the positive impact that this building has on the environment – ultimately using

less water and energy, producing less waste and having a lower carbon footprint – the building has substantially improved the working environment for its occupants. “The floor-to-ceiling glazing creates an abundance of natural light throughout the day which contributes to a sense of well-being amongst employees.”

A focus on water, energy and waste

Among the green building design measures incorporated into the building, there was a key focus on saving water, given the constraints on this critical resource particularly in the Western Cape. The water conservation features include:

- Rainwater harvesting for flushing toilets
- Water-efficient fittings for taps, urinals and toilets
- Recapturing fire test water and water from the HVAC cooling towers, to supplement rainwater for flushing toilets
- Landscaping with local indigenous plants with reduced irrigation requirements
- Using treated effluent from a wastewater facility for landscape irrigation and cooling towers

With a similar focus on energy consumption and waste management, various features have been incorporated into the building that are helping to achieve efficiency. In addition to optimising daylight, the lighting uses a combination of daylight sensor controlled dimmers and efficient fittings. The HVAC (air conditioning) system is run by efficient water-cooled chillers, serving intelligent air handling units designed to monitor the outside and indoor air temperatures and maximise opportunities presented by the differences in the temperatures. To promote recycling, additional space has been provided for central collection, sorting and storage of recyclables alongside the normal refuse storage.

As part of Discovery’s environmental sustainability focus, the new office promotes a paperless workspace. Interestingly, going paperless allowed Discovery to recycle 31 tons of paper and donate items to 16 schools, four Meals on Wheels branches, and three underprivileged crèches.

Healthier, happier staff are more productive

According to the World Green Building Council’s Building the Business Case: Health, Well-being and Productivity in Green Offices report, released in October 2016, occupying green office space keeps staff healthier and happier, improving productivity and



PHOTO: Dave Southwood

boosting businesses' bottom line. Research conducted among 15 case studies revealed some astounding findings, such as a two-thirds reduction in sick days among employees and a 200% increase on productivity in a call centre. This is backed up by a 2014 study published in the Journal of Labour Economics, which showed as much as a 20% increase in productivity when people were happy. Internal research conducted at Discovery has shown that fit, healthy and happy employees are almost 16% more productive.

Discovery was closely involved with the design and space planning of the interiors of their new Cape Town office, introducing many agile areas to facilitate collaboration across teams.

“Our employees have reported walking more, and this was an important principle for us to achieve through the design of the building – to ensure movement in line with our goal to encourage healthier living. Everyone is enjoying using the pause areas, prayer facilities and other on-site lifestyle services,” says Pierre-Eugene.

Encouraging alternative, and healthier, modes of transport to and from the building was equally important to Discovery, and for many who wish to cycle to work there are 180 bicycle racks provided on the first level of parking. There are also 16 bays reserved for those using fuel hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles.

The new building includes a state-of-the-art client centre that offers wellness assessments and personal online assistance with the suite of Discovery's products, from medical aid to investments, life insurance and Vitality.

Living out Discovery's core values

“Building on the success of 1 Discovery Place, uniting all of our Cape Town employees at Sable Park has been instrumental in achieving a single culture across the Group. Our commitment to healthier living, and excellence in sustainability, is now evidenced by our business being tenanted in two 5-star Green Star rated buildings,” added Pierre-Eugene.



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