

HAWORTH

# People-Led Design

November 2018

**Case Study**  
Watlow

**Location**  
St. Louis, Missouri

**Project Type**  
Global Headquarters

**Design Firm**  
Gray Design Group

**Dealer Partners**  
BSI Constructors Inc.  
Northstar Management



How do you design a flexible headquarters building to evolve for the future while still reflecting the heritage of a global company?



## Overview

Watlow, a \$500-million global innovator in the design and manufacturing of thermal systems, wanted to renovate the company's 50,000-square-foot global headquarters and create a state-of-the-art technological development facility. Since 1922, when Watlow developed low-wattage industrial heaters for the St. Louis shoe industry, the company has expanded its technological competencies to become an industry leader in providing customers with cutting-edge thermal solutions for their most challenging issues.

Watlow wanted its new headquarters building to reflect that heritage and commitment to continued innovation. Keeping valued employees happy and attracting new talent were huge considerations in the headquarters renovation and creation of the Advanced Technology Center (ATC).

## Specifications



- Area: 50,000 square feet
- Employees: 2,000+
- Stories: 2

## Objective

Create an energetic space that brings people together as a community—to communicate, collaborate, and share ideas—enabling the creativity and innovation the company prides itself on.

## Solution

Remove physical barriers to collaboration by developing a more open floorplan—with social areas that foster community.

## Results

With input from its people, Watlow created a space that supports all employees—onsite and globally—and provided the future-focused environment they envisioned.

## Objective

# Breaking Down Barriers and Building Community

Knowing that the creativity of its 2,000+ employees brings innovation and growth to Watlow, the company was looking to create a new headquarters space to support the needs and activities of its people, fostering a universal sense of community and collaboration that retains good employees and attracts top talent.

A company with global reach and facilities around the world, Watlow was finding it difficult to maintain a collaborative culture, which it needs to support company-wide creativity and innovation. Instead of people working together, silos had formed, and their St. Louis headquarters building was perpetuating them with walls and separation. Fortunately, Watlow recognized that engaged employees and collaboration are the keys to its continued growth and innovation.

## Open Floorplan

The open plan—offering more daylight and outside views to the entire office—invites collaboration and community with easy access to a variety of informal spaces that accommodate quick huddles, work sharing, unplanned meetings, and discussion.



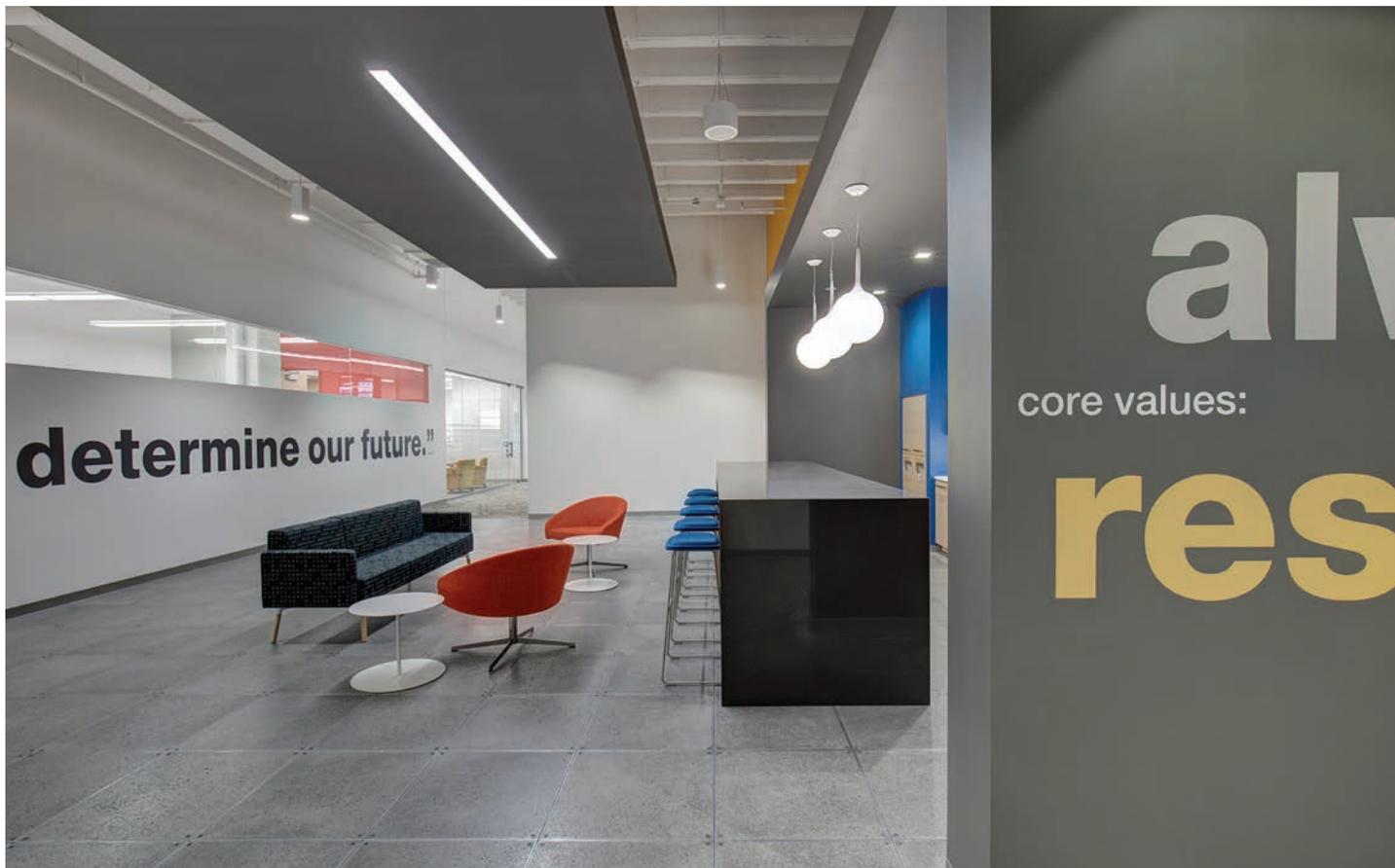
## A Vision Comes to Life

In 2014, Watlow's leaders decided that the company needed a global technological hub that would bring people together as a community, rather than separate them. This was the impetus for a complete building renovation that would result in the creation of the ATC at their headquarters in St. Louis. Everything about the new ATC building was designed specifically to make it easy for people to come together—from within the facility or any of Watlow's global locations—to communicate, collaborate, and share ideas, enabling the creativity and innovation the company prides itself on.

The interior design of the ATC building not only reflects Watlow's branding, it also supports employee happiness and well-being. The designs bring motivation to the space itself and make it a place where people feel energy, instead of energy being taken from them.

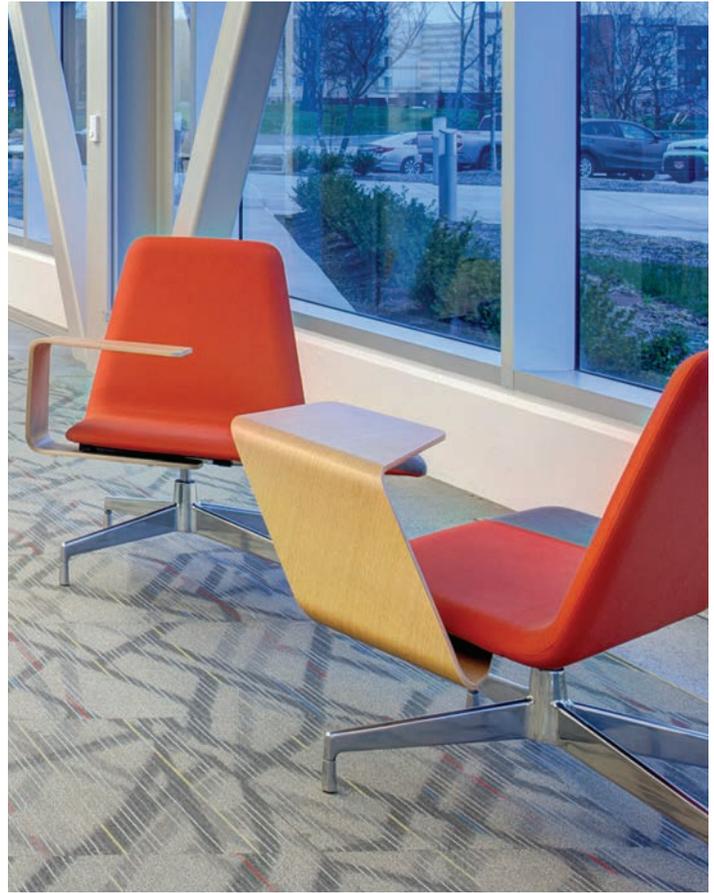
### Social Spaces

Strategically placed beverage stations within each work area entice people to gather, supporting serendipitous meetings and conversations.



“We want a workforce that feels energized with autonomy, mastery, and purpose to meet the demanding challenges our customers face.”

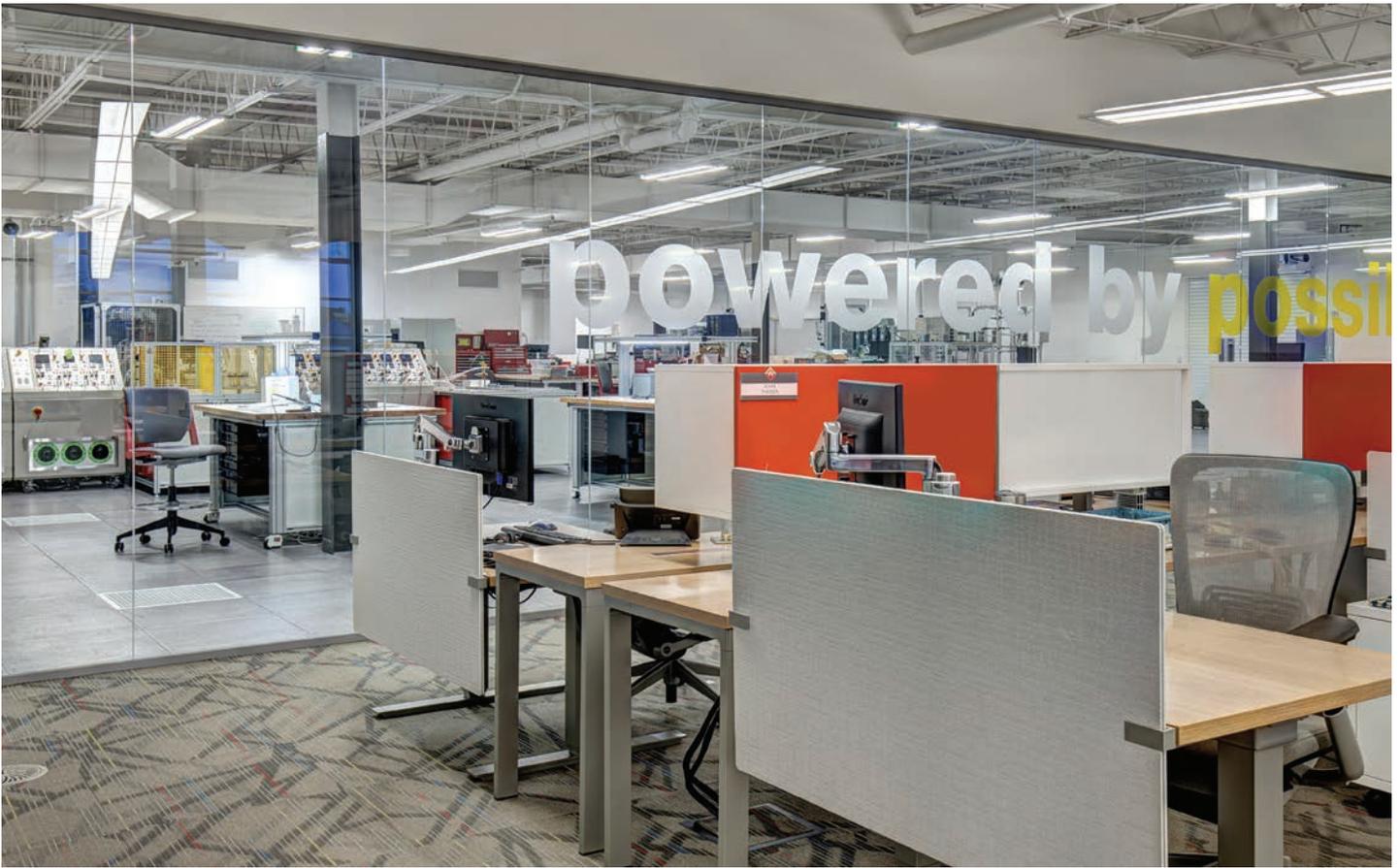
**Sheryl Hicks**  
Vice President of Human Resources, Watlow



**Employee Happiness and Well-Being by Design**

Active patterns and warm colors have been used to symbolize heat and energy, showcasing the company's heritage and identity, making it evident to everyone who walks in the door that this is Watlow.





Being a technology hub means that the building is also designed for improved workflow. Because Watlow believes that technology happens through hands-on interaction, the technology group was intentionally placed in what is considered to be the best location in the building, with easy access, ample light, and the best acoustics. Since the manufacturing area is no longer cordoned off from the engineers, it is now convenient and attractive for engineers to go to the lab and the manufacturing facility—to be more involved in the manufacturing aspect of the business.

**“We really took the wall down, in some cases literally, between the manufacturing and the engineering.”**

**Peter Desloge**  
CEO, Watlow

## A Collaborative Culture Serving Creativity and Innovation

Just two years into their new office, the ATC building was a manifestation of Watlow's organizational vision for the future—a modern hub of technological development, collaboration, and innovation where people really want to work. Watlow is also seeing significant returns on their investment. Post-occupancy surveys show increases in group interaction, better job performance, and employees' overall satisfaction with the environment. Evidenced by qualitative and quantifiable results, Watlow's collaborative culture, creativity, and innovation are now being supported by their environment. For that reason, company leaders describe the building renovation as one of the best investments they've ever made.

### Formal Meeting Rooms

New formal conference rooms provide the technology needed for presentations and working sessions.





The highlight of the social spaces at Watlow is Louie's Café. Not just a cafeteria where employees can enjoy healthy meal options, Louie's also offers a variety of seating and table options that can be used for individual relaxation, reflection, and work or collaboration, as well as social interaction with others—all in a centrally-located space filled with natural light from outside. The Café's outdoor patio provides a change of scenery, allowing employees to take their meals, discussions, and informal meetings outside to enjoy some fresh air. And as part of Watlow's sustainability efforts, the Café follows the practice of not using plastic utensils.

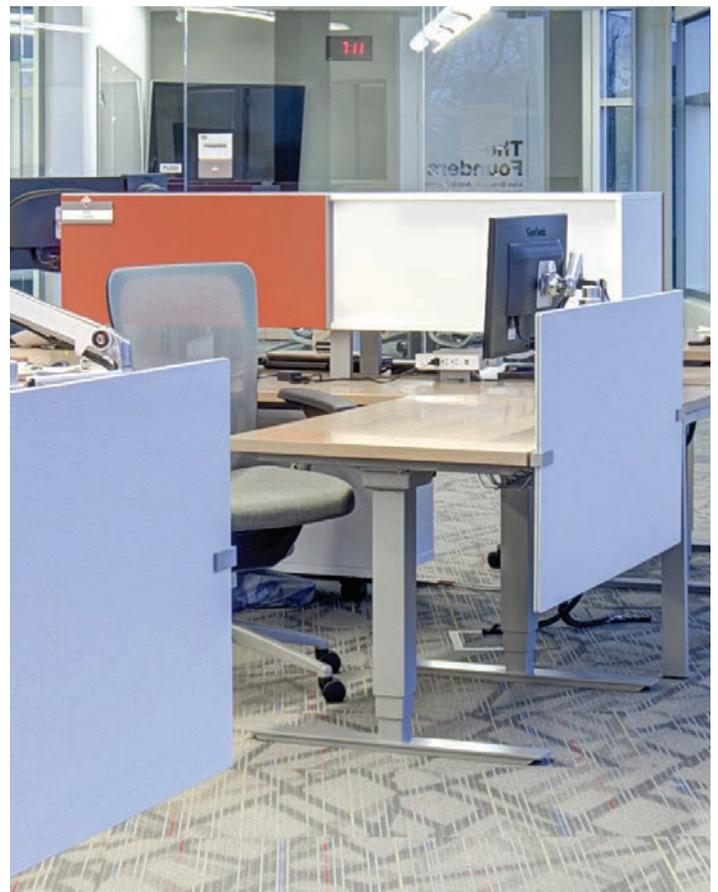
“Louie's Café was designed with the intent of creating a space that makes people feel good, and part of that is being very environmentally conscious.”

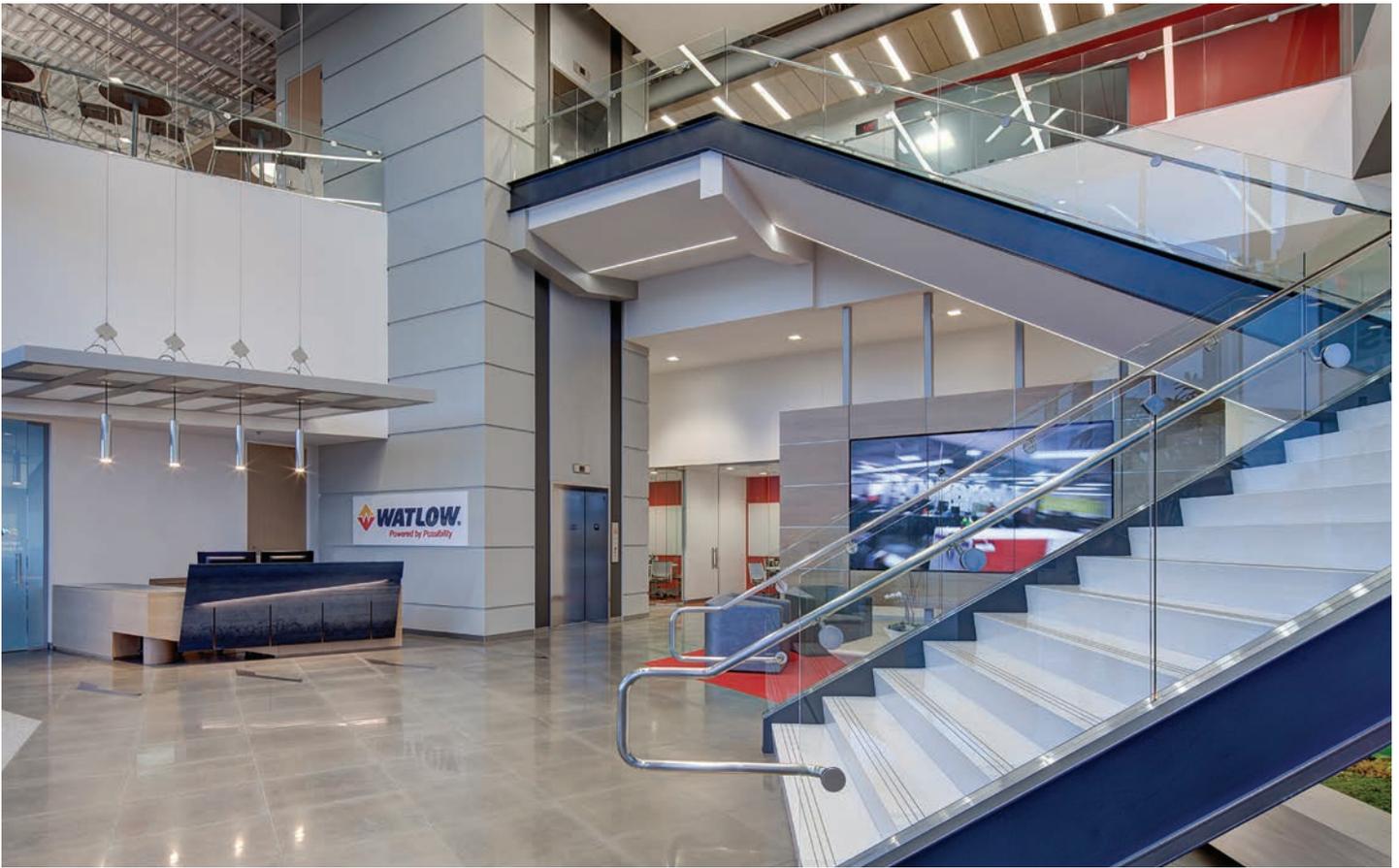
**Peter Desloge**  
CEO, Watlow



For Watlow, a company that focuses on creating innovative solutions for its customers, keeping valued employees happy and attracting new talent were huge considerations in the creation of its Advanced Technology Center.

While collaboration is important at Watlow, individual workstations are still needed to provide employees with a dedicated personal space for focus work. Multi-generational steering committees were created to help determine what people needed from their workspaces to do their best work, while supporting Watlow's brand and culture. Mock-ups of individual workstations were created for the steering committees to try, and adjustments were made based on experiential feedback that would not have been available if everything were just done "on paper."





## Customer Profile

Founded in 1922, Watlow designs and manufactures industrial heaters, temperature sensors, and controllers, as well as supporting software and assemblies—all the components of a thermal system. Partnering with customers to optimize thermal performance, decrease design time, and improve efficiency of their products and applications, Watlow brings its experience to industries including semiconductor processing, medical equipment, energy processes, diesel emissions, medical, and food service. Today, the company continues to grow, while its commitment remains the same: to provide customers with superior products and services for their individual needs.

## Featured Haworth Products

- A Series® Storage
- Belong™ Accessories
- Beside® Storage
- Cappellini® Hi Pad™ Stool
- Collaborate® Seating
- Enclose® Walls
- Hoop™ Tables
- Master Series® Casegoods
- Openest® Collection
- Planes® Tables
- Reside® Desking
- ToDo® Seating
- Very® Seating
- X Series® Desking and Storage
- X99® Seating
- Zody® Seating