CHIQUITA BRANDS INTERNATIONAL Corporate Strategies

Second in a series of LS3P case studies.

This case study focuses on the design of an efficient well-branded corporate headquarters for Chiquita Brands.

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INTRODUCTION

Under a compressed schedule and a finite budget, LS3P was selected to program, plan, design and deliver a global headquarters reflecting a ‘clean’ approach to the workplace with design emphasis on future flexibility. Chiquita Brands International occupies Floors 10 through 16 of first generation space in the NASCAR® Plaza Tower. Corporate branding standards were studied from the beginning to reinforce and incorporate elements into the final design. The architectural program consolidates business units from multiple cities and standardizes Chiquita’s workstation sizes.

The first four floors of the space are open office environments. Adjacent to the building core are cork flooring and metal ceiling panels that demarcate major circulation paths to dedicated copy and mail areas, collaborative ‘huddle rooms’ and an employee breakroom. Outside of the core are unobstructed views and daylight. Chiquita primary colors (blue and yellow) accent walls, floors and graphics. Secondary brand colors dot the carpet among the workstations. The top floors are dedicated to the Main Reception, Conference Center, Boardroom and Management Committee. Monumental stairs with translucent blue treads connect the top floors. Within these reception spaces are digital exhibits and historical artifacts that showcase Chiquita’s history. Along with this historical display, ‘Chiquita Banana’ lyrics are showcased on the connecting stair.
Our journey began with a visit to Chiquita’s existing corporate headquarters in Cincinnati, OH and the exploration of existing conditions and opportunities. This process allowed for critical observation, allowing insight into the strategies Chiquita had been employing in their space. Alongside our observation were conversations with employees and the Management Committee. With these dialogues we were able to explore challenges and illustrate possibilities. This interaction allowed us to quickly establish a rapport and trust with the team; this lead to open communication ensuring any and all issues could be freely discussed. It also allowed a prioritized vision for the work to be developed incorporating not only ‘needs’, but also ‘wants’.

The consensus among employees and stakeholders was for a better, more modern work environment. The envisioned interior design and architecture needed to exhibit a functional style and branding strategy which were neglected previously.
At the project onset, guiding tenets were established to safeguard the process and keep all parties aligned and in balance; these principles became our strategic vision. With the tight schedule, it was important to keep our goals simple, standardized and sustainable so that in the end, the ‘senses’ were heightened but not overwhelmed. These tenets guided each meeting and provided continuity for the whole project process.

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**PROJECT PRINCIPLES**
GATHER DATA
Investigate Existing

The first step was to gather data through tours and interviews at the existing Cincinnati, OH headquarters. This trip allowed us to perform analyses and generate an initial program and stacking diagrams as well as get a sense of the existing employee culture.

We explored cultural / company artifacts and thoughts / solutions regarding materials and colors previously used. We also investigated Chiquita’s history and community involvement.
PROGRAMMING

Documentation

Programming began with analyses of existing spaces and types. It was determined that adopting simplified standards would respect the project goals and develop an ideology toward the new workplace environment. Standard sizes and limited options of workstations and office sizes provided a module that made for simplified future flexibility.
SPACE PLANNING

Test Programming

The space plan takes advantage of the long narrow floorplate with open offices along the expanses of exterior glazing. Offices and meeting spaces are typically placed at the ends of the floors with common areas placed within the core. Common spaces include storage, copy/print areas, breakrooms and smaller meeting rooms dubbed ‘huddle rooms’.

10th Floor Space Plan

11th Floor Space Plan

12th Floor Space Plan

13th Floor Space Plan

14th Floor Space Plan

15th Floor Space Plan

16th Floor Space Plan
SELECT CONTRACTOR
The Last Component

Due to schedule constraints, integrated Project Delivery was deemed a key option to meet both the schedule and provide accurate cost estimate. A select list of general contractors was invited to provide qualifications. From the qualified list of seven, three were selected for interview with the contract awarded to Rodgers Builders. The selection was based on experience, fee and personnel. The integration also allowed for early budget and constructability review.
CHARRETTE
Schematic Design

At the culmination of the programming, space planning and general contractor selection, a formal charrette and presentation of the work allowed for the sharing of a large quantity of information both quickly and simply. Decision-makers received the same information in the same format at the same time with comments actively engaging the design team providing for real-time action.
DESIGN

Through our engagement and foundation of Project Principles, it was clear that Chiquita was seeking a 21st century workplace providing for greater flexibility and productivity. Their goal was to preserve and instill the brand of Chiquita within the workplace and, subsequently, the workforce. The workplace strategy responds to the hindrances of their previous space and addresses the needs of employee satisfaction. Open, collaborative environments are washed in natural light and punctuated by bright brand colors. Engagement and activity are encouraged among the space’s inhabitants, and illustrations of the company’s social outreach and the message of healthy living enliven the core of each floor.

The colorful and welcoming lobby of this global headquarters is respectful to employees, visitors and stakeholders alike. ‘Miss Chiquita’, debossed in an area of the front desk, gleefully welcomes everyone. Expansive floor-to-ceiling glass provides the backdrop of a lush, natural vista. Brand values are subtly expressed: Pure, Clean, Simple.

BRANDING
• Resources
• History and Stickers
• Social Responsibility

WORKPLACE
• Design Standards
• Branding Link
• Finishes
With one of the most recognizable brands and historically significant icons, ‘Miss Chiquita,’ the wealth of raw data in the form of images, ads, video, etc. was almost overwhelming. The dissemination of these resources led to the essence of the brand, the story to be told within the space.

With its nod to activity, community and history, the embodiment of the success of Chiquita is established and shapes the decisions made within the space by the employees.
BRANDING
History and Stickers

The montage to the left speaks of the vast history of shipping in Chiquita’s past. Although they no longer ship their product on their own vessels, they pay great homage to the fleet.

One of the most simple, yet most fun, historical branding elements is the Chiquita sticker. The stickers are a source of brand identity and outreach for the company (through design contests, movie premieres, etc.).
Go. Be. Love. Chiquita’s internal mantra relates to the core aspects of their corporate culture. Through workshops and conversations, LS3P worked closely with the CEO, Human Resources Director and Marketing teams in order to showcase Chiquita’s iconic branding elements within the space. These working sessions allowed for greater understanding of the flexibility of the brand guidelines in order to offer the most compelling visualization within the workplace.
The workplace design standards were simplified early in the process and generically specified for bidding purposes. As part of this procurement process, four major furniture manufacturers were selected to provide presentations, mockups, and budgets of the systems designed for the workplace. Simplified parts inventories and accessories were an integral feature of the design of the standard systems. Manufacturers were asked to present “added value” as part of their response to the Basis of Design.
WORKPLACE
Branding Link

With the systems furniture manufacturer determined (Steelcase), finish standards were selected and applied to the systems.

From that beginning, freestanding furnishings were identified and the finishes, although standardized, were selected to enhance the branding concepts by floor. Punctuations of personality and fun within the work environment were also key elements in the furniture finishes selection criteria.

**16th Floor Punchlist Furniture Finishes**

Note: bookcases in O3 offices not installed at time of punchlist.
Each floor was assigned a color that relates to the Chiquita brand, with Chiquita Blue being a common accent color on all floors.

The accent colors greet you in each elevator lobby and are then applied to standard materials on each floor. This method allows for stability and equality of finishes while enhancing personality. Carpet tiles interspersed with the Chiquita Blue and other accent floor color make up the typical floor finish; cork floors encircle and identify the core circulation path.
The creation of a space from an empty core/shell is similar to starting an essay with a blank piece of paper. Careful consideration of design elements, branding, furniture selection, etc. was complete, but the physical manifestation and inhabitation of the space was just beginning. Our tight schedule had compressed our ability for further exploration, but a new energy and excitement took over as the transformation of the space moved along with progress measured daily.

In fact, this ‘speed to market’ enabled validation of our client’s belief in us and the new design. At each milestone excitement increased, progress was shared and more employees decided to make the move to the new headquarters than had been expected. In place, recognition of the freshly illustrated ‘Go. Be. Love. Chiquita’ offered a welcome energy to the personnel. This encouragement of purpose not only grounds the employees of Chiquita, it propels them into action with purpose.

BRANDING
• Elevator Lobbies
• Breakrooms
• Community Service
• History Wall
• Copy Areas
• Exterior

WORKPLACE
• Open Work Spaces
• Private Work Spaces
• Collaborative Spaces
• Meeting Spaces
• Social Spaces

SUSTAINABILITY
• LEED Gold
BRANDING
Elevator Lobbies

Elevator lobbies provide the first impression of each floor. Accent colors are introduced here on doors and soffits. ‘Miss Chiquita’ herself provides a warm welcome to employees and visitors alike. Imagery related to the wide array of globally available product is also introduced within this space and is meant to be interchangeable or refreshed as required.
Breakrooms

GO! Break Rooms reflect the active side of the Chiquita brand. Promoting healthy snacking and active lifestyles, these engaging spaces span the core of the building. An energy pulses through as people come and go on ‘banana’ days or to find other snacks and beverages. The breakrooms also encourage social interaction at tables and whiteboards or ad hoc meetings. Banana stickers were enlarged and printed on magnetic sheets allowing staff some fun, active brand engagement.
BRANDING
Community Service

BE! The statement portrayed here is that sustainable practices and community outreach both home and abroad are integral to the mission of Chiquita. The company’s fingerprint left in the real world is represented here on the wall overlaid with photos displaying ecological and sociological awareness. These displays are designed to be moved between floors and replaced as new projects are unveiled.
BRANDING

History Wall

LOVE! Illustrating respect of the brand and its incredible history is represented by archived historical photographs overlaid with past advertisements and promotions. The collection represents Chiquita’s roots through the reality and the fantasy of the brand through the years.
BRANDING
Copy Areas

The employee copy/print areas provide consolidations of key office functions but also allow for posting of internal policies and knowledge. Each of these copy centers displays product imagery overlaid with the corporate values posters: Integrity, Respect, Opportunity and Responsibility.
BRANDING
Exterior

Chiquita was adamant that their brand become an integral part of their new community. For this effort, it was decided that a physical embodiment of the brand was required. The skyline of the City of Charlotte offered an enticing opportunity. Not populated by many corporate icons, Chiquita made the bold decision to illustrate their commitment to the community by adding their core ‘sticker’ to their new home. The two Chiquita signs are the largest of their kind in the world.
WORKPLACE
Open Work Spaces

The open workplace is inhabited by standard workstations accented with blue on the shared partition walls. Flexibility in size and parts standardization allows for future reconfiguration. Glass panels allow for openness to views and natural light.
PRIVATE WORK SPACES

Private work spaces are typically located either internally or on the ‘short’ side of the building. These offices are fronted by floor to ceiling glass to enhance transparency and encourage communication. The desking is also designed to offer easy collaboration among employees.

‘Barn Door’ style sliding glass doors are used to maximize floor space allowing for tighter space standards for enclosed offices.
Collaborative Space on 12th Floor

WORKPLACE
Collaborative Spaces

Impromptu and flexible spaces to encourage creativity and shared activity are placed throughout the work environment on each floor. These small collaborative places are available to all of the workforce.
WORKPLACE
Meeting Spaces

The greatest concentration of meeting spaces is organized in a suite on the main reception floor. This allows for easier public access while maintaining separation from the secure workplace. The suite includes multiple room sizes to accommodate a myriad of meeting styles and configurations. The suite also includes a separate prefunction space and catering kitchen.
Similar to Collaborative Spaces, Social Spaces are placed throughout the work environment. These spaces serve not only as prefunction areas, but also as less purposeful gathering areas. The spaces are less formal and structured to encourage simple interaction which is a key component of employee health and well-being. These social spaces ease barriers between people and allow for natural team building.
SUSTAINABILITY
LEED Gold

Sustainability is a global goal of Chiquita, both social and environmental. For their new headquarters, the requirement to be sustainable in the interior design and upfit was an easy early decision. The ultimate goal was to obtain a Silver certification in the LEED rating system of the USGBC. As with most projects seeking certification, LS3P elects to achieve more credits than are required. These additional points, along with several key decisions by Chiquita, lead to a better than expected Gold Certification.
Corporations are ever-evolving in their response to ever-changing consumer needs and tastes. These evolutions require an organization to be agile in order to adapt and grow. Chiquita is no different in this respect, but they were different in their desire for relocation in order to spark an evolution of their corporate culture.

Many clients and their projects are defined by their processes, what they do or have done. Chiquita required a revised process, one that moved them to decide faster and think further. In this process the cultural rejuvenation created a new expression of the fresh and active aspects at the core of their brand. The arrival of new space and standards marks the commitment of Chiquita to respond to their multi-national and multi-generational workforce.

Chiquita looked to LS3P for guidance and direction. We were able to establish trust early through our experience and to provide open, honest and fun collaboration. This constant communication afforded LS3P the opportunity to be immersed in the iconic brand and delve into Chiquita’s needs. Our development of the Project Principles was a key outcome of this entrenchment, and one that lead to ultimate decisions in order to maintain budget, schedule and quality. These principles also allowed the entire team to be better stewards of the brand. The final deliverable is an environment that fosters global understanding and encourages local interaction for the future of the Chiquita Brand.
SECOND IN A SERIES OF LS3P CASE STUDIES