

CASE STUDIES

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DIRECTIONS

We believe the best way we can assess your skills, aptitude, and overall potential for the DSD Program is to expose you to client challenges based on actual Gensler Strategy projects. Your response to one of these case studies will help demonstrate how you perform across a range of important criteria for our work:

- approach a tough, potentially ambiguous design problem
- make strategic decisions about the client issues on which it is most important to focus
- reason logically using facts and data—and identify and communicate implications
- formulate conclusions and recommendations to solve the problem
- articulate your thoughts in a written and graphic format
- problem solve, both analytically and creatively
- understand the basic principles of the design industry

Below are three case studies posing challenges that Gensler design strategists often face on projects. **Please respond to only one (1) Case Study** – feel free to choose the one best suited to your skills and experience. Your response should be a mixture of written and graphic communication and must be fully integrated with your overall Personal Dossier.

You must upload your Personal Dossier along with your complete online job application by the deadline. Refer to the “How to Apply” page on the website for details on the Personal Dossier.

TIPS

- We are not looking for a ‘right answer’—we want to understand how you think and present your ideas. We are looking for your process, not solutions.
- Make a few key points but make them very well.
- Develop the scenario with well-reasoned assumptions—draw from your own experience and research.
- Provide logical justification and reasoning for your responses.
- Embrace the ambiguity and respond as you see fit.
- Communicate your response through both graphics and written word.
- Relax and have fun. You should learn a lot about yourself and the type of work we do through responding to these Case Studies.

#1 | COMMUNICATING CHANGE

Carefully analyze the scenario described below and respond to the question that follows. To respond to this Case Study, you must make educated assumptions about the scenario. Define and justify your assumptions and outline how you reasoned from those assumptions to your conclusion. Clearly show your process.

SCENARIO #1

A well-known pharmaceutical company is relocating their headquarters from the heart of a busy urban metropolis to a large real estate development on the outskirts of the city.

They planned the move-in during a pandemic and expected a full return to working in the office by the time they moved in the spring. Earlier this year, the CEO set a 3+ days in the office policy. However, employees are still highly varied in the amount of time they spend in the office.

This new location is more challenging to reach by public transportation and has less retail within walking distance as compared to their current location. The new headquarters will offer amenities for employees, including a subsidized cafeteria, gym, day care, and a laundry/dry cleaning service. Many senior managers have expressed their concern that the company will lose employees due to the move, however they want to use the new location to help reset the culture and encourage more in-office collaboration and in-person community events.

In addition to this relocation, the pharmaceutical company has also decided to adopt a very different working environment in order to save money and encourage more collaboration among its employees. Though the move is still a year away, many employees have heard rumors – some accurate and others unfounded – regarding their new work environment. They are anxious and distracted, which is affecting their productivity and quality of work. The company has hired you for change management services.

Some of the radical changes include:

- *Open benching desks to create a more open environment*
- *Smaller individual workstations and an overall reduced square footage per person*
- *No more private offices – all senior staff will sit in the same type of open work setting as everyone else (except the C-suite executives who will remain in large private offices in the ‘executive’ area)*
- *Some specific groups will have workstations assigned to them. Most will not have an assigned seat and will need to reserve a desk when they plan to be in the office*
- *More diverse workspaces – allowing employees to choose the right type of setting to match the type of work they are doing at the time*
- *Increased collaborative spaces – both in scale, quantity, and diversity*
- *New technology to enable hybrid collaboration and increased mobility, including home office tools*

QUESTION

How do you address and communicate the changes taking place regarding the company’s move, work-from-home policies, and the new office environment?

#2 | STRATEGIC REAL ESTATE

Carefully analyze the scenario described below and respond to the question that follows. To respond to this Case Study, you must make educated assumptions about the scenario. Define and justify your assumptions and outline how you reasoned from those assumptions to your conclusion. Clearly show your process.

Please note that though this scenario is based on an actual project, the client and significant details have been changed. Do not contact the US Census Bureau or anyone affiliated with this organization.

SCENARIO #2

A large consumer goods company is planning to expand their headcount by 20% over the next five years. However, the organization is expecting that advances in their industry could allow them to be more efficient in the future and require less employees in five to ten years time. They are currently 16 years into a 20 year lease at their headquarters building in the suburbs of Boston. They occupy 1 million square feet with a headcount of 5,000. Currently 10% of their space is vacant. Their current workplace standards include 8'x8' cubicles and 150 sf offices along the perimeter.

Their current vacancy can handle 5% of this headcount growth based on their current workplace standards. This headcount growth will be a mixture of contractors and employees within each of the organization's 15 departments, and each department is expected to grow at different rates.

The goals of this project are:

- *Increase space utilization while meeting both present and future needs*
- *Operate more efficiently and reduce costs*
- *Streamline administrative and infrastructure support*
- *Accelerate the adoption of industry best practices in the workplace*
- *Spur additional innovation*

The organization is currently requiring some of its employees to work in the office full-time, based on their job requirements. They plan to have all employees return to the office full-time by March 2024.

You have been hired to provide real estate strategy alternatives for accommodating their changing business needs. The client is expecting scenarios ranging from conservative to radical.

QUESTION

How do you develop a series of scenarios to help the client make strategic real estate decisions?

#3 | DESIGNING FOR INNOVATION

Carefully analyze the scenario described below and respond to the question that follows. To respond to this Case Study, you must make educated assumptions about the scenario. Define and justify your assumptions and outline how you reasoned from those assumptions to your conclusion. Clearly show your process.

SCENARIO #3

A small start-up technology company will be moving from their co-working space into proprietary office space in a 'hot and happening' location in an urban metropolis. They have asked you to help them envision an 'innovation lab' type of space for them. The head of the company has expressed a desire to "... have a space unlike anything she has seen before!" They have a modest budget and the schedule is aggressive.

The goals of the space are to:

- Enhance their brand and reputation so that they may impress potential investors*
- Foster creativity and innovative thinking within their employees*
- Attract and retain the top talent within their field*
- Have a 'wow' factor for employees and guests*

QUESTION

In what ways, including spatial design and other (such as policies, services, events), can we help the client facilitate and enable innovation?

#4 | BUILDING CULTURE

Carefully analyze the scenario described below and respond to the question that follows. To respond to this Case Study, you must make educated assumptions about the scenario. Define and justify your assumptions and outline how you reasoned from those assumptions to your conclusion. Clearly show your process.

SCENARIO #4

Following the “talent wars” that have emerged during the pandemic, a large PR firm is struggling to retain employees as well as attract new talent. The firm has made a commitment to hybrid work, giving teams the option to come into the office to collaborate in-person as needed. Employees have enjoyed this flexibility, but as a result, the feeling of “togetherness” and personal connection have been diminished. New employees especially have been feeling a bit lost at sea, unsure what their company is all about (beyond the day-to-day work).

The firm has about 900 employees, with about 75% of them headquartered in San Francisco (the rest work in smaller satellite offices located in Dallas, New York, and Chicago, and a small handful are now fully remote after moving away from these cities).

Leaders within the organization have begun discussing the company’s culture, which was never a topic that was given much thought in the past, because generally, things “worked” and people seemed happy. However, the age of remote work has brought culture into the spotlight, especially given recent research which indicates that positive work culture has a direct and measurable positive impact on business outcomes.

The firm realizes that leaving company culture to chance is unwise, but they are unsure about how to build a lasting company culture that will be meaningful enough to attract and retain top talent.

The goals of this project are to:

- *Address any problem areas in the company’s culture today*
- *Increase employees’ feeling of engagement and connection to one another*
- *Ensure that employees have a shared sense of what it means to work here*
- *Ensure that company culture is coming through in the employee experience*

QUESTION

How can we build and leverage company culture to attract and retain the best talent, given the challenges posed by hybrid/remote work?