



Welcome to the new New Work cosmos: The lobby of the House of Communication in Munich, which opened its doors in July 2022.

---

A new space  
for New Work –  
the new House of  
Communication  
and the future of  
w o r k i n g

---

**IN CONVERSATION** / KARIN MARIA SCHERTLER / CHIEF PEOPLE & CULTURE OFFICER, SERVICEPLAN GROUP  
FLORIAN HALLER / CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SERVICEPLAN GROUP  
ALEXANDRA BERGER / TWELVE

*It was a real milestone for the Serviceplan Group this July when 1,750 of the company's employees relocated to the new House of Communication in Munich. Why does this move represent more than a new space? And what makes the new HoC a flagship project for New Work? These questions are answered in an interview with Serviceplan CEO Florian Haller and weMOVE Project Manager Karin Maria Schertler.*



Transparency and plenty of room for lively communication are the hallmarks of the new House of Communication.

# New Work



Visitors welcome: The entrance to the new HoC.



New Work as an opportunity: Karin Maria Schertler and Florian Haller, both from the Serviceplan Group.

**ALEXANDRA BERGER:** *Everyone's talking about New Work, but not everyone necessarily understands it to mean the same thing. Karin, what does the term 'New Work' stand for at Serviceplan?*

**KARIN MARIA SCHERTLER:** Here at Serviceplan, we define New Work as the way we want to work together to raise our ÜberCreativity to a whole new level. We want to achieve good results in a smart, fast way. And we want to provide a platform on which the intelligence within the group can develop to its full potential. For us, New Work is a whole lot more than tools, spaces and so on. That is all part of it, but at the end of the day it's a mindset, a way of thinking. It's about recognising people's different strengths and talents and ensuring that something good comes out of them. You could say that this is a counterproposal to the Tayloristic approach, which was aimed at increasing the productivity of human work by the division of labour. But this approach no longer achieves good results in a knowledge-based society. The more complex the world becomes, the more we feel we need this New Work approach.

*Florian, what new challenges does New Work entail?*

**FLORIAN HALLER:** The central issue of New Work is making the workplace as flexible as possible. Thanks

to digitalisation, we now have the tools that allow people to work from anywhere. But this in turn requires new leadership skills and makes the whole concept of management a lot more challenging. You have to deal with a whole host of new questions. Under these new circumstances, how can I lead people with a clearly defined target in mind? How can I create a shared culture when not everyone is in the office? How can I ensure that people are still coming into the office so the teams don't fall apart? These are all questions that we've never had to ask ourselves before.

*COVID really accelerated the structural transformation of the working world, which was driven by New Work. What were your main findings from the pandemic years 2020 and 2021?*

**FH:** If you want to put a positive slant on it, then the pandemic taught us new remote ways of working together. Here at Serviceplan, that opened up whole new opportunities for us to put together teams and collaborate. For example, we are now able to form teams from the Houses of Communication at different locations. People are also more efficient when they can work from home every now and again. And secondly, the pandemic showed us the value of culture and, as I already mentioned, made us think about how to

preserve our company culture when it's no longer the norm for everyone to come into the office every day. Those were the two biggest lessons that I learnt from the pandemic.

*In the two pandemic years, we saw that employees can also deliver good results when they're working from home. Karin, why are some employers still insisting that their staff come into the office?*

**KMS:** There's nothing wrong with wanting people to come into the office as such. It just depends what kind of an attitude you want to take to it all. When you have a culture in which interaction is a key factor for achieving good results, then it's perfectly legitimate to say that you want people to come into the office as it fulfils a purpose. Because let's not delude ourselves here: efficiency is all well and good, but this act of coming together, laughing together, having a drink together, the chats at the watercooler, working closely alongside one another – you don't get any of that if you're only communicating via video calls. But if you're just insisting that people come in from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm because you don't trust them to work well from home, then of course you're well behind the times. Because in a knowledge-based society, you don't necessarily have to be at a desk to work and create value – this can be done somewhere else completely.

**FH:** I'd like to fly the flag for spending time with colleagues in the office. A company culture is developed by spending time with each other in person, by seeing each other – as Karin just said – by laughing together, celebrating successes together, sharing failures... That's why I hope we can encourage lots of people to work at the office, which can then be perfectly complemented by mobile office options. There are days when it makes sense to work from home, when you want to concentrate without distractions or because you have a handyman coming.

*This July, 1,750 Munich employees moved into the new House of Communication. Serviceplan employees are no longer obliged to turn up to the office. How are you tempting those colleagues who prefer working from home into the new HQ?*

**KMS:** Three years before the move, we started getting our colleagues on board and encouraged them to join us on this journey. It was important to us to build up a real sense of anticipation. In the old building, for example, we set everything out for people to try: the chairs, the furniture for the rooftop terrace, the plates and cups and so on. This actually had a huge pull effect and we now have almost twice as many people coming into the office as we did in the old building. And we come up with regular occasions to get people to come into the House

of Communication – like our recent Family & Friends event or the movie night that we want to establish on Mondays. Our focus is on offices that reinvent the whole concept of office space. The House of Communication should be a place of experience, not just a place of work. We want it to be a place where people meet, a place of learning, where people come together to inspire each other, to experience our company culture – both for us, as well as with and for our clients.

*Working with clients plays a pivotal role in everyday agency life. How does this manifest itself in the architecture of the House of Communication?*

**KMS:** The activity-based working concept that this building is geared towards is all about offering the best workspaces and office furniture for different activities. Prior to the move, we defined four types of activity that are relevant for us, the four Cs: Concentration, Communication, Collaboration and Community. Working with clients falls under Collaboration, and for that we have a different selection of spaces, from meeting rooms with writeable walls to the Worklab where, among other things, you can hold bigger workshop formats. As soon as you set foot inside, you can tell that this is a very unique office building. The inspiration from the art on the walls, the community spaces and the Cafeteria with its long table are all elements that help clients to instantly

realise that this is a place where people work differently, where they feel inspired, where they enjoy coming to and where they have the suitable spaces to produce amazing things with us. If they want, clients can also set up shop here with their own team for an entire week or longer. We're really flexible as far as that's concerned and have the right workspace options to suit every need.

**FH:** The entire building was designed with a view to making it even easier to integrate different communication disciplines and combine different specialisms, and for this to be done even more smoothly and seamlessly than in the past. And we invite our clients to actively take part in this process and to be a part of the space.

*You involved your employees in the development of the concept for the new House of Communication. How do you test which measures and ideas actually work in your day-to-day working life?*

**KMS:** When we were developing the project, we said that the learning journey only really begins from when we actually move, which is why we defined the first six months after the move as a 'New Work learning journey'. That was also a way of taking off the pressure for both sides: the employees and those who were involved in shaping this mammoth project. Basically, so that no one expects everything to go perfectly from day one, otherwise it

We want it to be a place where people meet, a place of learning, where people come together to inspire each other, to experience our company culture – both for us, as well as with and for our clients.

Top: The font for the orientation guides was designed especially for the HoC.  
Bottom: The building is full of spaces and seating that are conducive to interaction.





Top: The light carpet on the ceiling is 130 metres long and six metres wide.  
Bottom: The transparent architecture makes it easier for teams to collaborate.

I can honestly say that there hasn't been a single day when I've wanted to go back to my old office.

would just end up being a huge flop. We incorporated three feedback sprints into the initial six-month phase. In the first one, we received 620 responses covering everything from building-related issues, the air conditioning, after-work activities, food requests in the Cafeteria, our house rules and so on. Now we know exactly what we still need to fine-tune. Overall, I'm not sensing very much stress or tension in the building at all – and I see that as a win and also a testament to all our colleagues that the whole process has gone so smoothly.

*What are the house rules that you just mentioned and how were they defined?*

**KMS:** We knew that, in order for the day-to-day routine to function in this building with its many shared spaces, we'd need rules to help people get on and work well together. But we wanted to appeal to people's common sense and judgement rather than laying down the law and overregulating everything. After all, New Work also means taking responsibility for yourself. Together with our weMOVE ambassadors, we sat down to systematically work out what each of the four areas (Concentration, Communication, Collaboration and Community) needs. Can I, for example, approach someone if they're working in a Concentration area? How should I leave my workspace when I'm finished? Questions like that. By the end of the process, we had come up with nine very simple rules. These nine sentences can be found on the wall of every floor as a reminder, and 90% of the time it works wonderfully.

*And what happens if someone notoriously ignores these rules?*

**FH:** As far as the rules are concerned, a lot of it is intuitive. If I'm sitting at my desk and having a loud, non-work related conversation on the phone, or with two or three people next to me, then that will feel wrong – provided that I have a reasonable level of sensitivity. So it's best to get up and continue the call in one of the telephone booths or conference rooms. And if someone isn't quite so sensitive to others, then you have to make them aware of it.

**KMS:** That's the wonderful thing about this building, that it has the right

spaces for every need. That's why, when we moved in, we made a point of telling people to try everything out and discover their favourite places so they know what workspaces they can use and how. I think that's worked out very well.

*Florian, since the move you've been sharing an office and one big table with your colleagues from the holding company. Are you longing to have your own office again?*

**FH:** I can honestly say that there hasn't been a single day when I've wanted to go back to my old office. In the beginning I was mainly backing the shared office concept because I wanted to set a good example to everyone else. As bosses, we have to stick to the rules that we set for our employees regarding workplace flexibility, shared tables instead of individual offices and so on. But I am now noticing that sharing an office adds real value to my work life. You can bounce ideas back and forth over the table, and I'm also out and about in the building more and meeting colleagues in different conference or quiet rooms. It really frees up your mind when you're not permanently stuck to your chair with everyone coming to you.

*New Work is an ongoing process that will never be finished. Where is Serviceplan at right now?*

**KMS:** In the past few years, we have experimented a lot and gained so much experience. That has enabled us to develop a clear, differentiated picture of what really makes sense for us and makes us more effective. We then defined our very own individual toolbox and optimised meeting formats and other things to suit our particular requirements. But the main thing we noticed here is that New Work isn't something you can prescribe; you have to live and breathe it. That was also one of the principles of our weMOVE project team: we wanted to be role models for the way that we want to work with each other here in the future.

*The new House of Communication represents a new beginning. Florian, what does it mean for you?*

**FH:** We want to keep our largest House of Communication attractive for our own employees and, at the same time, make Munich a magnet for the best talents. That's our big-

gest focus not only here in Munich, but across the whole company. The building should also be an experimental laboratory for new ways of working and for how to better represent our concept of integrated work in a spatial sense and how to breathe life into it. And at the end of the day, the Munich House of Communication should also set an international example. It should convey to the rest of the world that we are an agency group that believes in its future, in the future of communication and the future of creative companies like ours.

*Thank you for talking to us.*



Caffeine and communication: One of the coffee bars.