

# CASE STUDY

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## Global Oil & Energy Company Improves Culture & Retention Through Office Design with Humanyze



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# Global Oil & Energy Company Improves Culture & Retention Through Office Redesign



## The Background

One of the world's **largest oil & energy companies** was facing a **talent retention** and **recruitment crisis**. As some of their most senior and tenured employees planned for near-term retirement, there were fewer and fewer lower-level employees who were available to step into these critical roles. This was a result of two key challenges: cultural changes in the industry, which created more competition for young innovative talent, and difficulties transferring essential organizational knowledge to newer employees within the company.

While the organization had succeeded for years at hiring employees directly out of school and retaining them for their entire careers, increased organizational complexity and cultural shifts in the industry meant that their historically traditional, hierarchical processes were starting to create major divides and silos between hierarchies and tenures. As a result, the company was also starting to lose young and ambitious talent to industry competitors who claimed to have more open and progressive work cultures.

## The Challenge

The **corporate law department** in particular had a higher than average number of high-performing and senior employees on track for retirement, but was also notorious for operating in a silo and having a less accessible, hierarchical culture within the organization.

The department had many young, ambitious employees that they could not afford to lose, but recent HR assessments revealed that these same employees lacked sufficient growth opportunities and struggled to connect with more senior colleagues or influential leaders.

## The Challenge (cont.)

The department's HR business partners knew that a key to developing and retaining younger talent in the department was to help them build cross-level relationships with tenured leaders, so they could gain exposure to important company contexts and mentorship. In partnership with the Corporate Real Estate team, HR had some ideas around how to accomplish this cultural change through strategic workplace design, but they lacked visibility into what interventions would have the most meaningful impact and return on investment.

In an attempt to understand just how siloed the department was, to identify which teams would benefit most from interventions, and to measure the impacts of their initiatives, the organization leveraged Humanyze's Organizational Health and Workplace Strategy Solutions.

## The Approach

To conduct an **initial baseline assessment of the 500-person department's organizational health**, they used the Humanyze Platform to extract and analyze four months of historical, **anonymous collaboration data (using email, calendar, and Skype call and chat metadata)** for the entire employee population. Armed with an objective understanding of how the department was working, they informed an office re-stack and programming to support their desired outcomes.

After implementing the new changes and programs, the department continued to measure this data and **monitor changes for an additional five months** in order to validate the effectiveness of these decisions.

In partnership with the HR department, Humanyze also layered in **demographic information from HR and Real Estate information systems** to deliver anonymized and aggregated scores, indicators, and actionable metrics associated with organizational effectiveness for various groupings of interest, including:



**Tenure**

*(less than 10 yrs, 10-20 yrs, 20+ yrs)*



**Assigned Floor &  
Campus Building**



**Primary Team  
Assignment**

Given the department’s particular interest in improving knowledge sharing and employee retention for lower tenures, they focused primarily on identifying any groups who were outliers and/ or who experienced significant changes over time **using the following Humanyze indicators:**



### Alignment:

*Shows the speed and quality of communication between teams and broader working groups, indicating how effectively employees use existing tools to share and obtain information outside of their core teams.*



### Support Network:

*Employees’ social support network and potential sense of belonging within the organization*



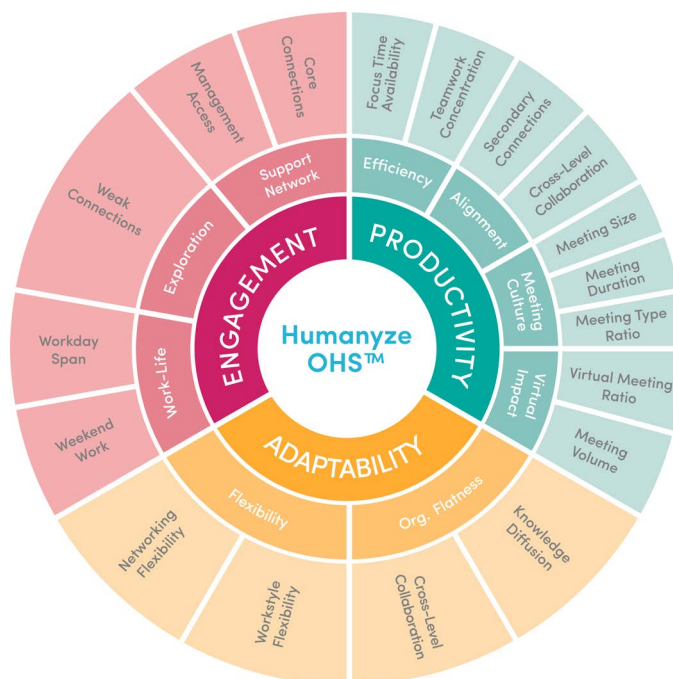
### Exploration:

*Employee exposure to colleagues who they may not depend on directly for their work, but provide access to important information and can help foster higher levels of employee trust, belonging and motivation*



### Organizational Flatness:

*Measures if communication follows a horizontal or matrixed structure, compared to traditional hierarchy-based structures. Higher scores can indicate fewer barriers between employees and leadership, supporting faster cross-level communication and agile responsiveness.*



## The Findings

The initial assessment of historical patterns within the department **supported HR's hypotheses**. Overall, the law department's **Organizational Flatness** score **was in the critical zone** – a sign that very little cross-team interaction or exposure to seniority levels outside one's own level was occurring. At the team level, **most teams had very low Alignment scores** and **moderate scores in Social Support**, indicating that they stayed mostly connected within their own teams but rarely reached out across teams and reporting lines.

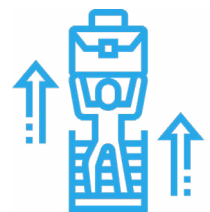
Silos between groups with different tenures were even more stark – particularly between employees with over 21 years of tenure and the rest. These silos appeared to be reinforced by physical location and office layouts, as most executive leadership had offices on a separate floor, while the rest of the floors were assigned to more junior members of each of their teams.

In particular, employees with less than 10 years' tenure had abnormally low **Exploration** scores. This is an indication that the organization did not provide sufficient opportunities for employees to develop **new, informal relationships** that are key drivers of **engagement, innovation, and mentorship** in the workplace.



Using these findings, the HR and Real Estate departments worked with leadership in the law department to conduct a campus restack and workplace redesign with the goal of increasing **Organizational Flatness** overall, and a particular focus on increasing **Cross-Level Collaboration** and **Exploration** for employees with **10 years or less in tenure**.

Among other smaller changes and programming intended to foster more cross-level interactions, the most drastic change made was **distributing executive leadership's offices across all floors, rather than keeping them all on the same floor**. They also increased the number of "flexible desks" on each floor, encouraged more tenured employees to use open workspaces, and created incentives for teams to change their location periodically within the building.



For **teams with particularly low Alignment scores** in the initial assessment, they also leveraged Humanyze's Workplace Strategy solution to **coordinate intentional, strategic in-office schedules** to improve cross-team interactions in the workplace.

## Impacts & Observations after 5 months

Five months after implementing these interventions, they observed noticeable improvements and desired outcomes. Overall **Organizational Flatness increased significantly** across the department, with certain teams experiencing major increases in **Exploration** and **Alignment**.

Teams that had previously been assigned to the same floor remained connected to one another, but also increased their interaction with other teams, leading to a more equal distribution of exposure and collaboration across the department.

Certain teams also showed significant increases in **Cross-Level Collaboration**. However, siloing between tenures and overall exposure to higher tenures for employees who had been at the company for **less than 10 years did not improve significantly**. This indicated that, while changes to the workplace did improve overall cross-team collaboration and supported cross-tenure knowledge-sharing within certain groups, the deeply-ingrained culture of siloing by seniority and tenure **still needed further nurturing in order to foster the necessary changes**.

### Department Network Pre-Interventions:

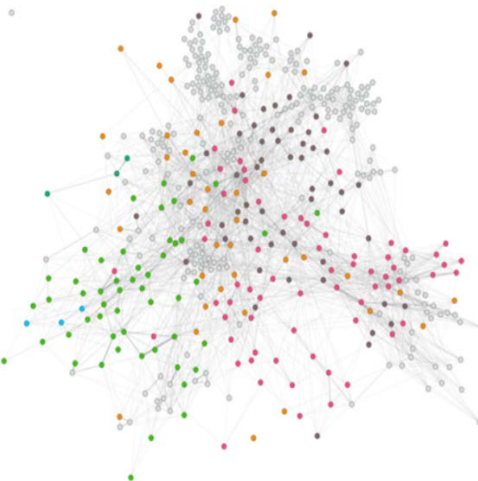
Network graphs are a high level visual of communication flow across an organization.

Nodes represent individuals, lines represent digital collaboration, and colors represent different teams.

The more individuals communicate, the closer their nodes will be.



### Department Network 5 Months Post-Interventions:



Post-intervention network graph shows increases in **Alignment and Organizational Flatness**, showing a more cohesive collaboration network overall with less team-based siloing.

## The Takeaways & Why This Matters

One-time interventions are seldom “silver bullet” solutions, and making significant cultural and behavioral changes often take much longer than five months to carry out. Equipped with Humanyze’s solutions, however, the law department can now inform data-driven changes, objectively measure which interventions had the most impact on which teams, and adjust strategies as they go with speed and certainty.

These dynamic insights will allow them to enable cultural change faster than their industry competitors in order to proactively mitigate costly, unnecessary employee turnover.



To learn more about how you can unlock your organization’s full potential with Humanyze, visit [www.humanyze.com](https://www.humanyze.com) or [request a demo today](#).