

African innovation centre launched

The GE Global Operations Properties team was tasked with planning, designing and building the Africa Innovation Centre (AIC), after evaluating the results and key findings from the four existing innovation centres in Middle East and Africa, to incorporate best practices in order to deliver a truly unique facility.



As the first GE innovation centre in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the challenge was to make the AIC in Johannesburg, South Africa a multi-purpose centre. The AIC provides GE Healthcare employees with an agile workspace; is home to a model of a “Hospital of the Future” and is a great training space for GE customers.

The overall aim was to create a sustainable centre that incorporates global principles into a smooth mix of integrated workspaces, training zones, digital laboratories and an interactive exhibition space.

Central to the conceptualisation and design was the GE store, a company initiative which encourages the exchange of knowledge, technology and tools across teams in different GE businesses and geographical locations.

Leveraging the brain power and global footprint of a multi-industry company like GE resulted in the team saving about \$1 million in the execution of this project. The AIC is the result of a \$70-million commitment by GE to innovation, localisation and development in SSA.

“GE is transforming into the world’s premiere digital industrial company, and the Africa Innovation Centre provides a unique

environment for GE to collaborate with the best minds in and for Africa. The Global Operations Properties team led this project from concept to inauguration, achieving several milestones in the process, including being the first fully agile, LEED-certified GE workspace across Africa,” said Huned Ujjainwala, regional operating leader, GE Global Operations MENAT SSA.

“The part I found most rewarding was watching the project develop from a concept to a design on paper and then into reality, seeing the value the space brings to GE. Seeing a building come alive with collaboration, being a central point where people want to spend time because it fosters the right behaviour and environment, is amazing,” said Renier Saayman, regional properties leader, GE Global Operations MENAT SSA and India.

Ben Preston, senior construction project services manager Global Operations Properties, MENAT, SSA and India, added: “Developing a clear brief and scope for the centre was challenging at first. There were lots of good ideas about what could be done, but filtering those to determine which would offer the best value for GE and their customers was sometimes a challenge. Tie this to tight budgets and you have loads of opportunity to be creative.”

Since opening its doors in June this year, feedback about the AIC has been positive and work is now underway to create a space for GE Digital. Jeff Sommers, general manager, Global Supply Chain for GE SSA, said: “With the property team’s leadership, we are already at full capacity at the Innovation Centre, with the SSA Learning Centre, the Healthcare Africa HQ, a customer centre and service operations cohabitating the facility.”

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