

Case Study:
Vitra



Vitra design at its VERY BEST

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award-winning work and
optimize its workflows,
Vitra is passionate about
using the Vectorworks®
Architect software.*





The Citizen Office

Project Vitra began in 1957 when the company started producing the furniture of Charles and Ray Eames and George Nelson in Basel, Switzerland and neighboring Weil am Rhein, Germany. In the years since then, the company, now known as Vitra, has grown significantly. Vitra continues to build and further develop classic furniture designs that influence the entire industry. It employs

renowned designers to create entirely new furniture concepts, and its interior design department produces furniture for complete working and living environments. Today, Vitra has a global presence and is known for its products as well as its cultural initiatives, which manifest themselves in the Vitra Design Museum, the VitraHaus, as well as in the company's own unique architecture.

Architect Case Study: Vitra: Design at its Very Best

To accomplish its award-winning work and optimize its workflows, Vitra is passionate about using the Vectorworks Architect software.

The teams at Vitra depend on the software to help them visualize functional office spaces and even entire ergonomically adapted work environments while still in the planning phase, keeping costs and expenses under control at all times. They also use the graphics library extensively. These are just two of the main reasons the renowned furniture manufacturer selected the Vectorworks and CINEMA 4D® programs from among their competitors.

Seeking the Right Software

After years of using various CAD applications and watching its partners do the same, Vitra realized the necessity of finding a uniform platform that could provide graphically attractive drawings and interior design plans. “Some of our work could be realized by means of the previously employed software, but much of it could not,” remembers Toni Piskac, Head of Interior Design Services at Vitra. The often very technical programs required long training periods, had problems interfacing with databases and libraries, and produced unsatisfactory output.

“We do not need technical designs, but legible emotional designs. They need to be attractive and simply interesting to look at.”

*—Toni Piskac, Head of Interior Design Services, Vitra,
Weil am Rhein, Germany*

Vitra’s interior design customers expect to receive a plan that allows them to concretely visualize how the interior design—including furniture, upgrades, lighting, and acoustics—would look in a room or building. This step occurs even before designers answer the questions of whether the envisaged design components would all fit together and if people would feel comfortable in such an environment. The tools that the firm previously employed proved to be unsuitable for realizing these requirements.

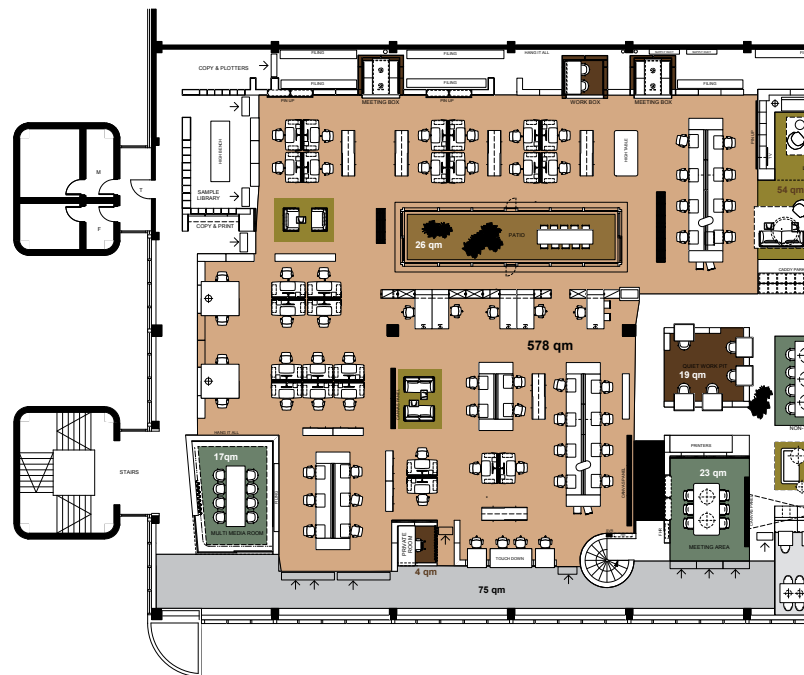
Vitra published a thesis examining this list of requirements for the Northwest Switzerland University of Applied Sciences at Basel. Wolfgang Böhm, Head of Sales Applications, Vitra, Weil am Rhein, Germany, explains: “The goal was a coherent basis for planning, concepts, products and price lists, furniture libraries, and output. Whether the objects are in 2D or in 3D, from the company’s own libraries or from other manufacturers, everything should be intuitively processed and presented in a graphically attractive manner. The point was that even untrained interior designers with their own libraries should be able to realize concepts for their customers in a quick and reliable fashion.”

“We were looking for a CAD program that would enable us to generate creative designs, quickly and in a simple intuitive fashion, based on our available data.”

*—Wolfgang Böhm, Head of Sales Applications, Vitra,
Weil am Rhein, Germany*

After evaluating the thesis, four software companies were invited to present their solutions. “Of course, we knew that every company had great marketing tools and presentations to depict everything in a simple and high-quality manner,” Piskac recalls. “But we really wanted to see the day-to-day reality and grill them about it.” At the interviews, the software companies received assignments that had to be solved and then presented to a jury—all in a matter of three hours. Andy Hängärtner of ComputerWorks Basel entered the competition on behalf of Nemetschek Vectorworks.

The jury found that the Vectorworks presentation offered the best solutions for Vitra’s assignment profile. Additionally, Piskac says, Vectorworks offered the best development options of all tested CAD programs. “It will be possible in the near future to select any manufacturer data from the Internet, to configure it with Vectorworks, and to conceptualize variable three-dimensional objects and scenes.”



Ground plan for the Citizen Office, SPGA London



A visualization of a client's project.

Planning at Vitra with Vectorworks

The migration to the Vectorworks program took place in 2010, fully supported by the Vitra team. Their first conclusions were that the transition phase went smoothly and that once they were familiar with it, the Vectorworks program opened up unimagined possibilities.

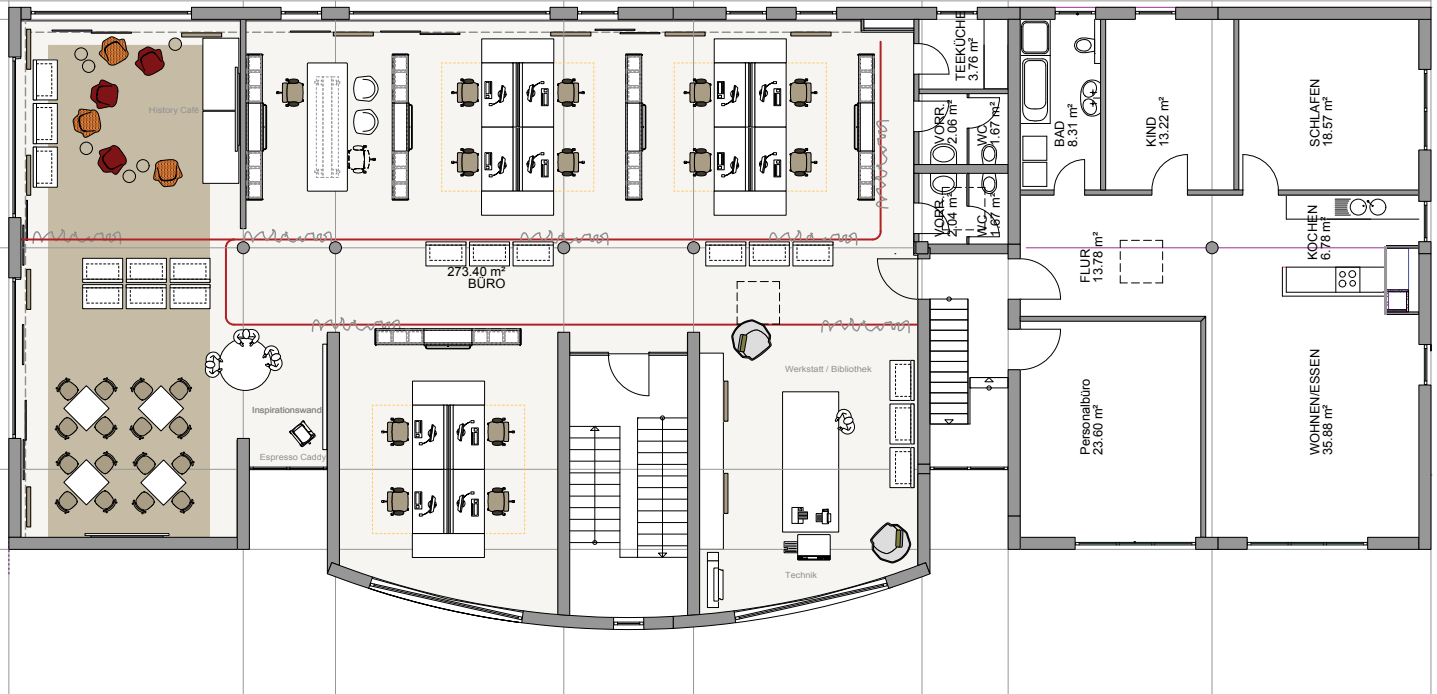
“Unlike many other programs, Vectorworks is very intuitive and easy to understand. You can really create great designs after only a relatively short initial training period.”

*–Wolfgang Böhm, Head of Sales Applications, Vitra,
Weil am Rhein, Germany*



According to Böhm, the new design tool finally offers the prospect of a comprehensive standard which considerably accelerates workflows. It generates unprecedented synergistic effects, handling functions that would normally require several software applications. This keeps costs for users and customers as low as possible.

Vitra currently uses Vectorworks mainly in two areas: for design concepts created by the interior designers at Vitra, and for editing and updating its furniture library, which is also used to compile Office Furniture Modeling Language (OFML®) data. The interior designers are required to deliver their planning concepts in a timely manner, and these documents must be able to accept greater detail in later planning stages, as well as share data with other parties involved in the planning process. The interior designers produce two- and three-dimensional graphics, which are presented together with other images out of the Vitra catalogue. Vitra sets extremely high expectations regarding the quality of planning concepts and presentations. This is why the planners greatly appreciate the graphical strengths of the Vectorworks software in 2D and 3D, as well as the visualization results from CINEMA 4D.



“The legibility of planning documents is an essential basis for builders’ decisions. That’s why the graphic quality of 2D plans and premium 3D visualizations is essential.”

–Toni Piskac, Vitra, Weil am Rhein, Germany

this way, individual furniture items or entire scenes can be individually configured and placed into the Vectorworks design. Subsequent changes, as well as automatic bid proposals can also be added easily. Moreover, the Furniture Manager is free for all users (available only for Windows).

Right from the start, the Vectorworks software was given the opportunity to prove itself for an internal project. When redesigning and reorganizing the Citizen Office’s headquarters in Weil am Rhein, Vitra interior designers exchanged and developed planning data with interior designer Sevil Peach from London. It was a great success. Now the application is used in all new customer projects.

Furniture for Interior Designers

Since the inception of the project, everyone at Vitra has been so impressed by Vectorworks’ performance that the new tool is now used as a CAD program by Vitra distributors in Europe, and its global deployment is already in the planning stage. Meanwhile, even specialty retailers and service providers that are supplied by Vitra have started working with the CAD program. “We have noticed that there are a lot of specialist retailers looking for suitable software, and they follow our example,” says Piskac.

Commissioned by Vitra, ComputerWorks developed the new Furniture Manager tool specifically for importing furniture—it is now available to all interior designers. Using an OFML interface, this tool enables planners to directly access the “Product Planner” and thus the Vitra catalogue. In

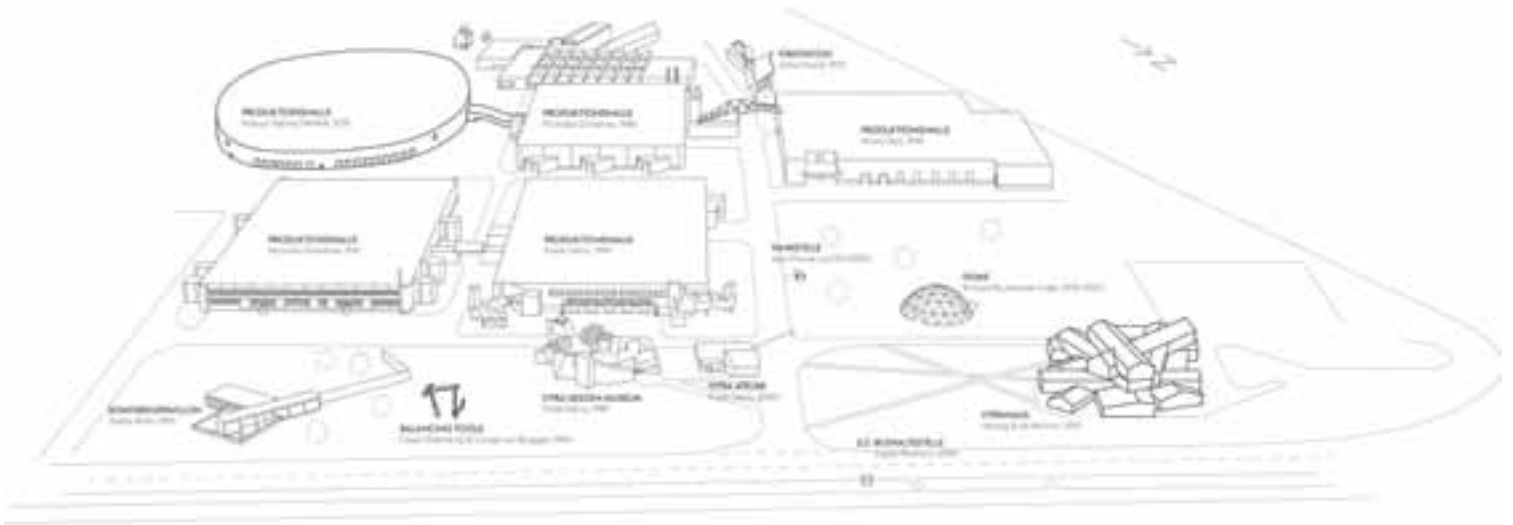




Another example of a client's project.

“We want all interior designers at Vitra to work with the Furniture Manager. The objects are optimized for use in Vectorworks, and the tool enables professional, fast 2D and 3D design.”

–Toni Piskac, Vitra, Weil am Rhein, Germany



The Vitra Campus in Weil am Rhein, Germany.

Acknowledgements

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Vitra is a furniture manufacturer committed to the development of sound, intelligent, inspired, and sustainable solutions for office, home, and public spaces.

Vitra's products and concepts are developed in Switzerland in a thorough design process combining the company's engineering expertise with the creative spirit of leading international designers. It is our goal to design products with long functional and aesthetic life expectancy.

The architecture of the Vitra Campus, the Vitra Design Museum, the design workshops, publications, collections, and archives are integral parts of Project Vitra. They open up new perspectives to the company and add the necessary depth to all of its creative endeavors.

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