TAMPA — You can see so much from the virtually 360-degree view from Kforce's new corporate headquarters in Midtown Tampa. Sunsets. Storm clouds. Shoppers coming and going from the Whole Foods and REI down below. The traffic situation on Interstate 275 and N Dale Mabry.

But it’s what visitors won’t see, said CEO Joe Liberatore, that makes the new headquarters feel so different from the old one.

“They will not see rows upon rows of cubicles,” Liberatore said. “People don’t like to be cooped up any longer because of everything that everybody’s been through with these last 2½ years with the pandemic.”

It’s Kforce’s “office of the future,” Liberatore said — a rethinking of the corporate atmosphere inside one of Tampa Bay’s largest public companies.

Kforce, a professional staffing services company that last year reported nearly $1.6 billion in revenue, is going all-in on hybrid work at its Midtown office, which opens for business Tuesday. At 25,000 square feet, it’s a fifth the size of the Ybor site; Kforce’s 600 local employees wouldn’t fit there all at once. But that’s by design.

“We envision that when people come into the office, they think of it almost more like a day business trip,” Liberatore said. “Our intent is to be remote-first. The majority of work will still be completed outside the Kforce office. We’re encouraging our people to utilize the office when it’s really additive, and it makes sense, whether that be for team building, collaboration and training, or when teams have to work on a project.”

The office is only the most recent facet of Kforce’s evolution. Over the last decade and a half, the company has shifted its emphasis on tech-focused companies from about 60% to about 80% of its business. During the pandemic, it adopted a new logo — now prominently visible atop Midtown West from southbound I-275 — and a set of corporate values displayed on the wall in the reception area: compassion, integrity, adaptability, courage, unity, excellence and fun.

When the company sold its Ybor City headquarters to real estate investor Darryl Shaw last year for $24 million, it had an opportunity to put into practice some workplace ideas it had already been considering. The company had about 700 workstations in Ybor, Liberatore said, but not all of them were being utilized. Projects were being developed offshore, instead of in the office, between teams in different places.

“It just became very apparent to us that the world was never going back to where it was,” Liberatore said.

At Kforce’s new office, there are relatively few dedicated workstations. Employees can huddle in collaborative “connection zones” with long tables and mobile touchscreen Microsoft Surface monitors or break off into shared “privacy pods” or “focus spaces” for individual work.

BY JAY CRIDLIN
Times Staff Writer

The new Kforce office at Midtown Tampa was designed with remote and hybrid workers — including the CEO — in mind.
“cy pods” or “focus spaces” for individual work. Even the executive offices operate hotel-style — they’re meant to be shared. Kforce has around 15 executive-level positions, and only five offices. When someone like Liberatore comes in, he’ll have to find an open spot.

Gathering spaces, including conference rooms, a training room, the boardroom and an open living room-style meeting area, feature camera-enabled Surface monitors designed and placed with remote workers front of mind. The airy, expansive office has other modern touches. There’s no receptionist; employees enter with an app on their phone. A small canteen area features an array of self-serve snacks and drinks. The wide, floor-to-ceiling windows flood the office in natural light; other areas are lit with warm, hula hoop-sized LED ring lamps overhead. A “dreamstorm” room features a wall of pegs on which team members can scribble out and hang ideas during brainstorming sessions.

Contact Jay Cridlin at cridlin@tampabay.com or 727-893-8336. Follow @JayCridlin.

The main entry at the Kforce corporate headquarters at Midtown, 1150 Assembly Drive, on Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022 in Tampa. Kforce, a staffing and professional services company that is one of Tampa Bay’s largest public corporations, is getting ready to open its new headquarters in Midtown Tampa, some 18 months after selling its Ybor property to Darryl Shaw. The new office is designed to be a little smaller, with hybrid work front of mind. PHOTOS: DIRK SHADD/TIMES

The training room at the Kforce corporate headquarters at Midtown, 1150 Assembly Drive, on Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022 in Tampa. Kforce, a staffing and professional services company that is one of Tampa Bay’s largest public corporations, is getting ready to open its new headquarters in Midtown Tampa, some 18 months after selling its Ybor property to Darryl Shaw. The new office is designed to be a little smaller, with hybrid work front of mind.

A recent internal study of job seekers showed that 93% preferred hybrid or remote work, he said. Another study showed that 96% of Kforce’s employees felt connected to the company regardless of where they worked.

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And then there’s Midtown Tampa itself. The $1 billion development has restaurants, bars and a coffee shop where employees can meet up. And it has two adjoining Marriott hotels, Aloft and Element, where remote workers will stay when they come to town.

“Especially going into these really nice months in Florida, October through May, our people can go out and hit Wi-Fi from outside the office and enjoy being outside, getting fresh air and everything else,” Liberatore said.

In the days before the grand opening, Kforce planned to host board meetings and a quarterly earnings call from the site. After that, the company’s hybrid era will begin in earnest. And Liberatore says Kforce won’t look back.

“When people are having a more fulfilled work-life balance, and they’re delivering the best results in our 60-year history, and this is what they’re telling us they want, why would we ever backtrack?” he said.

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