

building OPERATING management

HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUILDINGS ISSUE

**HVAC: DDC
transformed**

**Zero energy
retrofit path**

6 next steps for
your exterior

**IoT reshapes
lighting control**

**shaping
performance**

Support business goals with
space people don't want to leave



Mitchell Wickland,
Cushman & Wakefield,
explains why technology
means FM needs IT

**Water
crisis**



COVER STORY

shaping performance

- » High-performance office strategies are not one-size fits all.
- » Support collaboration, connection, and communication.
- » "Every office should have a living room."

naomi millán, senior editor

Everybody is searching for the golden ticket when it comes to high-performance spaces. With the right box or by following the right trend, by copying the strategy used by the famous tech company, we hope to crack the productivity code and create workspaces crackling with ingenuity.

Unfortunately, you can't hack high-performance. High-performance commercial interiors are a concrete manifestation of a clear understanding of organizational goals and how the components of the organization interoperate to achieve those goals. Facility managers have a "fortunate and influential position," as one industry expert puts it, as they manage the asset through which all the other entities in the organization connect and realize the goals of the enterprise. To help achieve high performance in the work environment, facility managers must understand the goals of the organization as a whole and in its parts, and ensure the space expresses and supports those goals.

No biggie, right? While there is no easy one-size-fits-all strategy, by understanding the trends in the ongoing evolution of the workplace environment and reaching out to partners within the organization, facility managers can shine as the drivers of innovation and positive change in the workplaces for which they are responsible.

Space as mission critical

Commercial interiors have embraced the concept of the open office as a high-performance strategy. Getting rid of walls and high cubicles, or perhaps cubicles all together, is believed to promote interaction and facilitate democratic access to amenities like natural light and views. With the exception of certain use types, such as law firms, open plan is what you can expect to see in a newly built commercial interior.

ARCH PHOTO INC.



Providing purpose-driven variety at this St. Louis financial institution ensures everyone can find the right spot for their changing needs during the workday.





At the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers in Washington, D.C., a traditional reception desk is replaced with a staffed coffee bar. The flexible space serves as the staff breakroom, facilitates small group discussions, and provides touch-down workspace.

"It would be wonderful if you have a lounge or boardroom with moveable walls off of a reception area where you can do that," she says. "But even if you have to stand in the open plan work space and do it, that communication is essential because that communication constantly changes in terms of what you're trying to achieve in terms of profitability."

Elegantly efficient spaces

It is the rare office that has the square footage to set aside for townhalls and nothing else, so the need is being met with flexible spaces. Open plan helps facilitate this, as well as the use of demountable walls, or stadium-like staircases that can double as seating. These strategies are being deployed at a headquarters for a financial technology firm Post-Marner's company is working with. "They want to grow and they're doing well, but they don't want to lose that scrappiness and collegiality they had when they were 20 people," she says.

At the headquarters for the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers in Washington, D.C., designers created a multi-use community-building space by getting rid of the reception area. "In the age of the cell phone, having someone at a front desk didn't feel productive," says Josh Hildreth, principal at DMG Interiors. Expecting to grow rapidly in the next few years, a complete redesign to get the most out of the square footage in expensive real estate on Pennsylvania Avenue required pushing the performance of the individual spaces. So, instead of walking into a "funeral parlor waiting room," people walk into a bright and busy multi-purpose room where a barista at the coffee bar greets them and offers them a beverage.

This entrance/living room space serves as the breakroom for the employees, provides a touchdown workspace for individuals, facilitates small group conversations, and functions as a hip lounge during evening events.

"Every office should have a living room or gathering space that is not just a lobby that people go into, but is something that can be used to benefit the culture of the

"The office is really becoming less and less of a workplace type," says Elisabeth Post-Marner, principal at Spacesmith, with more than 25 years in workplace design. In addition, she says she's seeing a greater shift to a more collegial feel. "What we're seeing is that corporate is becoming more campus," she says. This is marked with aspects such as lounge settings and training rooms accommodating groups up to 100, aimed at retaining the Millennial demographic, which is famous for a quick turnover rate and an appetite for engagement and continuous education.

Another force driving design is a desire to create community and create a space that is desirable. When much of work can be done from anywhere, what compels employees to come into the office and want to stay there and be productive? It's not about creating a hangout space, though that is a component, but rather how to "build a community that individuals want to opt into that's aligned with the purpose of your organization," says Joseph White, director of workplace strategy at Herman Miller. The company just completed a two-year study of 13 locations, gathering 600,000 data points for each site, on the nature of work and the workplace.

One aspect of building community is facilitating access to leadership. More and more projects are incorporating flexible layouts that can be configured for multiple uses, one of these being to create a townhall space where the CEO can gather her 300 employees and touch base on the state of the company, update goals, and create a sense of unity. In some companies, there is a desire for this kind of space on a weekly basis, says Post-Marner.



At Global Brands Group, an apparel company, collaboration space supports a variety of small group settings — a valuable trait in the high-performance office.

whole organization,” says Hildreth.

In addition, everybody in the new office was going to be giving up some personal square footage, so the office was designed with luxe homey touches and provides more options for work arrangements: sit/stand desks, bar-height seating at the windowline with views onto the Washington Mall, funky repurposed pallet-trolley sofas still moveable on their original wheels. “If you want to boost productivity, create something that people don’t want to leave,” says Hildreth. “Create spaces that engage the whole person.”

Strategic variety in space types

Personal choice in the workspace is a hot-button topic in high-performance spaces. But facility managers can’t just throw together a mish-mash of elements, call it “choice,”

more uniform workforce or a very diverse work force? To that, add a fine-grained understanding of the activities that need to happen everyday to meet the organization’s objectives.

“Those three together start to point towards the purposeful variety within the environment,” says White. “It starts to tell you about the right mix of the different types of spaces that you’ll need and the character of those spaces as well.”

One key space in a high-performing office is gathering space. In the past, this has been served by a conference room, but as more and more varied activities have been incorporated into the workspace, conference rooms have become too large and unsuitable. For example, a conference room set for 10 people will often be used by a small group or by two people needing a space for a private conversation. This leaves up to eight seats unused and potentially leaves eight people out in the general office hunting for a place to meet.

To solve for this, there is an increase of more and smaller meeting spaces. “Instead of one type of conference room that varies in size, we’re seeing as many as six distinctly different physical environments for groups to come together,” says White.

One of the types of gathering spaces that has seen a lot of growth is video conferencing spaces. “There is an increased need to collaborate,” says Post-Marner. “Global alliances are important — communication within the organization and outside the organization. We’re seeing a tremendous amount of video conferencing in all shapes and sizes.”

In addition to providing access to technology, the technology itself is impacting how the space is configured. For example, touch screens, both in mobile tablet devices and larger stationary touch screens in a meeting room. How much space is needed to stand comfortably in front of the screen and interact with the other people in the room is one question to consider. “Those human factors, understanding those dynam-

When aiming for high-performance interiors, instead of throwing the old idea out and ushering the new idea in, facility managers can identify specific components, test new strategies, and evolve the workplace gradually.

and wash their hands. Elements have to specifically serve a purpose that supports the business function of the enterprise, or else it will be ineffective.

“Work has become much more varied in nature,” says White. “But that variety should be very specific.” The recipe for getting the right mix is understanding the organization’s culture and its ultimate goals, as well as the character of the organization, he says. Are employee interactions more intimate and face-to-face or more about collaboration between team members scattered around the globe? Do you have a



The demand for video conferencing facilities in all shapes and sizes is increasing in the workplace.

ALISE O'BRIEN PHOTOGRAPHY

ics of what's happening when you're leveraging a tool and then looking at the physical environment start to give some strong clues as to whether a physical space will be coherent with the tool that you're trying to use," says White.

The importance of collaboration space is also manifesting in a shift of how circulation space is used. Traditionally, circulation space was essentially dead space serving only as a means to get from one point to another and accounted for about a third of the total square footage of the workspace. In high-performance spaces, circulation space was observed in the Herman Miller study to be up to 50 percent of the space and was being used as connection space.

"That ability to move around in a more gracious way that allows you to bump into a colleague, step to the side, share a conversation and spark a new idea — you see a lot of value from that dynamic being afforded," says White. "When you see organizations stating goals like promoting knowledge sharing or stimulating innovation within the organization, having space for people to meet like that becomes key to meeting those goals."

Space planning strategies

While in the past there have been dramatic shifts in the way office space

is designed for performance, it's anticipated that the current moment will be shaped more through continuous and more gradual iterations. This is a good thing for facility managers. Instead of throwing the old idea out and ushering the new idea in, facility managers can identify specific components, test new strategies, and evolve the workplace gradually, says White.

"It's so rare that we can start from scratch and build a new environment, but what we can do is start to identify aspects within the current workplace system that aren't performing as high as some of the others and identify them as ways to test new concepts," he says.

One place to start is to get a sense of how the current office layout is actually being used, says Denny Crain, architect with Remiger Design. As more employees have flexible work solutions, the need for a dedicated desk declines significantly. However, the desk might still be sitting in the space, wasting valuable square footage. A lot of the time the workstations are too large or there are too many of them for the actual tasks being completed in the space, he says. Once the workstations are right-sized, a floorplate might gain as much as 25 percent of usable space, which can be applied to other functions such as improving connection

space or to absorb growth.

To get a sense of the daily tasks the space needs to support, Crain recommends speaking with each department head. They know who is there 100 percent, 60 percent, or 20 percent of the time, for example.

Talking directly with departments such as IT and HR is also important to get a good sense of organizational goals. However, when talking to different people in the company about workspace, White cautions facility managers to keep the conversation on the activities performed in the space and what the goal of the work is. From there, facility managers can look at how the space relates to those goals and better shape it to meet those needs. Asking individuals what they want or what they like is a lost cause. Don't ask if a room is good or bad. Focus instead on whether individuals feel successful in completing a specific task or not, and then figure out the why. "I have found it's more successful to have a conversation around activities and then move to space, rather than space then to activity," White says. "It's all about starting with people first." ■

Email comments and questions to naomi.millan@tradeprss.com.