

FACILITIES STRATEGIES: SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM SPACE PERFORMANCE TO HUMAN PERFORMANCE

Growing numbers of case studies demonstrate that ensuring adequate facilities for the needs of workers almost always pays for itself—usually within the first three years.

A well-planned space balances:

- Speed—Minimizing worker downtime
- Flexibility—Simplifying future changes
- Cost—Up front and over time
- The Human Element—Supporting worker and team performance

Today's organizations must constantly change to meet shifting customer interests and demands. Long-term space planning must be an abstract, adjustable perspective on possible needs, with the ability to support multiple growth and change scenarios.

Creating the right combination of flexible, long-term and short-term solutions represents a fundamental challenge. Here are four ways to help make that happen.

1. Do the most with what you have.

This may seem simplistic, but reconfigurations often do not require a complete overhaul. Perhaps existing walls can remain or an ergonomics program can ensure that workers' environments adjust to fit them. Many times, freestanding components can simply be added as needed.

2. Design integrated spaces rather than individual footprints.

Consider work areas as functioning units rather than as a collection of individual footprints. Layouts should be structured to support collaboration, with flexibility to allow the space to grow and adapt.

3. Allow more user control.

The ability to mix configurations and components gives workers a sense of personal control of their workspaces. What's more, if workers can decide how to situate desks, tables, partitions, markerboards, and seating, facilities managers can concentrate on creating a highly competitive, dynamic environment at the global level.

4. Support teams and private work within the same area.

Emphasize larger, reconfigurable spaces that accommodate a variety of levels of group and individual needs. Consider primary work areas that support teams of various sizes and peripheral private areas that can be shared as needed — but be sure to acoustically separate group and individual areas to ensure that they do not interfere with one another.

References

Syfert, T. & Brand, J.L. (1999). Facilities Strategies to Support Corporate Change and Flexibility.