

CHAPTER 1

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

—HARRY TRUMAN

Creative thinking that leads to innovation occurs in diverse fields of work: science, mathematics, the arts, and others. In many circumstances within these branches of knowledge, collaboration is central to the development of new ideas, procedures, products, and creations. To devise workplace environments that effectively support new ways of thinking, planners and designers can learn from parallel fields. Doing this, however, requires an open mind and an ability to translate work behaviors from other disciplines for use in the white-collar workplace. The Critical Influence Design approach will give readers new insight to help them make these translations.

In *About: Innovation*,¹ Dr. Bettina von Stamm conveys a need for a shared language between designers and managers in order to break down communication barriers, which exist due to differences in education and value systems. According to von Stamm, it is a challenge to embed an

understanding of design in business education, and vice versa. To meet this challenge, the emphasis should be placed on the benefits the client will receive by taking an interdisciplinary approach, one that brings design and business professionals together, rather than viewing one skill set as more important than the other to the success of a project. As von Stamm writes, we should be building on the strengths of these two disciplines: "The idea is not to find the lowest common denominator but make the most of the differences."

VALUES AND PERCEIVED RISKS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

In 2002, I had the good fortune to meet Beth Harmon-Vaughan at the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research (FIDER) Future Vision strategic planning workshop. Harmon-Vaughan was on the board of directors of this organization,

which sets the standards for interior design education and conducts the quality assurance process of accreditation. I had been invited to facilitate the strategy session and guide the organization's design leaders through a process to gain consensus on common goals and establish objectives for the future of FIDER. (Note: FIDER, founded in 1970, is now known as the Council for Interior Design Accreditation.²)

Four years later, I interviewed Harmon-Vaughan for *Innovations in Office Design: The Critical Influence Approach to Effective Work Environments*.³ Her insight on collaborative teams is drawn from diverse experiences, often working side by side with design firms and construction companies that, though competitors, shared a focus—the best interest of the client. In “The Case for Collaboration” featured in the *Implications Newsletter* (April, 2006) by InformeDesign, she argued the need for a new model for project leadership. In the past, the various resources could be deployed in a linear sequence, whereby one specialist's expertise could be built upon the contribution of the resource touching the process before it was handed off. A common concern about this type of approach is that it involves an extended period of time to develop the workplace design. To address that concern, Harmon-Vaughan recommends leveraging technology and adopting an iterative model, whereby the network of experts can quickly design and examine various alternatives, proceeding on a fast-track basis.⁴

The iterative approach can result in savings of both time and money. Even more important is that the workplace solution is a much better

one, comprising the synergy of multiple experts working together to contribute every step along the way.

Critical Influence Design also endorses moving away from a linear design process, and involves a holistic, integrated approach in managing the client's workplace changes, as well as other organizational changes impacting the human capital of the company. In my work as a change management consultant, I may be pulled into a project quite late in the process, for what I call the “bandage approach.” The new workplace design, including numerous iterations, has already been presented to the client, but the communication strategy has not yet been developed and rumors are running rampant, resulting in an increasing level of resistance among employees. My job is to convince the workforce that they should accept the new workplace as “the right thing to do for the business,” a task complicated by the fact that each employee is concentrating on what he or she is losing personally. Unfortunately, there is little fluidity at this stage of the game for negotiation. The decisions have been made, and it's really too late to do much more than help the wounds heal a bit more quickly.

What I typically uncover are numerous barriers to the newly designed workplace, preventing it ever having a chance to be successful. As people begin moving into the new office, the physical work environment becomes the perpetrator of all wrongs. Everything that is wrong with the company, its processes, and employees' behaviors is attributed to the new workplace. The openness of the new office is to blame for acoustical distractions and interruptions

by coworkers. The new teaming area designed for collaboration is not being used. Inconsiderate workplace behaviors have not changed a bit and, in fact, seem magnified in the new space. All these perceptions reflect negatively on the organization's internal workplace transformation team, along with their external architectural and design partners.

Digging deeper into the client organization, I then discover a number of different initiatives or strategies being implemented simultaneously, yet independently. There may be significant departmental improvements, such as an information technology (IT) strategy focused on implementing an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, a human resources (HR) initiative focused on increasing employee engagement, or a sales support client segmentation strategy to realign customer service and all internal support mechanisms. In each of these areas for business improvement, the workforce will be impacted by changes being driven by IT, HR, and sales support, *in addition* to the adaptations employees will be asked to make as a result of the new physical workplace solution. Ideally, the client should have implemented and managed change on an integrated basis; conversely, the introduction of a new workplace design should not have been carried out by the workplace transformation team in isolation, without the appropriate support from the enterprise.

From my research—and the resultant theory on the Critical Influence System impacting human behavior in the workplace—I share two key findings:

1. The success of workplace transformation is impacted by other

influences on the organization's workforce.

2. Workplace transformation creates an opportunity to drive other changes necessary for the organization's success in the future.

Why does the development of a change management plan remain a linear step in the design process, rather than being integrated early, as part of an interdisciplinary approach? Too often, architectural and design professionals progress on the development of the workplace strategy in a linear, sequential fashion until they uncover stumbling blocks. At this point, an external change management consultant is called in to assist, to reduce human resistance to a manageable level. The linear process is then passed back to the designer. Not only does this approach waste time, it also results in a much lower level of employee acceptance of the workplace changes. Instead, parallel paths need to be established, with touchpoints along the way, to ensure barriers are identified and addressed as early in the process as possible—ideally, prior to the workplace strategy being developed.

What are the risks of not addressing workforce resistance early in the design of the workplace solution? Significant changes in the eyes of employees disrupt business processes and shift focus away from achieving the critical goals of the organization. Productivity declines as distractions increase. As mentioned above, too often, organizations are juggling the transformation of the work environment, as well as a number of other changes, in isolation, yet members of the workforce may be touched by many or all of the issues: adapting to

new leadership and structures; fear of ongoing waves of downsizing; concerns over changing expectations for work behaviors; anxiety that the organizational culture will not be sustained due to mergers, acquisitions, or consolidations; concerns over greater individual accountability, or fear that functions will be outsourced. The list lengthens as complexities in the business world intensify.

The cost of helping overcome employee resistance to change through an effective change management process is typically much less than the costs of the associated risks:

- Loss of productivity prior to, during, and following the change
- Reduction of innovative outputs due to withholding of critical information by staff members
- Loss of intellectual capital due to unnecessary employee turnover
- Reduction of competitive advantage as members of the workforce join other organizations in the specific industry, or employers in the same geographic region vie for talent
- Decline in customer satisfaction and profitability due to a reduction in external focus

Workplace professionals are under intense pressure to produce physical space solutions that drive the desired organizational results. Their most innovative office design ideas may need to be compromised, hence diluted, to a less-than-optimal recommendation on how people should be working in support of the establishment's short- and long-term goals. Identifying and addressing barriers to change early in the design process is less costly than attacking those same issues later. Moreover, the design

process may have to be interrupted to combat the threat of managers resigning from the company because their private offices are being taken away. This results—at minimum—in lost productivity, and the intended project deadlines being thrown out the window, whether or not key employees do leave the company.

Quite often, there is a perceived risk of a loss of control by the designer when another workplace authority is brought in to support the project. Will the planners and designers be seen as incompetent because they need additional assistance? How should the overlap of knowledge be addressed when a new expert is placed on the project team? Is the client paying for duplicate efforts? Although each professional contributing to the workplace project has a unique area of specialization, they share some common ground, which, from the outside looking in, one could construe as redundancy or knowledge overlap.

In fact, speaking from experience, there *should* be an abundance of common ground—after all, each expert is performing in the workplace field. You want your project teammates to have full awareness of your functions; that does not mean, however, that they are providing the same services to the client. And it certainly does not require handing over control to another expert who has been pulled in to contribute a narrow area of expertise. A shared commitment to do what's best for the client's project of course may require compromise; and the clear definition of roles is imperative as part of this effort. True professionals will make these collaborative engagements work as smoothly as possible and, in the

process, will benefit personally from the knowledge gained through these experiences.

To illustrate the effect of unfounded fears, I'll share a situation involving Christopher Budd, a principal of STUDIOS Architecture, and a highly talented workplace expert. Budd truly "gets it." He is a rare individual who fully understands the workplace and the impact of physical space on behavior. As the story goes, a third party, looking from the outside in, knew that change in management was an important issue for a particular customer, but was extremely hesitant to rock the boat by introducing external consultants to the architectural firm and its client. At the time, Budd was director of STUDIOS Consulting Services (SCS). The third party was open in sharing his perception that a change management consultant would be "stepping on the toes" of STUDIOS, an architectural firm with a very strong consulting practice. After much delay caused by fears of the third party that he would lose the opportunity to sell products to the client if he ruffled the feathers of the architects, I was introduced to the project team. The professionals on this team welcomed the addition of change management specialists—and, by the way, saw no risk of losing control of the design process. They understood immediately how my education, research, and experience would complement the architectural firm's expertise. The only negative was the client's frustration that the third party had not introduced me earlier in the process!

Long story short, the fears of the third party were unfounded. Those confident in their talents are typically the most generous in sharing their

philosophies and expertise with other professionals, and Budd is no exception. He possesses the intellectual curiosity that opens his mind to other workplace specialists' theories and approaches; and he has the kind of passion for excellence that ignites creativity in collaborative work groups.

Convincing other industry professionals that you, as an outside consultant, present no threat to their existence can be challenging for anyone put in the position of becoming a member of interdisciplinary workplace teams and contributing unique expertise. Often, it can be difficult to get people to understand that you are working with the client to identify and address the barriers to the successful implementation of the architectural and design professionals' workplace solution. When you get the "deer in the headlights" response, it may be much easier to tell them what you *don't* do. You are neither an architect nor an interior designer; you do not endorse a particular workplace design or product solution. What you do provide is:

- *Education* to the client's leadership team on the critical influences on their workforce
- *Identification* of specific barriers that may hinder the success of the workplace strategy
- *Consultation* on reducing those barriers in preparation for the workplace transformation

INTERPRETATION BY DIVERSE DISCIPLINES

An interdisciplinary approach can also mean interpreting the client's industry-specific business issues by

viewing the challenges through a different set of lenses and developing the workplace solution without assumptions about that industry or with preconceived notions about what a workplace should look like for a business operating in a particular type of commercial enterprise. To understand these concepts, consider the following practical example of a client wanting to change its internal processes from a linear sequence to a collaborative integration of efforts. You'll have the opportunity to read the entire case study on this example in Chapter 5, "Collaborative Workplaces That Work."

Brian Kowalchuk, director of Design & Architecture of CUH2A in Princeton, New Jersey, was asked by a client to create a "hierarchy of spaces." Many workplace professionals would have interpreted that request as the desire to reflect the organizational chain of command, using an increasing allocation of square footage and higher quality of finishes as employees moved up the corporate ladder. But for this client, Pfizer Global Research & Development's Drug Discovery Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut, it had nothing to do

with corporate power or politics. Rather, the hierarchy of spaces was intended to reflect work process in the discovery of pharmaceutical innovations. Thus, CUH2A's workplace design had to accommodate a specific infrastructure for the total number of teams of chemists, as well as the number of chemists per team. The same approach had to be implemented to develop the physical space for the total number of teams of biologists, including the number of biologists per team (see sidebar and Figure 1-1).

To do so, they sought not only to reduce the amount of time to bring a new product to market but, perhaps more importantly, to improve the quality of the organization's innovative output. In Chapter 5, you'll learn the details of how Kowalchuk and the CUH2A team leveraged physical space to create an environment centered on discovery and innovation, and in the course of their design work, took an approach that had never been attempted on such a large scale in the pharmaceutical industry (see Figure 1-2).

Another benefit synergy brings to an organization is that it enables diverse interpretations of the same challenge by colleagues from various disciplines. Engaging peers from other departments or groups in problem solving not only can expedite resolution but may, in fact, result in a much more creative solution to the quandary. In my consulting practice, I often interact with facilities managers through my involvement with the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) and its Corporate Facilities Council (formerly known as the IFMA Corporate Headquarters Council).⁵ Many professionals in this

PFIZER GLOBAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT'S "HIERARCHY OF SPACES"

CUH2A created collaborative areas appropriate for the size of the group in the research community, from the smallest to the entire Pfizer Global Research & Development campus.

1. Chemistry Group: 3 people
2. Chemistry Lab: 6 people (2 teams of 3 individuals)
3. Chemistry Discipline Critical Mass: 12 people
4. Biology Discipline Critical Mass: 18 people
5. Therapeutic Zone Team: 30 to 60 people
6. Wing: 120 people
7. Floor: 270 people

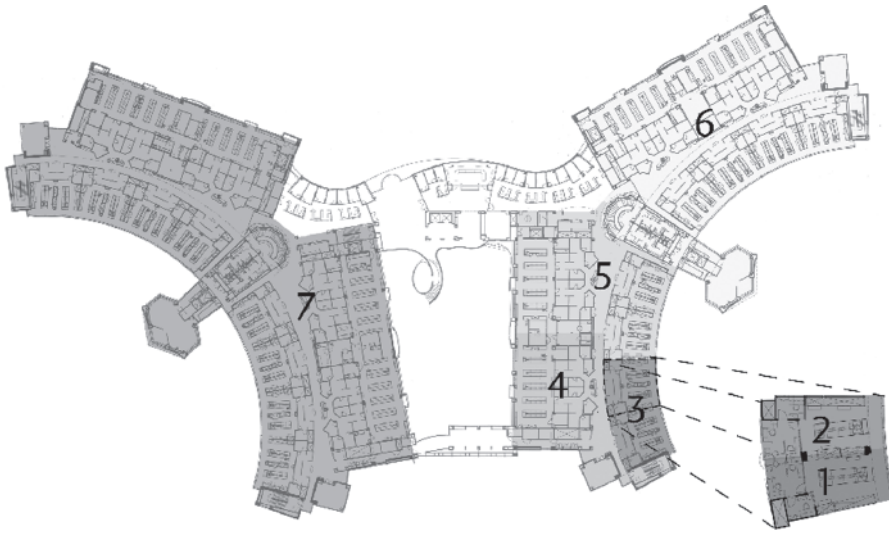


Figure 1-1: The hierarchy of spaces of Pfizer's Global Research & Development facility reflects the work process in the discovery of pharmaceutical innovations.

Courtesy CUH2A.

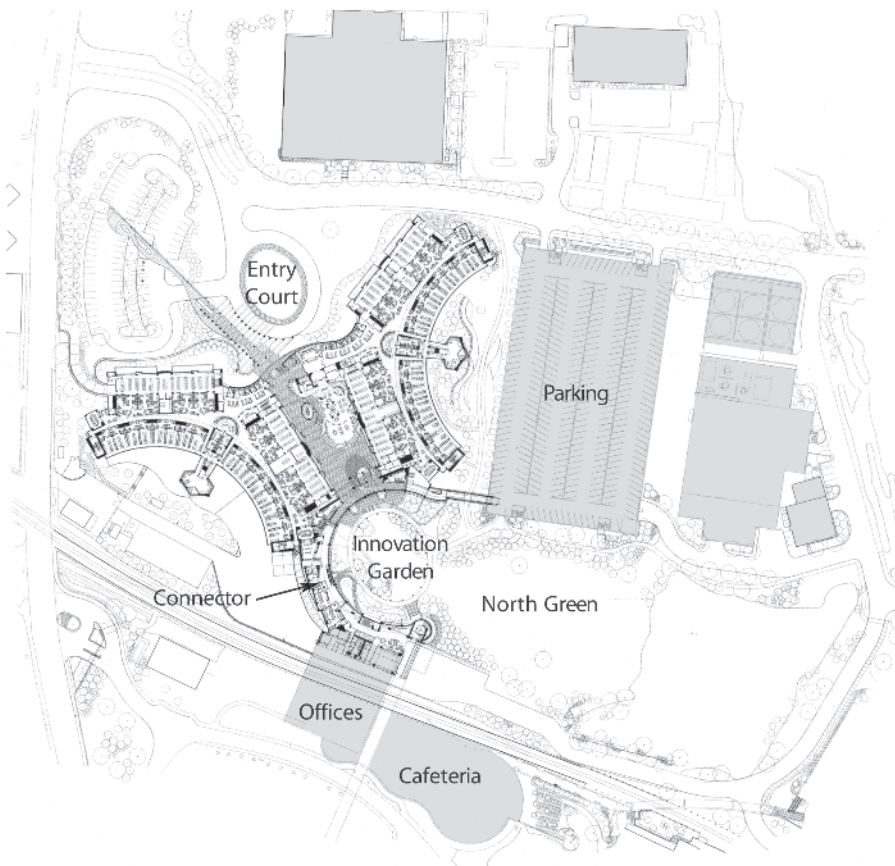


Figure 1-2: Architectural site plan for Pfizer's Drug Discovery Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut.

Courtesy CUH2A.

field are working diligently to elevate the role of facility manager to the level of a strategic business partner in the organizations where they are employed. When asked by IFMA members for coaching on how to operate more strategically, I frequently suggest they make the effort to better understand the human capital of their companies. A heightened awareness of human resources issues and initiatives will support their preparation for dialogues at the C-level of the enterprise.

In “Where Is Workplace Transformation Hiding?,” an article written by Christopher Budd for the International Development Research Council (which, in May 2002, became CoreNet Global,⁶ the corporate real estate association), he suggests that more companies ask the question, “What if the outcome of the facilities manager role was to construct physical environments as part of organizational development, supporting a profile of work patterns and attitudes that benefit the business?” Budd points out the strategic importance of the organization to ask facilities management professionals to take a more holistic view of the business, and become less involved in “the minutiae of counting and accounting for every wall and piece of furniture.”⁷

COLLABORATION BETWEEN ARCHITECTURAL AND DESIGN FIRMS

Sprint Nextel Operational Headquarters Project

It’s one thing for an architectural firm to be asked by a client to work with their preferred independent

consultant. It’s another thing for the client to have two or more architectural firms work collaboratively on a project when, in the past, these entities may have been competitors in the market.

Recall from earlier in this chapter that Beth Harmon-Vaughan emphasized her experience working on collaborative teams, including groups composed of experts who sometimes compete against each other when pursuing new business opportunities. Such was the case with her involvement on the Sprint Campus project in Overland Park, Kansas, from 1997 to 2001. The largest corporate office campus in the United States, the project involved 18 buildings (plus 3 service buildings), with a total of 4 million square feet of office space designed to support 14,500 headquarters employees (see Figures 1-3 and 1-4).

A strong driving force behind the project was the “One Sprint” philosophy, which shaped the organizational culture. The workplace being planned would need to attract the new generation of workers, who were, in the words of Faye Davis, Sprint Nextel’s vice president of Corporate Real Estate, “not really satisfied with a narrow frame of a work environment.”⁸

An important design criterion for the new space was to enhance “synergy among departments” dispersed among more than 60 locations throughout Kansas City. The company believed that could be accomplished by decreasing the geographic distance between work groups while increasing face-to-face interaction. Davis commented, “We wanted to construct an office environment that would foster teamwork and encourage interaction and cooperation at every level.”⁹



Figure 1-3: Aerial shot of the 4-million-square-foot Sprint Nextel Operational Headquarters in Overland Park, Kansas, the largest corporate office campus in the United States.

Courtesy Sprint Nextel.

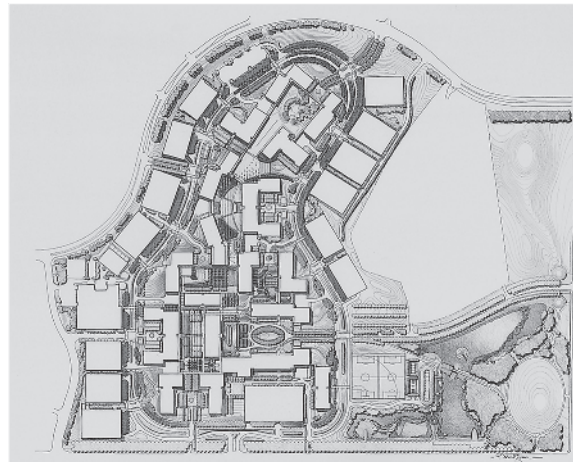


Figure 1-4: Drawing of the Sprint Campus, designed to accommodate 14,500 headquarters staff members.

Image courtesy Hillier Architecture.

Harmon-Vaughan explained that the Sprint leadership group focused on these same values—of teamwork, cooperation, and interaction—in selecting its architectural and design partners. To meet the aggressive project schedule for this high-profile endeavor of consolidating more than

60 office locations, which required highly specialized areas of expertise, Sprint created a team formed from design firms and construction companies that often competed against each other in the market. The sheer size of the project necessitated expertise many other workplace projects may

never require. Harmon-Vaughan was one of 125 team members who represented design, program management, construction, technology, and numerous support functions working on the Sprint headquarters project.

For starters, urban planning principles were employed to cluster amenities around the Sprint office complex, because walking across a 225-acre campus would be too long a trek in the winter. As well, specialized knowledge was needed to design traffic patterns to reduce congestion at peak times. Further, responding to employees' requests for a "dining experience" that was a destination rather than an extension of the campus required expertise not only in the design of food service facilities but also in analyzing the process flow of serving nearly 15,000 hungry mouths each workday.

In considering the diverse specializations required for such a complex project, the *co-opetition framework*—a concept that combines the advantages of both competition and cooperation—was determined to be the best solution to ensure project success for the Sprint enterprise.

Hillier Architecture, lead architect on the initiative, served as a positive role model for flexible collaboration, based on its own culture.¹⁰ The firm prides itself on "respecting and celebrating the extraordinary differences among the people and places on the planet." Bob Hillier, founder of the firm, walks the talk. His staff is organized in specialized studios of 25 to 30 team members each; and centers of excellence have emerged based on the development of employees' unique areas of expertise. The members of these studios connect with each other to collaborate

on large projects, then disband after they contribute their required skills. The Sprint Campus needed the same commitment to a cohesive yet fluid team approach—but on a much larger scale.

Ron Weston, AIA, principal of Hillier, shared his thoughts on developing a collaborative design process.

The owner, architect, and construction teams were colocated in an on-site office during the design and construction work. Design ideas were openly shared and discussed, with all participants buying in to solutions. The design team itself was composed of staff from five separate architecture and interior firms [Hillier Architecture, BDY Architects, Rafael Architects, BNIM Architects, and Gould Evans Goodman Architects]. Over time, the project design team developed its own focused culture, independent of the distinct design practices involved.

Design ideas were vetted as part of an open dialogue among architects, designers, owner executives, users, construction managers and other stakeholders. Traditionally, architects and designers retreat to their studios or drafting rooms to develop and document design solutions. On the Sprint Campus team, the architectural studio and design process was opened up to the owner and construction teams.

It is my belief that, on large-scale projects, the more time that the project team can spend together during the design process the better. The Sprint Campus design team spent long hours working, socializing, and re-creating as a group. Doing so helped build a unified project spirit and culture, which ultimately was reflected in the success of the campus.

To foster the building of relationships and trust critical to a group of this size, for the duration of the

five-year project, the client provided the 125-member team with 30,000 square feet of office space, on-site. Sprint trained these external members more intensely than some organizations train their own employees. Harmon-Vaughan and the others were provided with everything they needed to optimize both individual and group performance—computers, a telecommunications system, and other tools, as well as comprehensive training. The project leadership also orchestrated social events to enhance personal connections integral to these new business relationships, and as a forum for recognizing team achievements.

Solution Development: The Learning Process

The approach to developing the workplace solution for Sprint involved a thorough investigation of possibilities long before the groundbreaking in 1997. A diverse group of approximately two dozen individuals set out to research the architecture and design of other large corporate campuses around the country. They visited 15 sites, including those of Compaq, Ameritech, Microsoft, Sears, Sun Microsystems, and Monsanto.

It stands to reason that on a headquarters campus large enough to justify its own zip code (if incorporated, the campus would be the twenty-seventh largest town in Kansas), small errors made during the design process would be magnified, equating to extremely expensive mistakes. To reduce this risk, Sprint provided an exploratory environment for testing possible choices for workplace interiors. A 5,000-square-foot mock-up was erected, where the team could experiment with important elements

such as lighting, acoustics, and mobile furniture.

Other critical design decisions required consideration of Sprint's history of a high churn rate. Similarly, the workplace design had to accommodate nearly half of the company's employees moving annually from one location on campus to another and, in many cases, to a different building. To accomplish fluidity of the physical space, "home bases" (standardized 8 by 9.5 foot spaces, as shown in Figure 1-5) were laid out on a grid. The grid incorporated "department support spaces" that could be utilized as determined appropriate by the individual work group. For example, a support space could become a reference library for one department; six months later, it might morph into a training room for a new team occupying that departmental grid.

The emphasis on collaboration among and between departments was reflected in the design of the buildings' interiors, as follows:

- To optimize interaction and communication, the workplace strategy called for no building on campus to be more than five stories high; and wide staircases increased the opportunity of colleagues coming in contact with one another on a regular basis.
- Spaces referred to as "interaction nodes" and "solitude nooks" were scattered throughout the campus, and could be selected as an alternative to a given employee's home base, dependent on a desire for peer interaction or a need for privacy.
- Stand-alone break rooms and multipurpose rooms encouraged

Figure 1-5: With Sprint's high churn rate (nearly half of its employees move annually from one location on campus to another), the use of "home bases" (standardized 8 by 9.5 foot spaces) supports the company's requirements for fluidity in the workplace.

Courtesy Sprint.



social and business conversations (see Figures 1-6 and 1-7, and Figure 1 in the color insert).

- Meeting rooms were designed in variety of sizes to accommodate diverse team requirements.



Figure 1-6: Break rooms designed for the Sprint facility incorporate a diversity of configurations to accommodate different tasks occurring in these spaces throughout the day.

Image courtesy Hillier Architecture; photography © 2002 Sam Fentress.

In addition, to reduce potential frustration caused by working within a very fluid work environment, touchscreens with phones were installed in lobbies and other places throughout the campus as a means of expediting locating colleagues for planned meetings, as well as to communicate in the days before mobile phones became ubiquitous (see Figure 1-8).

Lessons from the Sprint Project

A number of lessons can be learned about fostering a design partnership from the experiences of those involved in the Sprint project. Here's what Ronald C. Weston has to say:

The success of the Sprint Campus project was grounded in a commitment by all stakeholders to form a 'true design partnership.' The owner, architect, and construction teams worked together from the outset as a unified group.

Partnering was made an integral part of the design and construction approach from



Figure 1-7: Multipurpose rooms on the campus serve as hubs where Sprint employees can interact.

Image courtesy Hillier Architecture; photography © 2002 Sam Fentress.

start to finish. The owner (Sprint) budgeted significant funds to support the partnering and collaborative efforts of the project team. Partnering events during the five-year process included a kickoff retreat and quarterly off-site retreats; celebrations and social gatherings in recognition of team milestones and accomplishments; and bonus incentives for teamwide performance.

A successful collaborative design process requires support and leadership from the owner. From beginning to end, Faye Davis, Sprint Nextel's vice president of Corporate Real Estate, invested time and money in support of project team partnering activities.

Evolution of the Sprint Workplace

At the time *Innovations in Office Design* was being written, the Sprint organization continued to evolve. The fluid workplace solution strategically designed for change supported the merger of Sprint and Nextel on August 12, 2005, which brought together

approximately 80,000 employees from two unique cultures. In April 2007, *Fortune Magazine* ranked Sprint Nextel number 53 on the Fortune 500 List, with more than \$43.5 billion in annual



Figure 1-8: Sprint building lobby.

Image courtesy Hillier Architecture; photography © 2002 Sam Fentress.

revenues in 2006 (an increase of 25.5 percent over 2005) and a total of 64,600 employees.¹¹

The physical workplace has gone through an evolution of its own, in response to the changing requirements of Sprint Nextel's workforce. Eileen Forbes, portfolio strategy manager of the company's Enterprise Real Estate group, shared the details of this evolution, which occurred in three broad areas.¹²

1. Workplace Evolution: Technology Offers More Choices for When, Where, and How Sprint Nextel Employees Work

- Team members come together in virtual meetings when face-to-face opportunities are not possible.
- Many business trips are now unnecessary.
- Employees who regularly split their work time between office and home now work from a growing number of "third places," such as airports, restaurants, doctors' waiting rooms, and others.

- Thin client-server applications, the prevalence of self-service solutions, and digital documentation methods give employees access to work resources from anywhere, without relying on paper files.

Workplace Implications: Technical and Interior Architecture More Generalized and Integrated, Rather Than Customized for Single-Purpose Work Practices

- Expanding capabilities of presence-based applications facilitate impromptu collaboration in the virtual and physical environment (geolocation indication, etc.).
- Very few reasons exist to maintain an individual, dedicated workspace for access to paper, voice, or data resources.
- There is an increased need for universal access to voice and data.

Figure 1-9 illustrates this first area of evolution.



Figure 1-9: In the evolving Sprint Nextel workplace, interior architecture has become more generalized, providing spaces that accommodate the diverse tasks taking place on campus.

Courtesy Sprint Nextel.

2. Workplace Evolution: Changing Office Utilization Patterns

- Eighty percent of employees come to the Overland Park campus (Sprint Nextel's operational headquarters) every day, but peak use of individual workspace is less than 50 percent.
- Conference rooms are heavily utilized, and end-user demand for spaces where groups can meet is growing.
- Formal meeting spaces often are used for team collaboration activity, sometimes exhausting network connectivity and access to power supply for laptops.
- There is increasing demand for dedicated team collaboration spaces that restrict access to the rest of the campus population and allow work in progress to remain in place for days, weeks or months at a time.
- Many workstations are used by more than one person.

Workplace Implications: Repurposing Space Allocation

- Rigorous reevaluation of the spaces dedicated to individuals, groups and entire campus community was undertaken.
- The size of individual space was reduced in order to devote more space to group and community collaboration areas.
- Wireless LAN coverage is provided across the entire campus.
- Informal collaboration spaces were created in the open plan environment, offering sufficient power supply for laptops and smart devices.
- Flexible, dedicated "war rooms," which become the main work locations and seat assignments for weeks during extended teaming sessions or critical operations, are established.

Figure 1-10 illustrates another aspect of the project's evolution.



Figure 1-10: Meeting employee demand for more team spaces at Sprint Nextel was achieved by reducing the typical footprint for individual spaces, and shifting square footage to areas designed for group activities.

Courtesy Sprint Nextel.

3. Workplace Evolution: Heightened Aesthetic Expectations

- The common belief is that interior satisfaction, workability, and usability are critical team performance factors.
- Hierarchical status as reflected in the seating provided is less tolerated.
- Desire for color and the “cool” factor.
- Expectation of brand evidence with high-tech look and feel.

Workplace Implications: Office Space Primarily Designed for Innovation, Learning, and Gathering

- Individual focused work is supported by a smaller footprint and in a variety of ways, maximizing choice and flexibility.
- Dynamic and flexible settings encourage creativity.
- Multipurpose group and community spaces contribute to team performance.

- Uninhibited access to windows and views to the outside improve worker satisfaction.
- Free address environment and fewer hard-wall offices support employee expectations for openness as well as the facilities’ need for flexibility.
- Rotating art collection, reflecting the brand and culture of the organization, improves workplace satisfaction.
- More cultural norms (cleanliness, accessibility, noise level, etc.) govern shared spaces.

Figure 1-11 illustrates the third aspect of the project’s design evolution.

Eileen Forbes and other members of Sprint Nextel’s Enterprise Real Estate team are, wisely, continuing to study new work practices and the implications they have on office design. As Sprint Nextel continues to evolve as an organization, the flexibility designed into the Overland Park campus project will enable future



Figure 1-11: Using fewer hard walls satisfies aesthetic expectations through openness, and enables greater flexibility to create collaborative areas within the evolving Sprint Nextel work environment.

Courtesy Sprint Nextel.

transformation of the physical and virtual workplace.

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

“Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up.”

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

The best team to contribute to an innovative workplace design is often composed of individuals representing diverse areas of expertise. Leveraging the unique skills of each team member can produce a richer output and, often, reduce the amount of time for the overall design development. Most architectural and design firms will not be selected to participate on a project the scope of that for Sprint’s headquarters. Nevertheless, the key components of an interdisciplinary approach can be applied successfully to simpler collaborative endeavors of shorter duration.

A major difference between pulling together a cross-functional team within your own organization and clients pooling the experts required for their projects often has to do with the availability of resources needed, as well as the importance of the project in comparison to other activities under way. In your own firm, you draw from available talent, perhaps negotiating their involvement on your assignment against another opportunity.

Put yourself in your client’s shoes. Consider that your architectural or design firm may be working on physical space projects for a dozen or more customers; but for the client, this is *the* project, the top priority—and, often, for that

individual, promises the visibility needed for career advancement. In hand-picking the resources to support the project, the client will seek out, for example, the highly specialized expert on change management who understands the impact of physical space on human behavior in the office environment.

More and more often, clients are not seeking a single firm to serve as a jack-of-all-trades. Not for *the* project, and certainly not for *this* project, which will require managers to move out of their private offices to function in a totally open workplace or with no dedicated workspace assignments. Remember, their careers may be at stake! Their employers are encouraging collaborative relationships both within the company and as part of the connections with their customers, day-to-day suppliers, and highly specialized external resources when necessary. The trend is moving away from the single-source, do-it-all provider in favor of the very fluid approach of multidisciplinary teams that form and disband as client requirements dictate. The onus is on individual team members, often from competing organizations, to learn to “play well together.”

SUMMARY

Critical Influence Design is an interdisciplinary approach involving diverse areas of expertise. As the core team is established, whether its members are chosen by the client organization, or a group of experts from several firms are strategically aligned according to the needs of prospective clients, it’s important to understand the key components of

this approach to ensure the highest level of success. A number of factors are essential to an effective interdisciplinary approach to workplace design, drawn from experience in collaborating with other professionals, both when aligned to proactively pursue new business and when assigned by a client as a member of a core team. They are:

- *Shared vision.* Each member of the core team should be committed to contribute his or her expertise in the best interest of the client's vision for the workplace transformation project.
- *Different terms of engagement.* The contract between the client and each core team member may vary greatly. Team members need to accept that each contract is highly dependent on: the expertise the specialist is hired to contribute, the phase or phases in the project during which those skills will be utilized, and the investment of time necessary to perform the activities required.
- *Role clarity.* Most likely, there will be circumstances where two or more core team members are capable of conducting a certain project activity. To eliminate the chance of conflict, roles should be defined early during team formation, and put in writing. Core team members need to be willing to hand off overlapping activities to an equally qualified associate, if appropriate, to achieve the client's vision.
- *Conceptual thinking.* Each core team member needs the ability to visualize in the abstract and to work in undefined, gray areas.
- *Strength and patience.* Each member of the core team must excel at articulating new ideas to others. He or she must also be willing to help others understand unfamiliar concepts.
- *Balance of approaches.* Each core team member must be willing to balance his or her own approach with that of others.
- *Ability to compromise.* Just as there is no one way to approach a client's project, there is no one right workplace solution. Each core team member must be prepared to make concessions.
- *Commitment to communication.* Lines of communication relate to the links between the client and individual core team members, as well as between core team professionals themselves. Ideally, the client and the entire core team agree on who receives which communications, whether there should be one point of contact between the client and the core team leader, or whether another structure should be used to share information throughout the project.
- *Touchpoints.* The client and the core team should schedule specific times to meet at critical junctures throughout the project to share updates on individual and shared activities.
- *Realistic timeframes.* Although individual core team members can estimate the amount of time needed for their own activities, they can create problems if they attempt to do this for others. Individuals should never commit to deadlines on behalf of others, especially for tasks

for which they have little or no experience.

- *Impact on others.* As core team members make recommendations regarding actions within their areas of expertise, they must be willing and able to recognize the implications of these suggestions on others' areas.
- *Shared spotlight.* Core team members should acknowledge that they are working with the best of the best, and be willing to share the spotlight. The focus should be on team performance, not on specific superstars.

In conclusion, leveraging the expertise of diverse disciplines for workplace transformation projects is of growing importance. The clients of architectural and design firms are being encouraged to establish collaborative relationships with their day-to-day service providers, as well as highly specialized external resources deployed on an as-needed basis. By keeping the goal in mind to better serve the client, professionals sharing their expertise among members of an interdisciplinary workplace team can realize time savings and, often, produce a much more innovative design solution.

NOTES

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⁷ Budd, Christopher, "Where Is Workplace Transformation Hiding?," *IDRC Communicator Online*, August 22, 2001. <http://www.idrc.org-communicator.online/co010822.htm> (accessed July 11, 2006).

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⁹ "Sprint's Massive Economies of Scale: 10 Percent-Plus Savings on \$700 Million Kansas City HQ," *Site Selection*, week of January 24, 2000. <http://www.siteselection.com/ssinsider/snapshot/sf000124.htm> (accessed December 5, 2006).

¹⁰ Hillier Architecture, www.hillier.com.

¹¹ *Fortune Magazine*, Vol. 155, No. 8, April 30, 2007, pp. F-3-4, F-70.

¹² Forbes, Eileen, Portfolio Strategy Manager, Enterprise Real Estate, Sprint Nextel, communications with the author, February 2007.

