

WorkPlace 20|20

Creating the Context For Organizational Success



Rapid drawings provide workplace visions for assessment.

Organizations, work practices and the workforce have changed dramatically in the past 25 years due to technological advances, demographic shifts, and continual demands for innovation in both the private and public sectors..

The U.S. General Services Administration aims to bring the federal workplace into better alignment with these shifts in organizational life. In doing so, GSA hopes to demonstrate how the workplace can be used effectively as a catalyst for positive organizational change and development

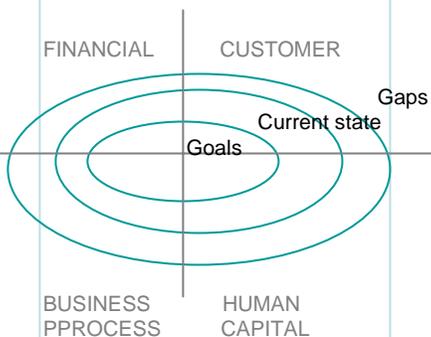
The WorkPlace 20|20 Approach

WorkPlace 20|20, established in 2002, is currently testing federal workplaces that have been developed by integrated teams of strategic consultants, organizational scientists, designers, and researchers. Although the clients and contexts vary, the teams work from a common approach. They derive design concepts and solutions from a grounded understanding of the organization, its goals, its current and desired work practices, and the current and emerging work styles of its employees.

Each of the current workplace projects is being tested pre and post on a wide array of outcomes developed around the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton.1996, Harvard Business School Press).

The WorkPlace 20|20 process is designed around three key activities:

- *Organizational Analysis.* Through a series of meetings and exercises, a team of consultants works with the organization to identify their business goals and needs, the constraints they currently face, and their vision for the future. This information is translated into workplace issues, themes and concepts.
- *Design Charette.* Findings from the organizational analysis are fed forward into a design charette. resulting in a design direction that addresses the client's business goals.
- *Workplace Evaluation.* The evaluation process, conducted both pre and post, includes core measures used on all projects as well as targeted measures used in all projects to assess how well the workplace has met the business goals of the client.



The Balanced Scorecard is used to Identify project goals, current state, and Gaps to be addressed in design.



Workshops identify workflows, key processes, and existing constraints.

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The Public Buildings Service in GSA's Regional Office is using the workplace as a catalyst for social change. The project, lead by the Public Buildings Service, was initially responding to GSA's Worldclass Workplace initiative to provide a better work environment for associates and to ultimately attract and retain new workers. However, as their commitment to the project developed, so did their desire to understand better how their own organization worked – particularly to improve internal working relationships in order to better serve their clients. Their goals for new workplace were:

- To improve cross-group communication and interaction.
- To use the workplace as a means of reducing stress.
- To use the workplace as a way to show that PBS is a thought leader in workplace design.

The workplace re-design included open spaces at central nodes for spontaneous interaction, more meeting spaces of a greater variety, a centrally located daylight café, a new daylight entryway, and a “de-stress space with pool table, ping pong, exercise room, and lounge furnishings. Research using social network analysis and a web based survey show high levels of cross group interaction, high levels of awareness, and improved sense of belonging and psychological well being. Stress studies, conducted by physicians and psychologists at the National Institutes of Health, are currently underway and are aimed at identifying the links between space and stress.

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U.S. Coast Guard V Division, Oakland, CA

Like all military workplaces, the Coast Guard experiences a brain drain every four years as the military personnel working at the site move on to new assignments. Reducing the negative consequences of turnover through workplace design became a central focus of the Coast Guard project. However, the project did not begin this way. It was through the organizational analysis, especially the identification of key work processes and relationships, that the client began to explore potential ways to improve informal and tacit opportunities for learning by new staff.

Learning specialists have long known that much of our working knowledge comes not from formal training, but from observing, hearing, and interacting with others in everyday work situations. Discussions lead to the following questions : how can the workplace support interaction and increase the visibility of activities that provide critical learning experiences? How can the workplace support the development of key relationships, especially mentoring opportunities? The workplace solutions implemented in the new space include:

- Increased visibility of activities across the groups through open sight lines and reduced barriers
- Creation of common touch points – break areas and casual meeting spaces – with good amenities (views, daylight, furnishings) to encourage use
- Use of open bullpen workspaces to aid on going interaction and communication
- More enclosed meeting rooms
- Display of group information to increase general awareness and to visually remind workers of their mission through a visual display of Coast Guard vessels

The effectiveness of the workplace in supporting tacit learning and communication will be tested using social network analysis, work process analysis, and a web based survey.

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