Pound-Wisdom: Using Minimal Investments to Maximum Workplace Results

It is typical during an economic downturn, to react to economic conditions rather than to respond. However now is the time to remember Ben Franklin's warning about being penny-wise and pound-foolish. This is exactly the time when being proactive gives companies an edge on their competition.

To that end, companies considering a change in their facilities can utilize any of a number of low cost workplace consulting services aimed at helping companies assess and make strategic use of their facilities. Benchmarking studies are one such service. A benchmarking study helps a company assess how its own facilities design, costs and strategies compare to other companies in its own industry and like size companies in other industries. Information derived from such studies provide Facilities Managers with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their space and provide helpful data to Senior Management to support desired facility change. For example, a benchmarking study our firm completed for a bank indicated that their churn costs were 35% higher than their competitors, providing information necessary to convince senior management to undertake a renovation of the facility.

Feasibility studies are also helpful when considering a facility renovation or relocation. In the formative stages of a project, it is necessary to examine the total scope to determine if the proposed project is feasible, and if it is, to determine in what manner to proceed. These kinds of studies are used by one of our clients on all projects of respectable size. The minimal investment in feasibility studies has helped this client successfully avoid implementing unnecessarily costly or overly complicated projects in favor of more efficient solutions.

Design Strategy Development is a valuable workplace consulting service for companies with a fairly large portfolio of locations and a desire to express their corporate branding in the workplace. Design professionals engage in collaboration with management to create top level concepts that are typically applied throughout a space or group of work environments. Such strategies help support business objectives and corporate culture, as well as reflecting corporate mission and image. They also help companies lower furniture and finish costs by allowing an organization to realize economies of scale.

Another simple but valuable service is the facility audit. A facility audit is a method for quickly scanning and analyzing an existing corporate facility or portfolio of facilities to ascertain how well they are performing along identified standards and how well they meet the needs of their occupants. Facility audits can occur at any time during the life span of the facility and provide a quick but professional opinion on various planning questions related to space utilization, furniture components, modularity, changing work styles, etc. Occasionally facility audits reveal inefficiencies and problems that can be solved with simple, low-cost reconfigurations, thus helping companies avoid more costly relocations or full-scale renovations. Often the perspective of an objective design professional with a breadth of experience with different facilities can bring to light problems and solutions that might not otherwise emerge.

Any or all of these services can be provided by an experienced workplace consulting group in an interior architectural design firm. Most organizations have senior staff with considerable experience and workplace consulting expertise to help guide facilities strategies, support senior management approval for facilities initiatives, and help companies develop thoughtful facilities solutions that provide high value rather than high cost.