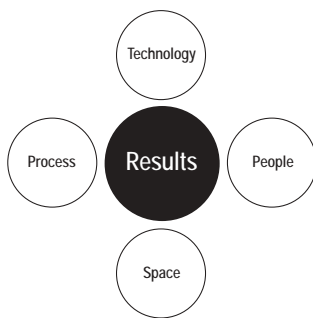


support diverse workstyles

There are sound business reasons for treating your work environment as a strategic asset... regarding it on the same plane with people, business processes, and technology.



As a strategic asset, the workplace must function as a high performance environment that seamlessly integrates architecture, furniture and technology through insightful planning.

The following discussion centers on Supporting Diverse Workstyles. It is one of six planning principles that enables you to plan and create a workplace that becomes a critical management tool, supporting the corporate strategies that have a direct impact on your business results.

Exploring the Issue of “Supporting Diverse Workstyles”

Supporting diverse work styles means exactly that: supporting what people do, however and wherever they do it. To understand how the workplace supports people at work, think about workstyles in three general categories:

1. Pre-defined tasks

Call center staffers, bank loan managers, airline reservation agents. Good examples of people who perform processing work, or more accurately, pre-defined tasks in a continuous flow with predictable outcomes.

Supporting their physical comfort is imperative if they're to work effectively and efficiently. And it's important to bring the tools, equipment, and information they use within easy reach.

2. Variety of tasks with moderate, expected interaction and interruption

Account managers at PR firms, project managers for development teams, or systems analysts are all examples of people who perform a variety of tasks.

Although their individual work is important, they often interact with colleagues and clients around shared collections of information. Paper-based information is stored in or near the workspace; or digital information is retrieved electronically. Frequent interruptions are expected so finding appropriate levels of privacy is key; they must get their own work done while remaining accessible to others.

3. Unpredictable, ongoing work with no obvious pattern

People involved in unpredictable work activities rely on experience and expertise to get the job done. Examples include product development engineers, software programmers, and ad agency principals. At times they need to concentrate and contemplate; at others, conversation and collaboration are more appropriate. Spaces for concentration and contemplation require visual and acoustical privacy, and easy access to technology. Spaces for conversation and collaboration need to support activity by two or more people: informal conversations in comfortable, informal settings encourage valuable interaction.

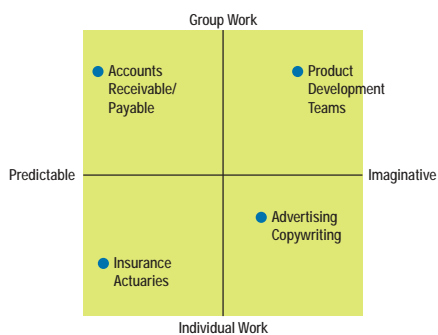
How to Think About It

In most successful enterprises, people are free to work in individual ways. However, considering the inherent differences of gender, generation, ethnicity, and culture, it's easy to see how designing a work environment that supports workstyle diversity becomes a challenging assignment.

As you scan your work environment, keep in mind that it should enable your people to effectively concentrate, collaborate, contemplate and converse — four activities that describe nearly all forms of work.

At the same time, observe whether your people feel free to personalize their environments, making the space their own. And determine if health and safety legislation is being observed.

What To Measure



List some of the types of work being performed by people in your organization, and discuss with some of them how the workplace can better support what they do and how they do it. For example:

- How does your work environment support collaborative activities — including team problem-solving? How can it be improved?
- What is the range of privacy needs required, and how many people require it?
- Is there mobile furniture available? Do your team members need to modify space arrangements to accommodate the work at hand and their working preferences? If so, how often? If not, why not?
- If a network connection is required to keep a meeting moving, how is that handled? How easy (or difficult) is it to gain access to network connections in your team spaces?
- Are there adequate numbers of marker boards or electronic display devices to help make thinking visible and create information persistence for team members and other colleagues? What recommendations do your team members make?

How To Experiment with Change

- Work with your local Steelcase dealer on an evaluation program for a small number of furniture items. Install the products for a period of time and have people provide feedback on how the items helped support – or detracted from their individual workstyles:
 - ergonomic seating: a vital aspect of physical comfort that supports a healthy posture
 - adjustable work surfaces, monitor platforms, articulating keyboard/mouse pad shelves: to suit individual comfort needs and preferences
 - ambient and task lighting: to help reduce eyestrain and overall fatigue, boosting productivity and performance
 - guest seating: to encourage impromptu interactions with colleagues
- Work with one or two small groups that work together in designated team spaces. Help them develop a few basic “behavioral protocols” (rules, guidelines, standards) that directly support their individual and group workstyles. Evaluate their success after 30 days.
- Identify a group that relies heavily on frequently used paper-based materials. Then work with your Steelcase dealer to experiment with centralized files or bins to accommodate large collections of information within or near the group's space.

Evaluate the Investment

Remember, one of the six planning principles of a high performance work environment is the ability to support the diverse workstyles of people throughout your organization.

If you're interested in using this or any of the other building blocks to help define or redesign your work environment – by strategically integrating the architecture, furniture, and technology used by your people – let us help.

For more in-depth information on supporting diverse workstyles, see the Steelcase knowledge papers at www.steelcase.com; Tools and Insights.

- *Musculoskeletal Disorders: A Framework for Understanding*
- *Creating Order Out of Chaos: Strategies for Organizing Your Work (S11278)*
- *Seeing the Difference – The Importance of Quality Lighting in the Workplace (S11163)*
- *Face to Face, Screen to Screen, Collaboration in the New Workplace (S11457)*