

from that to which we have become accustomed in North America—and everywhere else.

Conventional North American offices have always been used to increase business efficiency. There has been constant pressure from occupiers—especially in recent years from newly professionalized and frequently outsourced facilities managers—to drive down occupancy costs by reducing the amount of space allocated to each office worker. Workplace standards have been ruthlessly rationalized and simplified. Space planners are always attempting to tackle the intractable problems of paper handling. However, until very recently, there has been much less interest in the potentially much more rewarding but much more difficult challenge of managing the use of space *through time* more efficiently. Today both home working and workplace sharing are becoming much more attractive because of the technically exciting and mobility-encouraging potential of wireless telephony.

However, the bitter experience of some unsuccessful experiments to intensify space use is teaching occupiers that cost cutting is not enough. Too urgent an emphasis on saving money, by driving space use harder and harder, has always been the curse of conventional office planning and paradoxically runs counter to innovation because it can stir up so much end-user reaction.

Far more cogent as an agent of change is the use of innovative design to add value to businesses by stimulating more effective ways of working. Effectiveness goes well beyond cost-cutting efficiency. The economic driver for effectiveness is not just to save money but to add value to businesses by using space to create the potential for open-ended improvement in the quality of work done. Architectural devices, such as internal streets and carefully designed and located social spaces, can be powerful ways of enhancing serendipity and maximizing the potential for interaction among the diverse departments of large organizations. Nonhierarchical, interconnecting, transparent, open plan spaces can be used to encourage communication among disciplines, levels, and departments in businesses that must bring together creative knowledge workers from many disciplines. Bright colors, stimulating environments, rich amenities, and diverse settings can be used to attract and retain staff in the highly competitive commercial environment created by very low levels of unemployment. Imaginatively designed, the working environment can provide an infrastructure that stimulates creative people to even greater efforts.

The third economic driver for change in office design is the use of physical environment to express corporate intentions and business strategy in ways that are more powerful and more sustainable than any other medium of communication. Many businesses are learning to use design to express and promulgate the social values that underpin the empowerment of staff, the encouragement of creativity and innovation, and the generation and sharing of knowledge. Office space can be designed in ways that cry out loud that interaction is more attractive than isolation, that openness and transparency are preferable to separation and opacity, openness to enclosure, networks to hierarchy, that negotiation is more effective than command and control.

THE NEW IMPORTANCE OF TIME

Perhaps the most far-reaching consequence of change is that powerful, ubiquitous, reliable information technology is leading to the development of new processes and new ways of working. These in turn have made it obvious that new conventions in the use of time are even more inevitable than new conventions in the design of office space.

Things that have been taken for granted for a hundred years—such as the eight-hour working day and the five-day working week, such as the need for a vast infrastructure of roads and railways designed to get hundreds of thousands of commuters to their desks every day at the stroke of nine—are hangovers from our industrial past. Why was synchrony so important? Where did the idea of mass commuting come from? Both came from the time when the only way to get work done was to assemble workers all together in one place, at their lathes, or their spinning jennies, or their typewriters, so that when the bell rang, and the power surged, everybody would begin to work all at once, under close supervision, in complete unison. Needless to say, the technological necessity for such feats of synchrony no longer exists. In the age of the Internet, most of us are free to work not just whenever but wherever we like.

This is not to say that a civilized society does not need conventions in the use of time and space to keep things in place, to keep us all sane. The simple reality is that the temporal and spatial conventions that we have inher-