

measures using the Total Quality Metrics (TQM) data gathered by Herman Miller for its manufacturing plant. The study had hypothesized that the new green design would improve overall productivity and success because of the enhanced interior environmental quality. Unfortunately, the data analysis showed only modest improvements of less than 2 percent across all TQM measures. However, when data were analyzed relative to the baseline, it was obvious that there was actually little room for improvement. The organization was already operating at such a high level of effectiveness (98.7 percent on-time delivery) that big improvements were not possible. This suggests that other measures of organizational success should have been used instead.

INTEGRATING RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO THE ORGANIZATION

The point of doing research is to improve design by learning more about the effects of the designed environment: what works, what doesn't, and why in a particular context?

The frenetic pace of design work today doesn't often leave time for this kind of reflection, but efforts should be made. When research is done, it often is relayed only to the client and not to the rest of the firm. Internal lectures, seminars, and discussion groups can be used effectively to internalize the lessons learned so that future designs can build upon the successes and avoid the failures of past design projects. Many design firms have recently implemented internal learning components, primarily for continuing education purposes but also for generating an internal design knowledge base. These structures should be exploited and expanded to include Internet-based, enterprise-wide databases and examples. In addition to serving as an internal learning mechanism, such tools would also be useful in marketing and proposal development. Showing data along with photos of spaces in use (rather than the typical design photo devoid of people) would show a knowledge and concern out of the ordinary and would give added value to the firm's talk about fulfilling the goals and needs of clients.

Notes

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Suggested Further Reading

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