

workplace options available, as well as the benefits and the potential modifications of the workspace, technology, and work styles that may result from changes in the work environment. These solutions include a great variety of workplace scenarios such as open work areas, teaming environments, shared work areas, teleworkers, satellite offices, and activity-based worksettings. The designer may recommend a number of different solutions, including a more “traditional” approach based on the goals and requirements of each individual client.

The designer’s goal is to create a successful work environment that allows the client to use its space resources more effectively and efficiently, while meeting corporate business objectives. Designers can begin to identify the appropriate officing environment for a given client with the following steps:

- *Assess the particular needs of each group.*
- *Document how the current workplace is actually used, using a variety of methodologies (e.g., bedchecks or in-out studies).*
- *Analyze future trends and effects of changes in the uses of technology.*
- *Consider tools for success in implementation.*
- *Identify measurements for success.*
- *Make recommendations for human resources and organizational development responses to the change.*
- *Assess cost factors inherent in a successful transition.*

Rob Davis, an interior designer and workplace consultant with Griswold, Heckel & Associates Inc. (GHK), describes the typical activities that a workplace consultant performs. “Most of the activities of workplace consulting are atypical. The services need to be tailored to the client organization and its circumstances. But in general, the typical activities include: surveys of a variety of sorts, interviews, review of results of previous studies, projections (financial, business, human resources), understanding the business at hand (including linkages between the business and office needs), analysis, and recommendations.”

Rob’s co-worker, Robert Heizler, is an architect as well as a NCIDQ certified designer, and has developed an expertise in innovative officing. He defines

innovative officing as “responding to the minutia in how people work as well as answering what the client has requested. In performing innovative office consulting, we take the extra time and effort to truly dive in and discover how people work. It takes significant time and effort to get into this. It is not ‘designing by rote.’ It is the right response that all too often gets rubber-stamped into a design solution. It is not the mundane cookie-cutter approach. Innovative office consulting is customized to each individual client’s needs.”

Robert Wright, national director of design and construction for Ernst & Young (E&Y), was one of the leading pioneers developing E&Y’s Workplace for the Future. Wright distinguishes workplace consultation as the “strategic master planning for real estate needs for the office. Innovative officing considers all aspects of the interior workspace: where we should work, where we operate, where people are, where clients are, where business is accomplished.”

Wright describes three typical activities or responsibilities that a workplace consultant would lead. “First, they would understand our culture so that they could provide solutions appropriate to our business. Second, they would develop solutions to meet the functional needs of the office. Third, they would introduce, educate, and sell alternative workplace settings.”

Heizler emphatically agrees that the role of the workplace consultant is to educate and to be educated. This education takes many forms and is manifested in various ways during the progress of the innovative officing exploration. He makes it clear that: “It is vitally important to keep up with current business trends and ideologies. A workplace consultant must know and communicate what is going on in the workplace and in the interior design profession. He or she must be an avid publications reader, consuming *Fast Company*, *Wired*, and *Business Week* to keep fingers on the pulse of the real world with its real-world issues.”

Other traits that Heizler finds important include “the passion to make every opportunity be an innovative officing consideration. It is simply the practice of good design. Don’t box yourself in. People who excel in innovative officing think outside of the box. Additionally, the consultant should be focused and skilled at articulating to the client the potential benefits so that the client can think out of the box also. A workplace consultant cannot work independently. He or she must be able and excited about interacting.”

Wright describes desirable personal traits he looks for in his workplace consultants: professional, understanding, knowledgeable, good communicator