

exported into an Excel spreadsheet and combined with our cost of service data taken from our company's accounting system to determine both the costs of our services for each of our customers, as well as the per square foot information we use for performance measures and benchmarks.”

The interior designer, as benchmarking consultant, gathers and documents the data, and works with the client to set a baseline, develop an action plan, and determine the schedule for monitoring progress against the baseline. This effort can provide answers to key questions, including:

- *How well the space compares with others*
- *Suggestions for changes that would improve the bottom line or improve performance, and justify the expenses of the changes*
- *How well positioned the facilities are to accommodate future developments in technology, workstyles, and evolving needs*

Roth reports on how his company as a public utility uses its benchmarking results. “We trend and benchmark a series of costs, by service. We then identify where our cost improvement efforts are needed and tie those efforts back to our business plan for the coming year. Our customers, our management, and each of our functional groups are then presented with information that clearly identifies the cost of our services, how we compare to others, and where we intend to focus our cost improvement initiatives.”

James Loesch is chief facilities engineer for an applied physics laboratory. His organization uses its facilities benchmarking effort to determine “a sense of where his organization is in general. Where is our biggest deviation in a negative area? Are we in the pack? If yes, then I may look for areas in which to improve. If we really stand out as odd in one area, then it may be worth some time and effort to drill down.” (See Figure 19-6.) What Loesch finds especially helpful is to identify several benchmark partners to compare “apples to apples,” compare raw data, and share. He advises that it often takes a personal relationship with other organizations to accomplish such an intimate activity, especially if salary data are involved.

Rob Davis is an interior designer who is experienced in facilities benchmarking. He appreciates the opportunity to measure how design actually shapes users' reactions and productivity. He says, “I came to be interested in

FIGURE 19-6A
Client Benchmarking Study.

Square footage comparisons with same class and best in class companies.

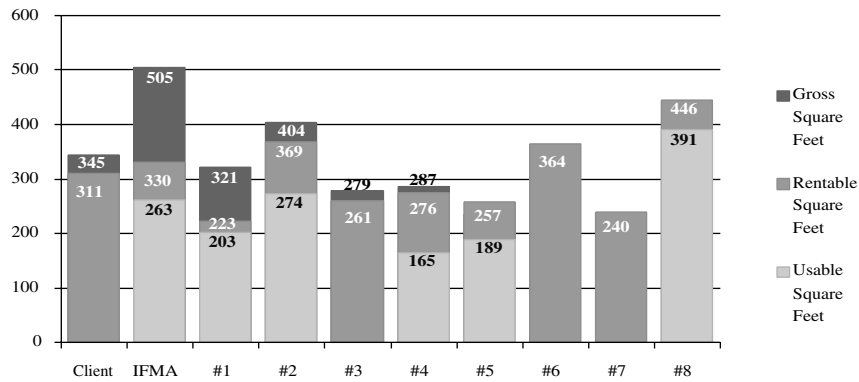
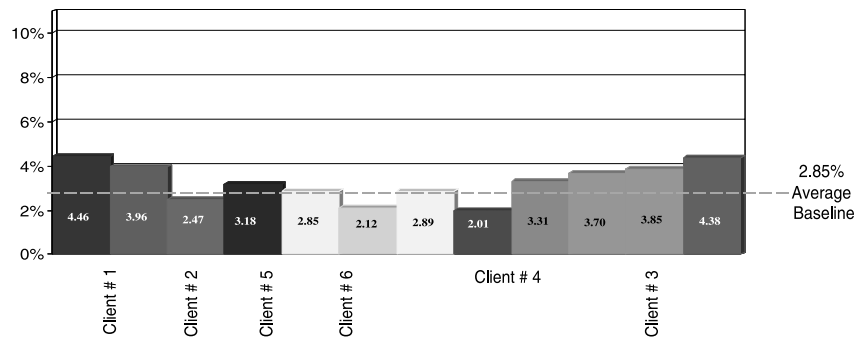


FIGURE 19-6B
Client Conference Room Survey Comparative Analysis.

Ratio of conference room usable square footage to workplace usable square footage.



the qualitative aspects of interior design after years of practice. My association with a variety of Fortune 500 companies, and understanding a bit about the internal considerations, politics, and funding issues, intrigued me. In fact, I was always interested in knowing about client businesses. Over time I became interested in being able to help *quantify* the relationship, if any, between design considerations and potential effects on productivity, satisfaction, well-being, etc. Dieter Rams and Stephen Bayley both make the case for ‘design’ being more than shape or appearance, as does the German philosopher Max Bense in his writings on semiotics.”

Davis has worked with a variety of customers, assisting them in obtaining data that could be benchmarked and analyzed to improve performance of the company’s facilities and assets. (See Figures 19-7 and 19-8.) He describes the successful benchmarking consultant as a dedicated investigator. He finds that “the most important trait for doing this type of work is curiosity about how things work, followed by an interest in problem solving, followed by the ability to grasp a situation and to devise a means of investigating it in a fairly rigorous and exhaustive manner. This must be combined with the ability to