design a given space. These studies are usually carried out with the client's facilities management team, the interior design consulting team, and frequently with the input of business or management consultants who report on improving business processes and operational criteria. Many large corporate clients are amending their design services criteria to exclude those design firms that cannot offer this type of consulting service.

The fees for these projects are usually on a fixed-fee or not-to-exceed basis.

WHO IS INVOLVED WITH THE PROCESS?

All three types of predesign services are influenced by the tangible project parameters of schedule and budget, with key issues such as "We will pay double rent if we are not relocated by _____." "There can be no down-time for our operation." These can be understood and planned for by the project team.

Less tangible, yet critical to success, is the definition and understanding of what the true goals and objectives of the project are, and—importantly—what the measures of success are for the project in the eyes of the board and/or the employees. The design professional needs to understand how the client views the situation—the history, the boardroom politics, the perception of themselves in their marketplace, and the degree of potential change to be planned for from the outset.

The predesign phase reports and recommendations must come to clear and impartial conclusions to be credible with the direct client and senior management, and to be responsive to the needs of the business. The methodology for gathering this information, the analysis, and presentation of recommendations is extremely important to establish early on the points of consensus on what the project is about. Quite a tall order for an outsider to come in to a client organization and accomplish. But it is exactly the reason why the design professional can see, without bias, the issues surrounding the client's existing situation and/or proposed project. Because we are not from "in-house," our opinions are often more readily accepted as being impartial and therefore more credible.

ESTABLISHING A PROJECT STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

In the second and third types of predesign services the interior designer forms part of a wider strategy development team. Ideally this should consist of the client's corporate real estate team, facilities management, information technology, human resources, and the interior designer, with input from engineers, a real estate professional, and other consultants on an as-needed basis. The strategy development process involves the following:

- *Hold strategic planning sessions with the business heads.*

- *Determine the business objectives and change/flexibility targets.*

- *Ask "Where are the opportunities for change in the corporate culture or process?"*

- *Keep space programming macro; detail is not required at this stage— think big picture.*

- *Question the real need for physical proximity between people/ departments/business units.*

- *Establish the information technology and services infrastructure requirements at the earliest opportunity.*

- *Establish the level of amenities to be provided.*

- *Establish existing conditions if appropriate.*

- *Establish the real drivers behind the project.*

Even if the client has chosen to outsource the management of the project to a client representative or project management consultant, it is critical that a strategy development team be set up in this manner. Building credibility with the direct client and senior management is key to a successful project.

The finalized strategic program or real estate strategy report is signed off by the client and the information forms the yardstick to highlight the challenges of the project and sets out the criteria to measure the suitability of various occupancy scenarios and locations that may be considered.