
Measuring Quality of Outcome—The Destination

The outcome is the completion of the designed environment, and it can be seen from both a *physical* and a *behavioral* perspective. Naturally, an interior design project will change the physical space in functional and environmental terms. And such physical changes can profoundly influence the overall behavior of the organization and its culture, image, and effectiveness. While interior designers can make a clear and tangible impact on the physical outcome, the behavioral outcomes are, arguably, more critical to the client organization.

PHYSICAL OUTCOME

The physical elements of a space are perhaps the most beloved by interior designers because they are the elements designers can influence directly. Any interior design project includes a planning or programming phase in which the client's specific requirements are captured, quantified, and approved. The requirements may include headcount projections, cost information, spatial layout information, and equipment information.

BEHAVIORAL OUTCOME

Interior designers do not simply design a physical environment in a vacuum; they create a space within the context of the client and its business and behavioral objectives. Environments designed to reinforce business objectives are a strategic means of facilitating the achievement of business objectives. Whether the client aims to achieve worker collaboration or improve recruitment or raise employee satisfaction, the designed space plays a role—either as reinforcement or as detriment.

The System in Practice

Even when using a client-defined approach to measurement, in which the client defines “quality,” the interior designer bears the responsibility of tracking, measuring, and acting on results. Implementing a measurement system may be a challenge for interior designers who have never used a formal evaluation method, yet the process is not difficult.

- **Expectations.** *Before the project begins, members of the client team meet to identify their expectations.*
- **Qualifications.** *During the project and often at completion of each project phase, the design team uses the expectations document (de-*

scribed above) to remain focused on meeting the client's explicit goals and objectives. The interior designer and client work together to make any mid-course corrections that may be necessary.

- *Evaluation. At the close of the project, members of the client team share their perceptions to evaluate how well their expectations were met.*
- *Action. After evaluation is complete, the interior designer disseminates the results of the client's assessment among design team members and prepares a plan for acting on the feedback.*

The measurement system outlined here is a framework, and interior designers or design groups will need to customize it to align with their own business objectives. No matter how the process is customized, designers must use the ultimate process with the following basic guidelines in mind:

- *Formalize the process consistently within the organization.*
- *Integrate measurement with the project process.*
- *Administer by a disinterested and unbiased party; project owners must not measure their own work.*
- *Communicate so all members of the firm can embrace and easily understand the process.*
- *Use the process to enrich the entire organization, not just a few individuals or even individual project teams; share knowledge gained from the process throughout the organization so all can learn from each project.*

The benefits of the process/outcome measurement system are at least threefold.

1. The mere fact that a designer measures satisfaction, as well as the scientific means the designer uses, will raise the client's perception of the designer's value. That is, the fact that a designer asks for feedback may be even more important than the suggestions the client makes. Moreover, any ongoing quality process is likely to improve ongoing client relationships.