Evaluating the Success of Design …
Why Measure?

Workplace Design Can Influence Employee Behavior and Performance

Workplace design does not determine how people will behave, but it does influence how people behave, along with other factors such as the culture of the organization, technology tools and business processes. For instance, the goal of design might be to make employees collaborate more effectively, address employee attraction or retention issues, or to encourage creativity. **Thus, designers have long attempted to create office work settings that positively influence these desired work behaviors and employee performance.**

The Challenge of Measuring Workplace Design

While designers instinctively know if a project was successful – or not – there is rarely any formal process in place to objectively measure success. Thus the opportunity to identify areas for improvement in current and future workplaces is lost.

Workplace Assessment Increases the Success of Designed Work Environments

▸ **Think of Workplace Assessment as a form of risk management.** Ongoing assessment reduces the chance of problems with the workplace design and thus protects your organization's financial investment in the workplace.

▸ **Workplace Assessment permits you to optimize the design of space.** The information can inform corporate workspace standards by helping you understand the needs of specific job types or work units.

▸ **Retain and improve design ideas that work, and abandon ideas that fail.** Use what you learn to improve future workspaces.
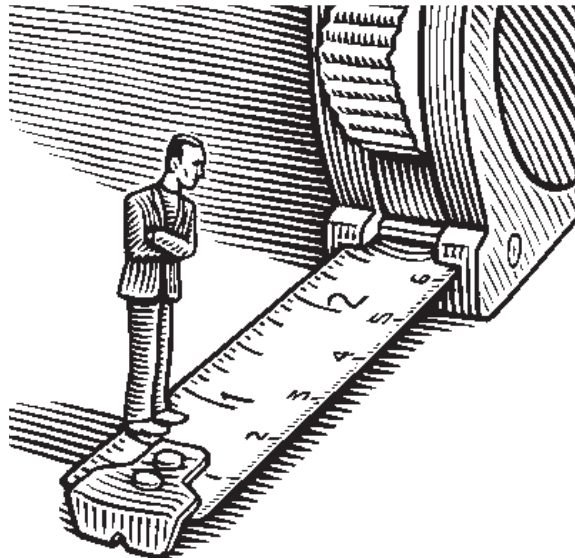
Steps to Successful Assessment

To successfully measure the success of a workplace, you need to create a set of relevant outcome measures and put in place an ongoing process for measurement.

▸ **Start by creating a "workplace balanced scoreboard" of metrics.** These metrics should be relevant to the intentions of the design and the organization's business objectives.

Include measures that reflect financial, behavioral, work process, health or other outcomes pertinent to the business.

▸ **"Less is more."** Select the fewest, highest impact measures possible. Do not collect data unless you know in advance exactly how you plan to use it. Double check to make sure it relates to your Workplace Balanced Scoreboard.

▸ **Establish Baseline Measures.** Baseline measures establish a reference point against which you can assess the success of changes made to the workplace over time.

• **Use a survey to measure employees' perceptions of behaviors** related to project goals, such as comfort, degree of collaboration, quality of group decision-making, etc.

• **Collect objective metrics from other sources**, such as HR databases for attraction and retention rates, health claims rates and costs, or other metrics that are related to financial outcomes.

▸ **Collect data on an ongoing basis (quarterly or semi-annually).** This will provide an ongoing stream of objective information that can keep the workplace design aligned with employee needs and business goals.

▸ **Keep the reports simple.** This will enable everyone to understand the results and thus be able to act on them.

▸ **Remember to manage the "human side" of the project.** A technically successful assessment program can still fail if people don't buy in to the effort. Thus to assure the support and engagement of employees within the organization, ensure that everyone understands the purpose, approach and benefits of the program.

Knoll research initiatives focus on links between workspace design and human behavior, health and performance, and the quality of the users' experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments.

To learn more about this topic or other research resources Knoll can provide, go to www.knoll.com/research

Knoll

Illustration by Gregory Nemec