
James Calder

PRINCIPAL
CALDER CONSULTANTS

When it comes to workspace, there is no 'I' in 'team'.

There is an old saying in team sports that there is no 'I' in 'team' (the joke goes that there is in 'win' though, but I digress). Much of the discussion around the workplace has focused on the individual, whereas it is teams that drive organisational performance. Sure individuals are important in idea generation, creative leaps and so on, but it is the collaborative work by highly focused and hard working teams, led by great managers and team leaders, that is the engine of organisational success. This misplaced focus continues to distract researchers and designers as we now move to activity based working environments, where individuals chose where, when and how they do their

work, but teams find it difficult to work together. Research at Calder Consultants has focused on collaborative teamwork, with the National Australia Bank's new 60,000m² Melbourne facility (due for completion mid 2013) putting our latest ideas and concepts into practice.

Workspace, in evolutionary terms, is a recent invention, and we are only beginning to understand its potential in the post-industrial age. Mobile information technology and the internet have changed everything. The old workspace models are beginning to cause harm to organisations as the next generation comes to work with very different behaviours. But it is still important for us to not be distracted

by the individual, but to focus on the real driver of performance – teams. Elton Mayo, in his famous Hawthorne experiments in the 1930s, discovered that the key driver of productivity was the social network and the bonds between individual workers.

Most studies on the work environment focus on the individual, measuring noise and ability to concentrate, and many researchers are still focussing on the advantages, or otherwise, of offices or open plan. This is mostly irrelevant. It can be argued the most important role of the workspace is to provide space for collaboration and support teams to work in 'real time' together. Concentrated work can easily be done by accessing files from 'the cloud' using 'follow me' technology such as an iPad, and moving to a space that is ideal at a time that is convenient. It could be a quiet room in the office, a booth in a café, or the study at home.

The new workers do not have the opportunities to collaborate that we had a decade ago. Many can work in an office producing their work and communicate solely by email. We need to change the balance of space to drive up and force much more face-to-face time between our people, or we will grow a disengaged generation that will begin to threaten the future viability of many organisations, as creativity reduces and the shared sense of purpose is lost. We are missing out on business opportunities through outdated silo structures and building

forms that break up people who should be working together.

Many organisations are attempting to break their old structures down. They seek to create new business opportunities as they move towards customer centric models of operating, and create shared platforms across previously disparate customer databases. Their aim is unlocking overlooked business value or creating new market segments, and being early starters in these new markets to gain market share. The physical space (perhaps surprisingly to business leaders, but not designers) has a significant role to play in supporting and embedding this change. A financial services organisation in London recently cut a large hole in their floor and inserted a stair over six floors. The cost of that lost space was around \$5,000 per person per annum, but the percentage of the profit attributed by management last year was 20%, due to the new business opportunities created through cross-business unit initiatives. In many sectors, the future profits will come from new initiatives generated between business units; not within the current businesses. Increasing face-to-face collaboration is critical to forcing our people to work together. Studies show that just putting people in open plan doesn't work. We need a new mix of spaces with an integrated alignment with technology and building forms that have high levels of visual connection.

Much of the important work is undertaken by teams that are constantly growing, reducing and reforming. These teams need their own sub-branding and local collaboration spaces, with a mix of owned and shared work settings. Sequential processes need to become parallel processes to increase the speed to market and reduce wasted effort. It should be possible to walk around the space and see what is actually going on, so we can share ideas and leaders can see what is happening in 'real time'.

Knowledge creation starts with socialisation. The 'water cooler' moments are too important to leave to chance, and organisations need to begin engineering space the same way they are investing millions in client databases and technology platforms that work across the whole organisation. The mobility we now have, with mobile phones and internet access pretty much anywhere we are, means people need a good reason to come to the office. Leaders need to create that space and be actively seen in it to manage effectively.

There are three key aspects that stand out as making the next generation workspace important to business:

Firstly, there is the business commitment to engage with their people, the community and customers in an authentic way. We are seeing new, more open buildings that sit above a public concourse, where the tenant is, in effect, paying rent to create public space, where their

volunteer program is provided with space to operate, and auditoriums are designed to be used by the business and the community. The passing foot traffic is encouraged to come in, which is at odds with the conventional glass box building with restrictive perimeter security thinking. The important innovation here is that the community space will be designed into the base building.

Secondly, with the number of people owning a desk reducing, perhaps to around 25% for many organisations, there is a considerable percentage of space allocated to a diverse range of worksettings. These worksettings, combined with new building services that increase air quality, create natural environmental variations and the opportunity to select various micro-climates, encourage and support people moving around the building to facilitate knowledge exchange, chance encounters, social opportunities and moments of serendipity. Creating 'micro-climates' that encourage people to move around, much like a park setting, is enormously valuable in driving cross-business transformation and evolution. There is also a sustainability benefit where it is desirable to challenge the normal '22 °C +/- 2 °C' temperature range across the entire building, which uses large amounts of energy to achieve. Increasing the temperature range and recognising that some parts of the building (a small percentage) will be unusable for brief portions of the day, dramatically reduces the

energy costs, supports mobility and choice, and creates a more natural 'seasonal' environment for the human organism.

Lastly, the move from Industrial Age to Information Age work and lifestyles is speeding up. For the early adopters, the ability to manage the business in 'real time' for the first time is a common comment from business leaders. The new buildings designed around flexible project team space, where projects are easily formed and disbanded, where information is placed in the hubs of these teams for easy communication, and it is possible to walk around the building in minutes and have a far greater understanding of what people are actually doing than ever before.

We have known for many years that staff performance is a factor of motivation and ability, with many organisations undertaking regular 'engagement scores', but it is now time to add environment to the equation. This ability to integrate the real estate, technology and human resource disciplines in a way that creates invigorating places for our people to come to, will create significant business value, and is starting to look more like a serious management discipline that is an essential component of creating successful businesses.