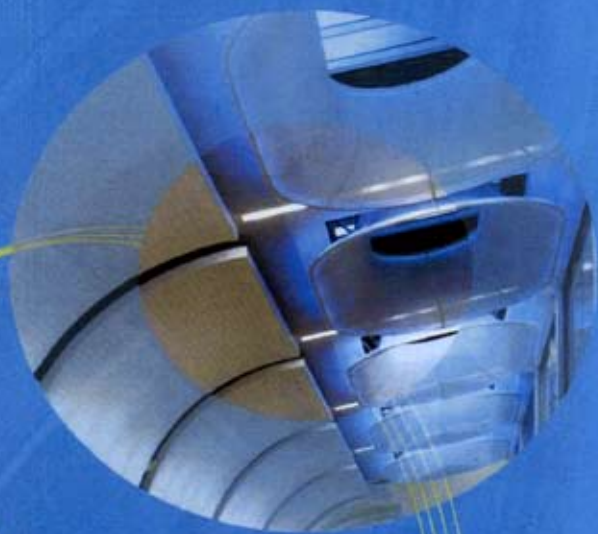


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THE NEW LOOK OF FM AND BUILDING MAINTENANCE

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Many Happy Returns!



Companies need to recognise the importance of the working environment on employee performance says Jessica Marshall-Davies of Triumph Business Systems.

Justifying the ways in which money is spent is one of the great management obsessions of our times. Demonstrating return on investment (ROI) is perhaps no more apparent than in the market for goods for the workplace. This is in part down to a quest for best value triggered by the recent recession but also due to a greater awareness amongst executives that the cost of purchasing an asset can be negligible compared to the costs of owning it.

To some extent this has been driven by the changing role of the facilities manager. Facilities managers have long sought to build a business case for the products they buy. They have had to do this because they are often merely the conduit between the

Continued >>>

vendor of a product and the unseen person who actually makes the decision – often the finance director. They are also risk averse. Most experienced facilities managers understand that they are most likely to come to the attention of their superiors when things go wrong rather than when they go right, so they will welcome a pitch by any supplier which helps them to look good and avoid problems.

They have been helped in this endeavour by a great amount of research into what factors are important to build a business case and the development of information systems such as computer aided facilities management (CAFM) software which can rapidly put a figure on all aspects of the workplace.

This means that for suppliers of workplace products an understanding of how to make a business case can be an incredibly powerful sales tool. Not only will the ability to sell in this way help to differentiate the supplier from others in a crowded and commoditised marketplace, it encourages customer loyalty and word of mouth recommendation and, perhaps most importantly, means the dealer can offer an added value service that makes price less important and so increases margins. In the meantime, the client can enjoy often substantial savings. Everyone's a winner.

This is nothing new, of course. We've always understood the principle that 'you get what you pay for' and the idea of the 'false economy' has long encouraged manufacturers to see quality and durability as more important purchasing factors than mere price.

Now however we know how to quantify total life cycle costs and even to assess the ways in which workplace design factors can increase productivity, retain and attract staff, convey corporate identity to customers and generally help the business to meet its objectives. Any supplier that can play on such ideas will be in a very strong position to win contracts for their goods and services.

The possible savings of taking such an approach can be substantial. Even in the area of office filing the amount of money that differentiates a decision between two possible options can be heart stopping. And the good news for the dealer is that they can save their customers a fortune while themselves making higher margins.

An intelligent approach to storage specification can help the business to manage information, define space, help individuals to do their jobs better and implement new working practices. None of these would be possible without a thorough understanding of the business case for the specification of different types of storage.

One thing that has become particularly apparent is the ways in which firms now understand the role of the workplace in attracting, retaining and motivating employees. This has become increasingly apparent as we approach full employment and is fed by evidence from the facilities management and design sectors. A recent Management Today survey reported that 45 per cent of employees would change companies for a better working



environment. The findings are backed up by the American Society of Interior Designers, which reported that 41 per cent of potential employees see the workplace as being a factor in their decision to take a job. In the same survey 90 per cent of executives report the positive effects of workplace design on productivity.

Facilities are commonly businesses most expensive asset after their employee salaries. When so much money is spent on the physical environment it is important to leverage that investment to get the best value out of a company's most expensive asset – its staff. That is the underlying principle behind the BIFM's very own Rethinking FM initiative and is also the principle that underpins Context, a new workplace event that will take place in London in October.

Triumph will be exhibiting at Context and will be investigating, along with other exhibitors; the four themes of Context event are Design, Environment, Productivity and Knowledge. Context will provide a forum where visitors can make the most of their time by meeting with suppliers and customers, inform themselves about the latest trends in office design and working practices and network in a social and professional environment.

It is about time that all businesses understood exactly how the office building relates to the effectiveness of the people who work in it. While the idea of the workplace being the key to business growth and development is not new, the events and speaker programme at Context will focus on how best practice in workplace design is constantly changing and that there are always opportunities to share knowledge and exchange ideas.

Jessica Marshall-Davies is marketing officer at Triumph Business Systems.

Triumph will be exhibiting at the new workplace event Context next month at Earls Court 2 at stand B340.

www.triumph-tbs.com

www.contextlive.com



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