THE PERSONAL WORKPLACE

A system of office furniture designed for comfort

VOLUME NUMBER

3

LAYOUT PROCESS

FOR A
PRIVATE OFFICE

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

We aim at an office which is perfectly adapted to you and your work. We should like to help you make your office, as finely tuned to you and your work habits, as a classic carpenters workshop, is to his work.

In the carpenters workshop, each piece is gradually built and fitted, over many years, until each tool fits just where it belongs, and each surface is just the right size and height for the carpenters work.

Many modern offices do not have this quality. Typically, there is a more haphazard arrangement of available pieces of furniture. The process of work is not reflected deeply in the layout of the office. It is not a truly comfortable place to work. And, certainly, it is not a deeply *efficient* place to work.

In this manual we shall try to help you discover, for yourself, what it takes to make your own workplace completely comfortable and efficient, in this way.

Before we start, it is necessary to understand one thing. There is no perfect layout process, and no perfect theory of layout, which you can use to get the perfect working environment. The carpenters workshop, referred to above, is the end product of years and years of gradual, painstaking adaptation. During these years, the carpenter works, each day, and every now and then he does something — usually something small, and quickly done — to make the work more comfortable.

Thus, the great comfort which is achieved, is not arrived at by being right. It is arrived at by being wrong, and by making small modest steps, to make what is wrong slightly more comfortable, slightly less wrong.

It is important to recognize that the state of mind in which the carpenter is able to achieve this , is a very humble one. He is never trying very hard o make a

"perfect" environment for himself. He is never under the illusion that he can reach anything perfect. He just keeps trying to make it a little bit better all the time.

This process of gradually trying to make things a little bit better, all the time, is the only state of mind in which you can really get there, because it is low stakes, humble and fairly easy. You don't have to try to hard, you don't have to kid yourself or anyone else — you just have to keep working at it, bit by bit, and having a few small ideas which slowly make things better.

So, the state of mind in which you can arrive at an office which works well for you, is low key, and rather slow. You need a certain amount of patience. You don't have to go too fast. Just try to make things a little bit better, every few weeks, or every few days.

As you will see, this "easy"process, requires a very particular set of tools, to let you get there. The carpenter has a set of tools, available, because he always has his own workshop tools near him, and he always has a few scraps of wood lying around, so he can knock together whatever he needs. For a person working in an office, the tools are not so close to hand, and the "scraps of wood" do not exist. However, the main thing which is needed, is a set of things, which , like the nails and scraps of wood, allow you gradually to make your office right.

We shall see, later in this manual, that the tools which are needed for this process are surprisingly sophisticated. *The system of furniture which we call ""the personal workplace" is a system whose characteristics come about, the way they are, entirely because we have designed it to make this process work for you.*

2. AVAILABLE FURNITURE AND THE MAGIC LIGHT PEN

The items of furniture available are:

WALL LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS

REAL CEILING

CUTTABLE WORKSURFACE

EXECUTIVE DESK

MANAGERS DESK

LIBRARY BOOKSHELVES

LOW BOOKCASE

FLAT FILES

COUNTER WITH SHELVES AND FILES

CONFERENCE TABLES

PERSONAL CHAIRS

WORKING SOFA

WORKING ARMCHAIR

JAPANESE SILK PANELS

WINDOW PLACE

COMPUTER SETUP

RECLINING CHAIR

STORAGE BENCH

CURTAINS

SIDE TABLE

ROLLING TABLE

WHITE BOARD

FILE BOXES

ROLLING FILE CABINET

PAPER PILE ORGANIZER
DESK LIGHT
HANGING LIGHT
WALL SHELVES
PATTERNED CARPET

These items of furniture have been designed to allow you to make your office just what you want.

In theory, any physical system could allow you to lay out your own office. You can go through the layout process defined below, arrive at a good layout for your work, and then have this layout built by any carpenter, or assembled from any set of furniture made by any manufacturer. In practice, though, it is easier to make the layout, from a system of furniture-making which is specifically designed to do just this. In order to explain just what it does, and what has to be done, it is helpful to imagine a kind of "magic light pen".

Suppose you had a magic pen, and that with it, you could make desks, chairs, counters, shelves, appears wherever you wanted, in space, just by waving the pen and clicking it. What you would do, then, is to go through the questions, answer them one by one, and as you gradually arrive at an understanding of the perfect workplace, you would use the light pen to mark chunks of air — and make them into desks and tables, shelves and chairs.

This magic light pen would not be restricted in any way. You could simply make any thing, of any size, appear in the air, just where you want it, with the color, surface, and geometry you want.

Of course this is impossible — at least today.

But the personal workplace system comes as close as we know how, to making such a magic light pen possible in the 20th century. It is a system of pieces which are designed to be available, in just the size you need, with just the

character you need, without trouble, and in the shape, size, and position that comes naturally out of your process.

It is because the system is like a magic light pen, that we believe it is the most useful tool there is, in helping you to arrange, and built, your ideal workplace for yourself.

3. HOW YOUR OFFICE WORKS

You need to start by getting clear what your office *is*. What we mean by this, is that you must get clear what is the essence that makes it *your* office (as opposed to someone else's), that will make it easy for *you* to work there, that makes it unique to *you*.

It is very important to be clear about this. Our experience is, that when someone understand deeply, what their own needs are, and how their own office works, then this office will almost always become something special, something very comfortable, and something which is — probably — unlike any other person's office. This is not because uniqueness is a virtue in itself. Difference for the sake of being different is just silly. But when something is profoundly understood, and when it works perfectly, it usually becomes unique, just as each leaf on a tree becomes unique — simply because the exact circumstances which it deals with, are different.

WHAT YOU REALLY DO

To get started, you must get clear what you really need. Above all, you must get clear about your actual work habits, that means, the way you really work — and get away from over simple stereotypes of office layout, which usually consist of formulas and images of what works well, but which do not necessarily work well for you, or for any other actual individual person. One way to get clear about what you do, is to pay attention o the following list of processes that may play a role in your work. Rank order them, according to the relative importance they have in your own work, by writing a number after each one.

	rank
Use of desk	____
Files, filing and storage	____
Computer use	____
Conference	____
Clients	____
Discussion	____
Concentration	____
Using library	____
Telephoning	____
Access to records	____
Overview of projects	____
Other machines (FAX, xerox etc)	____
Connection with your staff	____
Drawing and layout	____

In the effort of putting the processes of your work in rank order, you may have some surprises. For example, if you ask yourself whether the last office you had, or the present one, really does these thing as well as possible, you may be surprised to find that it does not.

DREAM ABOUT YOUR IDEAL WORKING CONDITIONS

Now start going through the short list of key processes, one by one, in the order you have ranked them. Start with the first one. Ask yourself which place or occasion you can remember where this activity was working most beautifully. It is important that you do not stick to any stereotype but that you honestly ask yourself which place you can remember, where this activity was really working most comfortably for you.

The result may be quite surprising. For example, if you have identified discussion, and you then ask yourself to remember some place where a really good discussion happened, the best that you can ever remember — you may find that it was in a cafe by a river bank — or that it was in the window seat of

an old bookstore, or sitting on a packing case in the attic with your friend. The main thing, is that you are very very honest and accurate about this. You have to be accurate and honest, because we are dealing with an empirical problem here. You did actually experience a wonderful atmosphere in such and such a **particular** discussion. You therefore have the greatest chance of recreating a similar quality of process if you can identify the actual circumstances in detail, and reproduce them.

Of course this runs counter to all "normal" thought. It doesn't matter. Do it. Dream as much as you want, and identify the most idyllic and best circumstance you can remember, and that you wish were happening in your daily life every day.

DEFINE THE ESSENCE OF THE DREAM CONDITION FOR EACH PROCESS

Now, if you have a vision of the dream condition for each process, write down the key essential elements which made it happen. This is hard to do. To do it, you must construct the essential elements in the form of a center. What this means, is that you identify the key physical elements which made that circumstance what it was, and describe their arrangement as a "center".

For example, suppose I am trying to visualize a perfect place to draw. I remember an ideal place, where I once very much enjoyed drawing. It was a large high table, with a very big window to the right, with lots of panes, and my brushes to the left away from the window.

This "thing" which I remember, is a center. It is a center which lets me draw as nicely as possible. The elements which make this center are the following: the table, the window, and the brushes. And in addition, the essential thing, is the space on the table, between the window and the table and the brushes, which makes this space a center.

Every center always has the same format. There is a center — which is always a space — created by some elements which surround it. The structure of this situation is fundamental. *There is a center* — the space which is the heart of the whole thing. *This is always space*. Then, there is a crust, or boundary around this center, which forms it. *The crust or boundary is always made of solid elements*. In the case of this example, the boundary is made of a window, a table, and a place where brushes and paints are on the left of the table.

Each part of what you do when you are working, is essentially a center. For example, if you spend a lot of time talking one-on-one with a single client (attorney client relationship), then it is the space which the two of you form together, which is the principle center. It may consist of two chairs, perhaps a table or a desk, perhaps associated stuff you need to talk about. In any case, the efficiency of the way you can talk with your client, depends on the extent to which this center is a concentrated focus, and really works "as a center".

The same is true of the computer in your office. Especially if it is important, then your workstation, the chair, the keyboard, the discs within easy reach, a surface for the mouse — all this forms a center. Once again, the center is comfortable and efficient, to the extent this center really is a **center**.

ON PAGE TWELVE FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUR FOUR MOST IMPORTANT CENTERS

In the list of activities which you have put in rank order, it is probably the top three or four which play the key role in the way your office needs to work for you, and which therefore create the essence of your office.

To capture the essence of the circumstance you have in mind in each process, write a description of each one. Write down the key elements, and their relation to the condition of the center. Write any information you know, about key aspects of the situation. As a general rule, the rough size of the thing, and the way the light works around that thing, may place a key role in making it work comfortably.

Do this for each of the top four items on your list. In some cases, you may want to have as many as five or six. However, don't make the list too long. The best offices usually, have a very simply essential structure.

One point is very important in your use of the hierarchy of key centers. There is one main center, the first one, and a number of secondary centers — the remaining ones. However, you should be aware that even though there usually is one center that you experience as the "main" center for your office, still, your work changes from day to day, and you may make the rounds in your office. One day the so-called main center may indeed be your main focus of activity. Another day a second one may play the main role. Another day it may be a third one. You need to visualize all these centers as part of a small group of centers, which give you your arena for work — and among which one is, often, but not always, the "main center".

The system of centers which you have defined should give an accurate and general picture of the way your own office really needs to be. It should be a complete map of the essential character of your work habits, and your ideal office.

NOW FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT CENTERS

**C1. THE MOST IMPORTANT CENTER**

**C2. THE SECOND CENTER**

C3. THE THIRD CENTER

C4. THE FOURTH CENTER

4. THE CARDBOARD MODEL

You are now in a position to start visualizing the way your office really needs to be. To help this visualization, set up the cardboard model so that it is like your own office. It is important that walls are in he right places. Dimensions must be fairly accurate. Use the special rule to get lengths to the nearest foot. Make walls the right height. Place windows and doors in the right positions.
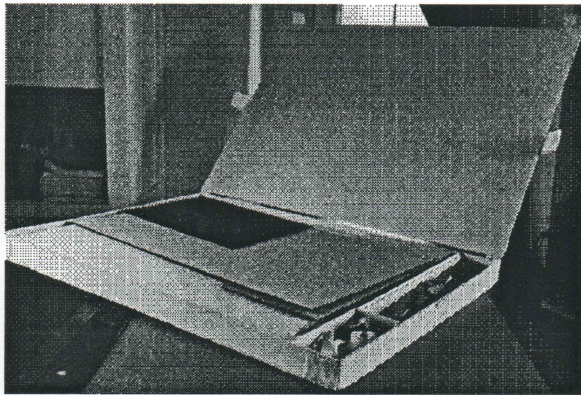
Kit for making office model, 2" to 1 foot
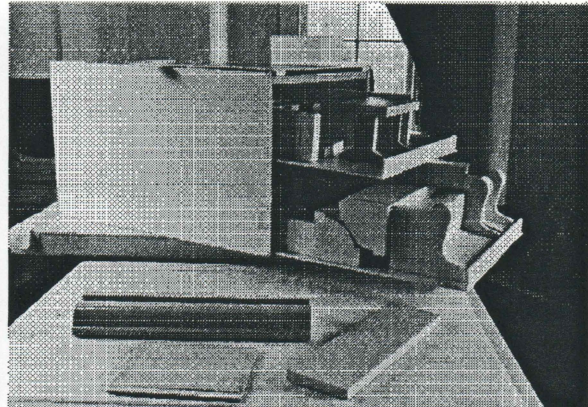
The kit of expandable furniture items, 2" to 1 foot

Make yourself familiar with the items of furniture available. These items are described in the catalog. The items are specific pieces of furniture available from CES Workplace. However, you should think of them as generic things which can be made to fit your needs, and can be placed, or adjusted in size, length, height, to fit the exact configuration you make in your office.

It is also essential to recognize that these pieces can go with you, when you move your office, and that you will be able to set up a similar office, with the same pieces, if you have to move. The work you do now, in defining the office you wan, will go with you, and remain part of your experience, even if your office changes physical location.

5. THE LAYOUT PROCESS

Now use the model to do the following steps one at a time. Important note: if any of the following steps are not consistent with the dream centers you have defined up until now, just leave them out.

POSITION OF THE MAJOR CENTERS

1. IDENTIFY THE NATURAL CENTERS OF THE ROOM.

Use the small red markers to identify the natural centers in the room which is to be your office. Remember that there is probably a natural center somewhere near the window. There may be another in the physical middle of the room, or towards the back. The actual centers depend on the particulars of your room. It is up to you to get them by "feel". Use the red stickers to mark these naturally occurring centers.

2. WINDOW PLACE.

Mark the spot near the window which is most likely to develop as a window place. Put a white sticker there.

3. ENTRANCE TRANSITION.

Mark the zone inside the door which needs to be a transition area, so that your room feels protected emotionally from the open doorway. Put a black sticker there.

4. LOCATE THE MAIN CENTER OF YOUR WORK.

Now decide in which of the naturally occurring centers you will put the process you have defined as C1, the main center of your work. Use the red spot to mark this main center.

5. LOCATE THE SECONDARY CENTERS OF YOUR WORK.

Decide in which of the naturally occurring centers you will put the processes you have defined as C2,C3,C4, the secondary centers of our work. Use the green stickers to mark these secondary centers.

6. OVERLAP.

Note, in what you have just done, and in what you are going to do next, it is essential to remember that the different centers may overlap each other. A particular piece of furniture may be part of two or three different centers. And the different centers may occupy the same space, or different overlapping areas of the same space. There is no reason why the centers have to be sharply distinct.

LAYOUT OF THE MAJOR CENTERS

7. DISCUSSION AND CONFERENCE.

If your main activity is a meetings or conferences, to make your room suitable for meetings and conferences, it may be very helpful to make the main center a conference table. It may be large, or small, or circular. The space which this table commands would then be the

principle center of the room. In other cases, it will be one of the secondary centers.

Any of the following items may be useful:
CONFERENCE TABLE
DESK WITH PIGEON HOLES
WORK SOFA
WORK ARMCHAIR
STORAGE BENCH

7. YOUR MAIN WORK-SURFACE.

Choose the main center in the room, where you are actually going to work. Imagine yourself standing or sitting there, and decide which way you want to face. Mark it on the model with an arrow, and begin to get a rough idea of the physical elements which will form this center. Fix the main work surface of your work place.

It may be any of these:
EXECUTIVE DESK
CUTTABLE WORK SURFACE
DESK WITH PIGEON HOLES
COMPUTER SETUP

8. SECONDARY HORIZONTAL SURFACES.

Along with your desk or main work surface, you may need secondary work surfaces. These can be at right angles to the main one. It usually works best if the second surface is lower than the main one. Many people like a second layout surface, near their main work surface.

This can be a second
CUTTABLE WORKSURFACE or a SIDE TABLE

9. SPARKLING DAYLIGHT.

Beautiful light is crucial to your comfort. Place wall lights along one or two walls, in positions which help to define the area you have designated as the main center of the room. Place reflectors below the walls lights, or above them, them so that the lights illuminate these reflectors and create a cheerful light in the room.

Use:
WALL-LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS supplemented with
DESK LAMP
HANGING LAMPS

10. WINDOW PLACE.

Fix the window as a definite place, and make window place there by making something which is framed and has depth.

This can be done either with the
WINDOW-PLACE item or with
CURTAINS

11. COMFORTABLE SOFAS AND WORKING CHAIRS.

If you want a comfortable chair, for your visitors or for yourself, put in a work sofa chair: a comfortable chair designed for upright working, and for comfort.

It can be a
WORK ARMCHAIR
RECLINING CHAIR

STORAGE BENCH
or a WORK SOFA if the room has room for it.

12. REAL CEILING.

Put in a solid ceiling. The light and comfort of your room depends critically on the presence of a real ceiling, with its own design and color.

Use
REAL CEILING

SECONDARY FURNISHINGS NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE SPACE

13. COMPUTER SETUP.

The computer setup is a multipurpose computer-specific trolley, which can take almost any make of computer inside, and has room for all kinds of connections, and subunits. Outside, you have only the screen, which you can put on the trolley, or on your desk, and the keyboard, which goes away when you don't need it. Some people like to use the computer table in an armchair, on a board, or on their conference table where others can see it too.

COMPUTER SETUP

14. RECLINING CHAIR.

If you do a great deal of computer work, you may want a special reclining chair, as the main workplace for your computer.

RECLINING CHAIR

15. DIFFERENT CHAIRS.

Informal discussion around the conference table, or in the office, is helped by a variety of different chairs, including task chairs, sofa, armchairs and benches. These chairs can be the individually fitted upright chairs.

PERSONAL CHAIRS
ROLLING BENCH
WORK SOFA
WORK ARMCHAIR

16. WALL SURFACES AND PIN BOARDS

Walls will be most comfortable if they have spots of color and ornament. The japanese silk panels provide color and harmony from handmade textiles, and the whole surface of this panel is a pin board where papers and messages can be kept.

JAPANESE SILK PANEL
WHITE BOARD

17. THICK WALLS

Besides the thick walls, bookcases, counters and files, Surround some parts of the office wall with built-in furniture, thus helping to form the cozy and comfortable feeling in the center of the room. The main ways to make a thick wall like are with

LIBRARY BOOKSHELVES
LOW BOOKSHELF
FLAT FILES
COUNTER WITH SHELVES AND FILES
WALL SHELVES

18. FILING

Small groups of files can be conveniently kept in file boxes, in the small rolling file cabinet, or in specially constructed files in the storage bench. For closed bulk storage use the files built in under the counter or the cuttable worksurface.

ROLLING FILE CABINET
FILE BOXES
STORAGE BENCH
COUNTER WITH BULK FILES
CUTTABLE WORKSURFACE

19. ENTRANCE TRANSITION

To maintain a good feeling of privacy and individual territory in your room, use the elements of the thick wall to make an entrance transition space inside the door where you have marked a black spot earlier.

LIBRARY BOOKSHELVES
LOW BOOKSHELF
FLAT FILES
COUNTER WITH SHELVES AND FILES
WALL SHELVES

MINOR FURNISHINGS TO FILL IN THE GAPS AND MAKE UP DETAILS

20. FLAT FILES.

If you store a lot of papers, and need to get them easily, install flat files, which are specially made for storing piles of papers.

These can be a
FLAT FILE
PAPER PILE ORGANIZER

21. OCCASIONAL TABLES

Place various smaller side tables to create minor centers to help the major centers you have established. These smaller tables are most helpful in different positions and at different levels, so they give you the widest possible variety of work-surfaces and surfaces to pile things on.

They can be
ROLLING TABLES
SIDE TABLE
ROLLING FILE CABINET
COMPUTER SETUP
STORAGE BENCH

22. DESK LIGHTS

Place individual lights to spot those centers which are most important.

DESK LAMP
HANGING LIGHTS

23. PATTERNED CARPET

To mark a special center which you want to give emphasis to, and to increase the comfort of your room, use a patterned carpet of the right size.

Color must be carefully chosen. Use the color process
PATTERNED CARPET

6. GETTING THE SIZES RIGHT

The size of things is critically important, and will affect the feeling, and usefulness of your office in a way far beyond what you imagine. Some things can be bigger than you might think. Other things can be smaller than you might think. All that matters is that it is practical

Present day office furniture tends to make everything homogeneous in size, and this contributes to the dead and unpleasant feeling one gets in many modern offices

The personal workplace items are specifically designed to take a wide variety of sizes, and the model you have, also reflects this capability. Take full advantage of it.

It is very important that sizes are just the way you want them, without constraint from what anyone might consider "normal". Everything that matters, about your office, and the way the centers work, is always affected by the actual size things are. It is not only the efficiency of the space which is affected by sizes of things, but the **feeling** of the place is significantly altered by the size things are. This is not only true for the size of the spaces, but also for the size of the elements. One of the most important things about the personal workplace system, is that it lets you make things just the size you want them — so you can control the feeling of you office, and make it personal.

Use the flexible sizes available in the model to get each piece of furniture exactly the right size.

It is especially important that things all fit together nicely and harmoniously. You should adjust the sizes, until you like the smoothness and comfort of the space you have produced.

7. YOUR BUDGET

Once you know what you want in your office, you can decide what is the nearest you can get to it, staying within your budget.

In the following chart you see that each item is shown at three different prices, the high end, middle range and low end. Decide which of these items you want, circle the price level you want it at, and — if you need more than one of the item — write the number in the column marked "number". Write the total cost of each item, at the end of the line, and total them at the bottom. You can play back and forth, until the price meets your budget.

ITEM	LOW	MED	HIGH	YES/NO	COST
WALL LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS					
REAL CEILING					
CUTTABLE WORKSURFACE					
EXECUTIVE DESK					
DESK WITH PIGEON HOLES					
LIBRARY BOOKSHELVES					
LOW BOOKCASE					
FLAT FILES					
COUNTER WITH SHELVES AND FILES					
CONFERENCE TABLES					
PERSONAL CHAIRS					
WORK SOFA					
WORK ARMCHAIR					
JAPANESE SILK PANELS					
WINDOW PLACE					
COMPUTER SETUP					
RECLINING CHAIR					
STORAGE BENCH					
CURTAINS					

THE PERSONAL WORKPLACE

ITEM	LOW	MED	HIGH	YES/NO	COST
SIDE TABLE					
ROLLING TABLE					
WHITE BOARD					
FILE BOXES					
ROLLING FILE CABINET					
PAPER PILE ORGANIZERS					
DESK LIGHT					
HANGING LIGHT					
WALL SHELVES					
PATTERNED CARPET					

NUMBER OF ALL CHOSEN ITEMS _____

TOTAL COST OF ALL CHOSEN ITEMS _____