

EARLY DRAFT

THE PERSONAL WORKPLACE

**A system of office furniture designed for
comfort**

VOLUME NUMBER

8

LAYOUT PROCESS

**FOR A
DEPARTMENT**

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1. INTRODUCTION

TO THE DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Assume now, that we are faced with a department in an organization. We assume the department contains anywhere from 3 to 30 people, and that this department has been assigned a specific space within the organization.

Let us imagine that there is some “ideal” or near ideal layout which will allow this group to function at an optimum level. In this imaginary layout, they will be able to perform very effectively, efficiently, be happy in their work, and reach the best level of performance which current forms of work can imagine.

From the definition of the group, and the definition of their workspace, how can we reach this “ideal” arrangement of workspace?

2. WHO DOES THE LAYOUT

WHO WILL THE DEPARTMENT MANAGER ASK TO WORK WITH HIM/HER IN DETERMINING THE LAYOUT OF THE DEPARTMENT

The layout process is, ultimately, in the hands of the manager. Since it is ^{their} his job to be responsible for the overall welfare, well-being and productivity of ^{the} his group, he will decide how much of this layout process that follows should be shared with the group, and how much of it he should do himself.

A typical arrangement of work might be this. The manager starts by consulting with one or two of his top aides — the people he feels closest to in the group, and with whom he is comfortable making decisions. Together they may work through some parts of the process.

At other times, as they begin to get an overall grasp of the groups most efficient working structure, they will perhaps begin to notice that they do not have as much insight into the detailed feelings of other group members as they need to. They may decide to involve half a dozen work group leaders in some discussion. In exceptional circumstances, they may decide to have a kind of round table discussion with all members of the department, and get feedback or contributions from everyone who works there.

Later, once the broad structure of the department has been settled, there is a framework in which individual groups may work, by themselves, to determine the best internal working atmosphere for their own group. And later still, it becomes possible for the individual workers to lay out their own workspace.

Even at that last stage, the manager in charge of the department, may decide to give this privilege to certain workers — who have the longest and most stable

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relation with the department — or he may choose to give this privilege to everyone who works there. Or he may decide to give it to no-one at all.

In any case, the process which is described here, is mainly a tool for the departmental managers, which is designed to help him achieve the most productive happy working environment for the people in his department. He, or she, should use it as they see fit.

A good manager will, to whatever extent possible, try to think through these problems, and make an arrangement which satisfies as many of the answers as he can. Probably, in the course of trying to figure it out, this manager will also consult with various members of the group, perhaps some more than others. He will also, to whatever extent he can, also incorporate as much about the individual's wishes as he can. However, he will necessarily balance these individual wishes with the larger questions of operational efficiency — the good of the whole — as he can.

The result will then be a kind of balanced mixture of all these considerations, coupled with a healthy feeling reality.

The process has a number of features which may be more explicit, than they might be if you do it without the help of this process.

1. The process will pay much more attention to the overall factors controlling group harmony and efficiency: some of these factors may be unfamiliar to you.
2. The process will allow more careful scrutiny of issues controlling the group space than you might use otherwise.
3. The process shows you how to bring people into the process at different points, and asks you to identify, explicitly, whom you want to help you in these decisions.
4. The process will give you the opportunity to let each person design their own workspace, if you wish to do this.

3. KEY ISSUES

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WHICH MAKE YOUR DEPARTMENT WORK WELL AS A WHOLE

We begin by asking you to analyze the life of your department. The issue of greatest concern to you, as manager, is inevitably the human life of your group as a whole, the ability of your group to be productive as a whole, the ability of the individuals to be productive in their own designated tasks. These factors are determined, in large degree, by the human atmosphere in the department. People are productive, both individually, and collectively, when there is an overall cohesion, a human bond that unites them in their effort, a feeling of caring and concern among the individuals, helpfulness between people who can help each other, and an atmosphere of understanding and intensity in the group as a whole. It also, of course, depends on the individual well-being of the people who make up the department.

In this part one of the layout process, we shall try to help you analyze these matters in your group, with the idea of helping you to see more clearly, what overall structure in the group, might help the department as a whole, to be productive.

To begin this process, the following list contains some of the factors which might help to encourage the health and well being of your department. We suggest that you read this list carefully, and then try to decide, for your particular group, what is the relative importance of these issues, in making your group work well together.

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These are very complex matters. If you feel it is helpful to consult with other members of the group, do so, and then make a joint decision about the relative importance of these factors in the life and productivity of your group.

THE MAIN EMPHASIS IN WHAT FOLLOWS SHOULD BE FACTUAL. The issue is not whether these ideas “seem” like good ideas, or “seem” like things that might help your group to work. We are asking you to ask yourself, in your recollection of the past successes of your department, which of these factors have played a role in making things work well. This is the essence. It is meant to be a factual appraisal of the best moment in the history of your department, and its work effectiveness.

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KEY ISSUES IN YOUR DEPARTMENT'S OPERATIONS

ITEM #	KEY HUMAN SITUATIONS	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE IN YOUR DEPARTMENT
1	HELPING EACH OTHER	
2	CORE GROUP OF STABLE PEOPLE	
3	ACCESS TO TOP MANAGER	
4	LUNCHTIME	
5	PLENTY OF SPACE FOR INDIVIDUAL WORK	
6	DISCUSSION SPACE THROUGHOUT THE WORKSPACE	
7	HAVING A CLEAR SENSE OF THE DEPARTMENTS TARGETS	
8	SPORTS TOGETHER	
9	RELATIONSHIP WITH CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS	
10	INTENSE TEAM WORK IN SMALL TEAMS	
11	MANAGERS IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH WORKERS	
12	QUIET AND PRIVACY FOR PEOPLE WORKING	
13	ACCESS TO OTHER GROUPS AND DEPARTMENTS	
14	CONNECTION WITH PEOPLE WHO GO IN AND OUT A LOT	
15	EFFECTIVE WORK BY ASSISTANTS HELPING MANAGERS AND LEADERS	
16	PRIVACY	
17	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	
18	USE OF TELEPHONES	
19	INDIVIDUAL COMPUTER WORK	
20	GROUP WORK AROUND A COMPUTER	
21	JOINT WORK AROUND LARGE COMMON TABLES	
22	DAILY DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF WORK	
TOTAL NUMBER THAT ARE IMPORTANT IN YOUR DEPARTMENT		

23 *Sense of a common goal*

24 *Access to a shop or shop-like space*

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To think about these issues, and to have them clear in your mind, here is a slightly more detailed discussion of each one, with the questions that may help you to decide if this kind of thing has played a role in the past, or if it is relevant to the life of your department or not.

1. HELPING EACH OTHER.

Arrange people so that people who can be helpful to each other, will be able to interact and help each other.

NOTE: This does necessarily mean putting people with similar tasks or experience together. Sometimes it is people with opposite skills, or opposite levels of experience, who can be most helpful to each other.

2. CORE GROUP OF STABLE PEOPLE

Identify a core group of people who are always there, and who can act as a stable home base to the others.

NOTE The permanent atmosphere of the department does a great deal of good: these people may be planners, the ones who think out the department work, the administrators... it does not matter, it is the permanence which helps.

3. ACCESS TO TOP MANAGER

Make a single core of the top manager, and maybe top assistant: a place where everyone goes and has access to.

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4. LUNCHTIME

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

NOTE Having lunch together is very pleasant and very helpful to a group. Once a day, a time to share ideas around a table.

5. PLENTY OF SPACE FOR INDIVIDUAL WORK

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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6. DISCUSSION SPACE THROUGHOUT THE WORKSPACE

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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7. HAVING A CLEAR SENSE OF THE DEPARTMENTS TARGETS

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8. SPORTS TOGETHER

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9. RELATIONSHIP WITH CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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10. INTENSE TEAM WORK IN SMALL TEAMS

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11. MANAGERS IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH WORKERS

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12. QUIET AND PRIVACY FOR PEOPLE WORKING

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13. ACCESS TO OTHER GROUPS AND DEPARTMENTS

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14. CONNECTION WITH PEOPLE WHO GO IN AND OUT A LOT

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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15. EFFECTIVE WORK BY ASSISTANTS HELPING MANAGERS AND LEADERS

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16. PRIVACY

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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17. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

NOTE Having lunch together is very pleasant and very helpful to a group. Once a day, a time to share ideas around a table.

18. USE OF TELEPHONES

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

NOTE Having lunch together is very pleasant and very helpful to a group. Once a day, a time to share ideas around a table.

19. INDIVIDUAL COMPUTER WORK

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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20. GROUP WORK AROUND A COMPUTER

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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21. JOINT WORK AROUND LARGE COMMON TABLES

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

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22. DAILY DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF WORK

How does lunch work. Where do people have lunch. Does it contribute to the day.

NOTE Having lunch together is very pleasant and very helpful to a group. Once a day, a time to share ideas around a table.

4. MAKING A PICTURE OF THE HUMAN STRUCTURE OF YOUR GROUP

You have identified a certain number of activities as being most “helpful” to your department. Now ask this question: What would your department be like, if it made use of these insights, and if its structure as a human working group, was arranged to benefit from these activities which you know to have been helpful and life-giving in the past.

This can be a difficult and shocking question. It may lead to a conception of your department which is different from what it has been in the past. There may therefore be a natural reluctance on your part, even to *think* about this question. Nevertheless, we encourage you to think about it, since it is likely to lead to a much better future for your department, and to a more productive and happier life for the people working with you.

TRANSLATION INTO CENTERS

To get this picture, you go through four steps.

1. Dream about each of the main activities.
2. Identify it as a physical center.
3. Try to get some rough idea of its size.
4. Get a picture of its relations to other centers.
5. Try to get an idea where each center is in the overall picture in relation to the others.
6. Draw a diagram which shows the whole department.

5. THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE WORK-GROUP

As we contemplate this question, we may pose the following questions:

1. How many of them have private offices.
2. How many of them are grouped together, and in what groups.
3. How much of the available space is group space, and how much of it is individual workstation space.
4. Do the different people have different amount of individual workspace: if so, what differences are there.
5. Who gets the windows.
6. More generally stated: of the available area which has natural light and natural views, how is it allocated. Is it allocated to groups, to individuals, to combinations.
7. How formal is the space. Is it a shirtsleeve atmosphere or a formal atmosphere. What controls this factor.
8. Is it easy to go in and out, or is it a controlled environment.
9. Are peoples workstations personal. To what degree.
10. What is the statistics of room sizes. Is it one large space, or many small spaces. What other combination of large, middle sized and small spaces is it.
11. To what extent are spaces connected, or not connected.
12. How many are dead ends. How many are directly connected.
13. How much acoustic privacy is there. Can be people make phone calls without giving trouble, and without being overheard. How many of them can do this.
14. To what extent to people working there feel themselves to be a family. Which aspects of the spatial layout contribute to this effect.

6. ASKING BASIC QUESTIONS TO ESTABLISH THE NATURE OF THE WORK-GROUP AND ITS WORK

ADMINISTRATOR ANSWERS QUESTIONS:

Names,

TOP MANAGER ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS.

How many of the people are there in your group.

Choose 1 2 or 3 of them, with whom to plan the overall structure of the group space.

Decide, for each person, how much space they need.

What level of permanence does this person have in the company: what level of control would you give them of the workspace.

1. Over the department.
2. Over local group (2-4 people).
3. Over own space.
4. No control at all.

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WORKERS AND MANAGERS BOTH ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FOR EACH PERSON. IF THERE ARE DISCREPANCIES, MANAGER CAN DECIDE, BUT HE/SHE ALSO HAS THE OPTION TO DECIDE ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL WORKERS STATEMENT.

Choose what are the main modes, in which these people should work, with respect to others.

1. By yourself.
2. With others.
3. Prefer team work in room with others.
4. Need completely private space.
5. Don't need a fixed place of work.
6. Need tiny fixed place, just enough to leave stuff.
7. Belongs to more than one group.
8. Takes part in roving projects.
9. Have meetings in your office.
- 10.

Percentage breakdown of space in the office:

1. GROUP SPACE, WHICH IS EVERYONE TERRITORY
2. GROUP SPACE FOR A GROUP OF 2-6 PEOPLE
3. PRIVATE SPACE.
4. ROOMS IN WHICH 2-6 PEOPLE WORK.
5. ROOM FOR ONE PERSON, WHICH CAN ACCOMMODATE MEETINGS.
6. CARREL WITH COMPUTER STUFF AND PHONE.

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7. GARDEN SPACE.

8. SPORTS

9.

HOW MUCH MONEY CAN BE SPENT PER PERSON.

PHASE 1: GENERAL IDEA

END RESULT OF PHASE 1, IS A GENERAL VERBAL PICTURE OF HOW THE DEPARTMENT WILL WORK. THIS IS NOT A SPECIFIC PLAN, BUT A BROAD ORGANIZATION PICTURE, WHICH DESCRIBES, IN WORDS, WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN.

PHASE 2: MAIN ELEMENTS IN PLACE

END RESULT OF PHASE 2 IS A PLAN OF MAJOR SPACES, AND LOCATIONS AND SIZES OF WORKSTATIONS. THIS EMPHASIZES AREAS, LOCATIONS AND BOUNDARIES.

PHASE 3: WORKSTATIONS IN PLACE

END RESULT OF PHASE 3 IS A DETAILED PLAN OF FURNITURE, FOR EACH PERSON'S WORKSTATION, AND FOR GROUP SPACE.

7. PHASE 1: GENERAL IDEA

GENERAL VERBAL PICTURE HAS THE FOLLOWING FORM

There are x people in the group.

Altogether they have x square feet of space. They have x feet of window, and x entrances.

The space is subdivided into the following zones:

Group space, for everyone, x square feet.

Subgroups which contain the following individuals, .

there is a mixture of private offices and rooms for more than one person, very small places, and rooms where everyone can work.

There are x sf of private office.

There are x sf of rooms for 2-4 people.

8. PHASE 2: MAIN CENTERS

**THE ENTRANCE, GROUP SPACE, POSITION AND
DEFINITION OF WORKGROUPS, MEETING AREAS,
COMMON AREAS, OUTDOORS AND SPORTS**

9. PHASE 3: MINOR CENTERS: ALL INDIVIDUAL WORK-STATIONS

**INTERNAL LAYOUT AND FURNITURE OF
PRIVATE OFFICES, AND ALL INDIVIDUAL WORK-
STATIONS**

10. GROUP PROCESS FOR LAYING OUT WORK-STATIONS