

strategic spaces

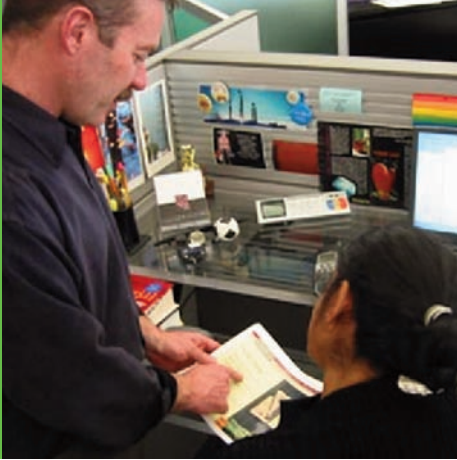
optimizing work-place design for the professional services environments

The world has changed...can you feel it? It's gradual and imperceptible by day, but over the last decade has amounted to a tectonic shift in the professional services business. Clients are more discerning. Corporate real estate footprints are shrinking. Workers are more mobile and change employers more frequently. Information is ubiquitous and overwhelming. To better understand the critical issues affecting professional services, Steelcase launched an extensive, six-phase research and design initiative. Through our research we've noticed that space plays a big part in supporting or not supporting changes taking place. How is your workspace responding to the increasing demands of today's dynamic business environment? How does it support the diversifying areas of expertise, and offer ways to help new employees get integrated into the firm's culture?



A human-centered research and design process

Our multi-disciplinary team visited a variety of professional services firms specializing in law, accounting, consulting, advertising, architecture, design and engineering. Using ethnographic research techniques enabled us to see general business trends and evolving work behaviors, revealing significant patterns across these culturally diverse industries. Ultimately, while we observed significant differences in cultural values between organizations such as law firms and advertising, we saw similar work goals across professional services — moving the project to the next stage quickly, efficiently and with an eye always toward meeting the client's expectations.



understand

Phase one:

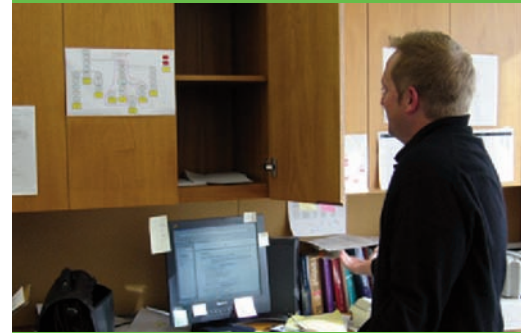
Understand. The first stage of the process is to understand. Before going out into the field, our researchers prepare themselves by conducting secondary research and listening to what experts have to say. This foundation of knowledge prepares us to be smart listeners, conversant with the jargon, and aware of trends in the industries we are studying.

The process focuses on observing people in the context of their workplace. Our goal is to gather unarticulated insights about how team members learn and work.

Phase two:

Observe. In an effort to understand behaviors, our teams head into the field to see how people are using offices, board rooms, meeting rooms, workstations, common areas, and the spaces in between. The process focuses on observing people in the context of their workplace. **Our goal** is to gather unarticulated insights about how team members learn and work. This helps us better understand how the design of workstations, offices, and “we spaces” can more effectively respond to the pressures they are faced with daily.

observe





synthesize

Phase three:

Synthesize. After returning from observations researchers document what they've seen and heard, and share their most meaningful and interesting stories. When observations, secondary research, and interviews are combined, they open our eyes to ways an environment can better support people, their interactions and the work they do. Synthesis is the stage at which we start to look for patterns and anomalies in this data. From the patterns, design principles emerge that guide design work and help us keep the user in mind.

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Phase four:

Realize. We realize our design principles by developing sketches and conceptual plans. This is the primary vehicle through which we **share** our research. Our goal is to inspire new ways of thinking about your space. These sketches can be thought of as a starting point for a conversation about your needs and requirements. Although this process helps us create new concepts, we still depend on you to determine if the solution is right for you and your organization.



realize



prototype

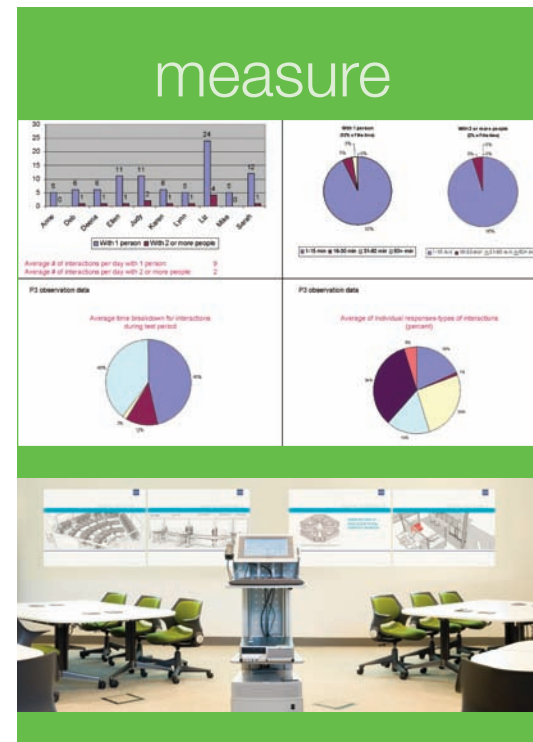
Phase Five

Prototype. After presenting our research findings, design concepts, and potential applications, we often partner with clients to further refine and pilot our concepts at a partner site or within a Steelcase facility.

Phase Six

Measure. During and after the previous phase we collect data through a variety of techniques including time-lapse video, quantitative tools, and often more observation (photos and interviews). Our goal is to understand and report on the effectiveness of the concept, provide qualitative and quantitative feedback, and recommend iterations.

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(left) Creating and comparing digital documents with multiple authors

(right) Maximizing workflow in a tethered environment

The Results

The result of our year long intensive study is a portfolio of conceptual applications that address a variety of settings critical to professional services firms. The applications focus on open plan workstations, presentation venues, professional assistant suites, private offices, project and case rooms, shared offices and collaborative neighborhoods. We would be pleased to share our results and concepts with you. The presentation uncovers the pressures that impact a broad range of professions, our research methodology, observational research findings, design principles and conceptual applications.

Anticipating growth and aiding acculturation

