

Measuring Productivity Over Time

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To truly be able to measure office productivity, an organization must first appreciate how their firm defines “productivity”. Is it working faster? Executing work using fewer people? Is it reducing overhead costs while maintaining sales? Or is it staff with more creative approaches? Once the corporation’s productivity objectives are understood, the organization is able to establish if attempts to increase productivity are really working or not. And only the organization, itself, can measure results.

Offices that tend to simply follow trends – thinking that the new ways of working they see popping up everywhere are better and produce better results – usually find their approach backfires. Open plan offices with open air lounges for spontaneous meetings, staff “play areas” with pool tables or air slides, or allowing bicycles and dogs into a workplace: these only work for specific office cultures. The trick is to analyze and understand your culture, and what it, specifically, would need to make it a better, more productive place, before implementing changes. Blindly following trends can be a very expensive mistake.

1. The Bulldog Group Inc.

McGregor Design Group first met with the Bulldog Group when they were a partnership of 2 people, sitting in a space, working hard to build their fledging business. They had many objectives in these young years, including:

- Build a brand that could be recognized in the marketplace,
- Attract business in, but also,
- Provide a brand message that would give them credibility in the marketplace,
- And to do it within a start-up company’s budget

MDG teamed with the two partners to first review and understand their functional requirements, as well as their aspirations for the future of their firm. Once this was well understood, the real fun started. Meetings between the McGregor Design Group and the Bulldog Partners became very collaborative sessions of cultural evaluation, as all present were creative minds who listened with respect to the others ideas. This allowed all brand elements – from business cards to the website – to be developed collectively to ensure that each was reinforcing the desired message. The resulting brand image reflected a unique culture, allowed the Bulldog Group to stand out, and to dramatically increase its market share.

The design of the offices ensured all functional requirements were met – but they went a little further than just that.

Results:

- Provided better work flow, and was designed to gracefully accommodate double the staff anticipated in the first year; without need for any re-organization costs
- “Sells [Bulldog’s] commitment to quality and excellence,” convincing more business to get signed, and drawing top creative talent into the firm
- Conferred credibility on the team in the eyes of the marketplace
- And since the office is so enjoyed by the clients of this firm, the partners are now entertaining their client in their office space, and not wasting time travelling. Even greater productivity

“Our best marketing tool is our office.” - Christopher Strachan, Partner, Bulldog



2. Maple Leaf Foods

In 2007, Toronto-based Maple Leaf foods asked MDG to design a space that reinforced their mission statement – “Passionate People, Passionate about Food” – by creating a new brand message, and a new office space that reinforced that brand message. A critical objective was to help recruit young creative talent while providing a better working environment for existing staff. Their objectives included:

- Integrate more staff into their square footage
- Inspire more creative thinking and “passion” in their existing staff
- Attract new, young, creative talent
- Create a new corporate image that would satisfy investors AND young creative staff
- All achieved in a fiscally responsible manner

According to Michael McCain, President of Maple Leaf Foods, the design of the offices “energized” him. When he had a problem to solve, he’d walk the renovated floor, and a fresh perspective was revealed to him. As the designers, MDG considered this a real compliment.

Headcount on each floor increased by 25%, but rather than people being “shoehorned” into the existing space; they received a better quality of environment. Better, more conveniently located personal storage and more privacy than in the past; but also a healthier environment with more fresh air, daylight and less mechanical noise. Staff worked better because they really did feel better – less tired at the end of the day.

“Occupying such a spectacular space delivers a tremendous sense of pride; effectively representing the company’s energy and forward looking business direction.” – Natasha Dunham, Maple Leaf Foods, Senior Project Lead



3. MindShare Canada

MDG was contracted by MindShare in 2009 when their UK headquarters implemented a surprise international “re-branding exercise”, with a deadline of 3 months, and a tight budget. MDG won the competition and executed the design in MindShare’s Toronto office as they took the project further than others did. This surprise mission was not budgeted for, and so had to be executed in a very creative, cost effective manner. The objectives of the project were quite concise:

- To ensure that visitors, upon arrival, understood MindShare’s business and their position in the marketplace
- To implement the new brand message in a manner that Visitors would resonate with
- To ensure that the investment made in the changes would improve operational efficiencies if possible
- To execute all of the above in a fiscally responsible manner, within a 3 month time period

“[MDG’s design] tied the client-facing areas together to create a more unified and flowing feel.” - Laura White, MindShare’s Finance Director.



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Lynn McGregor is a past President of ARIDO (the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario), Co-Chair of their Legislative Review Committee and elected representative of the Province' registered Interior Designers, on Ontario's Building Advisory Council. She has practiced in the area of Corporate Architectural Interior Design for over 34 years, and is the Owner of the [McGregor Design Group](#), headquartered in Toronto.

