

Thanks previous speakers, Hi everyone, participants, colleagues

Intro WP:

I like to talk about what keeps us busy: The workplace.

For most of us the current workplace is at home. Some of you might be at your office hoping that your colleagues will join you shortly? Or hoping that your colleagues stay at home for a while.

This session is entitled *Back on track*. Back on the same track? And at which speed: fast forward, slow forward? What is the road ahead?

Marie was speaking about another business, a re-imagined business. Who of us could have imagined the crisis we are in right now? We talk about a/the next/new/interim normal. Since we are dealing with an unusual or abnormal situation, we must pay attention to the fundamental question: “what comes next”? All we have is our knowledge from the past and our imagination, but no one has the answers!

So, lets go back on the experience track. What we did in the past, could that work for the future?

Optimization mode I

When it comes to the workplace we are used to optimization. We all were matching, balancing and optimizing functional requirements for the business with the costs. Our focus: *cost control*.

Then corona appeared. As a precautionary measure most of us closed our offices and started to work from home. By now we are experienced users of any teleconferencing tool, finding out about the pro's and cons of working from home; We experience the difference between using all our senses versus the limited use of eyes and ears.

The invisibility of the virus confuses, the whole situation is complex. It is what we call a *wicked problem*: We must deal with incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

What to do for the future: back on the optimization track that we are so familiar with? Or find a new optimization perspective!

Optimization mode II

One thing is for sure. The future is not without offices; especially when we consider the office cowboys that focus on HOW to go back e.g. the people from the furniture industry. Or those office users with their explicit new appetite: skin hunger, the desperate longing to be with your colleagues; to hug them no matter the risk. What is to be included in the new optimization? Fear vs opportunism, health vs risk of being caught by the invisible, functionality? But what are the new functions if we re – imagine our business, if we re-design our processes? And what differences or inequalities are included in your current real estate or workplace portfolio? Want to solve those?

The story as an example

Here in western Europe there is this logistics firm with offices in different capitals. All empty. This gives the opportunity to rethink what the firm consider as a good new corporate standard. Is it just space standards? One of the offices has 8 m2 per person, another has 30 m2 per person: the work processes are lookalikes.

What is the firm's view of their resources? Is there a different view on **human resources** that explains the 8 vs the 30 m²? If so, what is the underlying principle or basic thought? Equal value of human life in one company in different countries? What then if we include new criteria to protect from our invisible opponent: the virus?

Sounds familiar to you: empty buildings, users that want to come back, end user questioning the new workplace? And here you are as a workplace manager, as a Fac. Manager familiar with optimizing, yet with an old set of criteria.

What to do?

So here are the two questions to ask your CEO.

And mind you: do not let the CEO decide that employees can come back to the office just because it is good to work (literally) side by side to regain productivity of the firm.

You are there to offer your services to the company as you did before (and you are paid for that), and let the CEO do what he or she is paid for, and that is to answer two questions:

1. What are the new leading principles beyond cost control to get back on track?
2. What are the firm's new capabilities – the re-imagined capabilities; and what is the time schedule for you as a facilities manager to respond with a view of the new FM competences?

In summary:

It is no rocket science, yet it is much more difficult than that: it is confusing and complex.

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It is all about a new WHY, a new WHAT and a new HOW.

As said, we are here to help; provide us with your questions.

Wim Pullen

Delft, 2020/05/06

[Contribution to WW Eu opening panel.](#)