

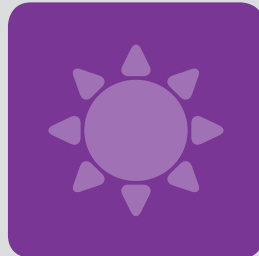
Health, Wellbeing & Productivity in Offices

The next chapter for green building

Executive Summary



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Introduction

It has long been considered the ultimate yet seemingly out of reach test of the business case for green building: if the human benefits of green building could be reliably quantified this would prove beyond all doubt the ROI for investing in building green.

After all, staff costs, including salaries and benefits, typically account for about 90% of business operating costs. Therefore what may appear a modest improvement in employee health or productivity, can have a huge financial implication for employers – one that is many times larger than any other financial savings associated with an efficiently designed and operated building.

This report does not claim to put this argument completely to rest, but it does put forward the best and latest information on the building design features that are known to have positive impacts on the health, wellbeing and productivity of office building occupants and points to financial implications where possible.

Further – and what distinguishes this report from other similar efforts – it provides a high-level framework for building owners, occupiers and their advisors to start tracking the impacts of buildings on employee health, wellbeing and productivity in order to use that information in financial decision-making.

In other words, it sets the groundwork for businesses to begin to answer this tantalising question as to the true payback for building green.

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The relationship between office design and office users

Teams of experts from the around the world were assembled to investigate a range of office design factors, from indoor air quality, thermal comfort and daylighting, to acoustics, interior layout, views and biophilia. The impacts of location and amenities were also considered.

The evidence was compiled, debated and synthesised. Overwhelmingly, research clearly demonstrates that the design of an office has a material impact on the health, wellbeing and productivity of its occupants.

While to many this may sound obvious and goes without saying, it does need saying, loud and clear, because this evidence is not yet translating at scale into design and financing decisions, certainly not in all parts of the globe.

By presenting the evidence in a clear and concise way, this report aims to build momentum and give real estate executives some of the ammunition and communications tools needed to change this.

Measuring Impact: how does my building impact my people?

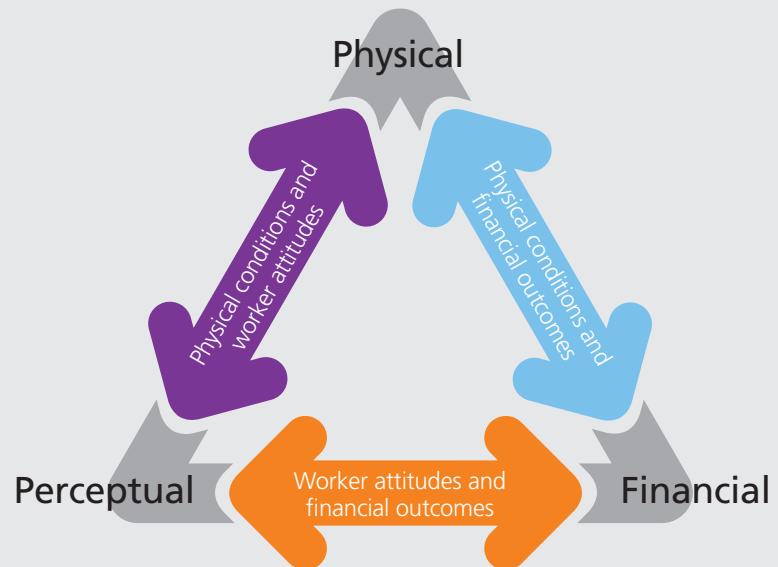
One of the key barriers to incorporating health, wellbeing and productivity considerations into business decisions has been confusion around what to measure and how.

This report proposes a simple, high level framework for measuring organisational or financial outcomes (such as absence rates, staff turnover and medical complaints) and relating those back to the physical features of buildings and employee perceptions. Many organisations are already sitting on a treasure trove of information that, with a little sifting, could yield immediate improvement strategies for their two biggest expenses – people and places, and the relationship between the two.

By encouraging businesses to do this for themselves in their own buildings, we hope to make the business case argument personal and verifiable.

This report proposes a simple, high level framework for measuring organisational outcomes and relating those back to the physical features of buildings and employee perceptions.

Summary of metrics framework and key relationships



Healthy, productive...green?

We have addressed very transparently the ways in which strategies to maximise health, wellbeing and productivity outcomes are compatible with (and even enhanced by) strategies to minimise energy and resource use. It seems there is often a 'virtuous circle' of good design that works for both people and planet, for example maximising daylight, enabling user control and designing in biodiversity.

However, there are also some contradictions and challenges as well as the win-wins, particularly in hot and humid climates. This shows the importance of ongoing product and systems innovation to increase energy efficiency and improve the experience for occupiers; and the need for the real estate sector to help drive grid decarbonisation through installation of renewables and community-scale low carbon solutions.

Ultimately, the report findings undeniably affirm that buildings can maximise benefits for people, and leave the planet better off as well. Low carbon, resource efficient, healthy and productive – fundamentally, this is about higher quality buildings.



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