

THE ADDED VALUE OF SERVICE DESIGN

FOCUS ON USERS

If you really want to benefit from a new work environment, it is advisable to rethink and reorganise the facilities and services around it. Of course this should be done as much as possible from a user's perspective. Service design makes this possible.

By John Dommerholt and Rob Sparnaay

Designing and organising integrated and innovative services is becoming an indispensable link when creating an attractive and productive work environment. Activity-based working, and especially the desire to realise attractive meeting areas with a high experiential value, are driving this development. This article gives a brief introduction to the community floor and then discusses the added value of service design and integrated design. Many large organizations have adopted activity-based working. Employees no longer have a fixed workplace, but look for the workplace that best suits the activity that they want to do at that moment. Central areas, such as the entrance, reception hall and restaurant acquire a different function – in the past they were not or hardly used during a great part of the day, but now they have become central meeting places. Places for working, meeting people, consulting, eating and relaxing.

COMMUNITY FLOOR

There is a new trend discernable, especially in the redevelopment of buildings and in introduction programmes for activity-based working. The central facilities are increasingly being concentrated, but they are also used as the carrier of the organization's or building's culture and identity. Rather than offering facilities in different places throughout the building, more organizations are opting for a community floor, where all facilities for meeting, inspiration and interaction come together. It offers employees an incentive to 'return' to the office and try to connect with colleagues. It also contributes to the yield per square metre of floor space and consequently to more efficient operations.

And increasingly often such a community floor is a public space, easily accessible for outside visitors. What you also see is that several organizations share a single community floor. The development of the community floor for the Smart Services Campus in Heerlen is a good example of this.

COMMUNITY HUBS

In larger office environments one also finds, besides the central community floor, peripheral community hubs. This miniature version of the community floor includes facilities for meeting people and relaxing and provides central services such as coffee, multifunctionals, etc., intended for a specific part of the building or a division. These are lively places, a favoured hangout and source of pride among employees. Especially if employees are given the opportunity to express their identity through them.

SMART SERVICES CAMPUS, HEERLEN

Location :	In Heerlen a Smart Services Campus is under construction: an initiative of the Province of Limburg, Maastricht University and pension provider APG.
Goal:	the campus means to create a breeding ground for new businesses, innovations and talent development in the area of smart services. This comes about through the interaction of learning, research and entrepreneurship.
Organizations:	the campus hosts established companies such as Accenture and Conclusion, as well as numerous start-ups and self-employed workers.
Community floor:	On the directions of the campus organization, Hospitality Group is developing the concept for the community floor, the creative heart of the campus. A place that is all about meeting people, collaborating and sharing knowledge.

SERVICE DESIGN

Service Design is a relatively new discipline aimed at designing new services. An important aspect is the focus on optimizing the experience and interaction. Thinking in terms of Service Design offers facility management a new perspective. Together with IT and HRM the facility services for the organization and staff can be organised in a new way. An integrated design of services is becoming the new standard in this context. In most organizations support services are still organised separately. Facility services are often still based on the traditional classification of cleaning, catering, reception desk, handyman, etc.

FOCUS ON USERS

In Service Design the user is the focal point. After establishing the user's wishes and needs, the services are organised and detailed. Adding value is of central importance. How can services contribute to making an organization and its staff function optimally? The community floor or hub is one of the places where Service Design can add value directly and visibly. But in the end Service Design needs a broader interpretation. Service Design is tailor-made: what fits and works in one organization could be off the mark elsewhere. A Service Design approach may entail that services are organised differently, for instance by bundling services or a broader set of duties. But it may also include closer-by and more accessible services and resources, pop-up services, or creating surprises. In this way, Service Design contributes to an attractive work environment, with the facilities to match: a work environment that employees take pride in.

ENSEMBLE OF SURROUNDINGS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The application of Service Design adds a new dimension to the design process. Enabling users - the starting point - to function optimally requires a different approach to the design process. In user-oriented designing and planning the surroundings, facilities and services are designed in unison, and in line with the organization's ambitions. As such, all elements must be in harmony, which requires a comprehensive perspective.

A useful instrument to achieve this is the guest journey. On a guest journey, you - as an employee, visitor or supplier - visit the building, the facilities and services from a user perspective. In a virtual setting you find out how you - as a user - would like to work or communicate, and what you are experiencing or would like to experience. Having a guest journey helps to develop an integrated vision on both the physical environment as well as the services.

User-oriented designing and planning and the Service Design approach means a fundamental change to the design process. No individual and often technical solutions or flexible workplaces that appear to be inspired mostly by cost savings, but a choice for offering strong facilities and creating value together.



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