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NY, NJ, PA, CT, MA, DE, FL

Cost Effective Renovation Approaches

When the economy trends downward, our clients have to scramble to adjust and adapt. Organizations are squeezed from all sides as state governments threaten inevitable funding cuts, sources of private sector funding dry up and market share shrinks, all while operational costs continue to rise.

These forces lead to program closings, consolidations and the tabling of new planning initiatives. As our clients' strategic planning partner, we have been challenged with helping to manage the related physical plant changes in innovative and cost effective ways.

History has shown that disciplined companies who focus on their core strengths can actually gain market share in "down periods" as their less disciplined competitors lose traction. By contracting intelligently in non-revenue generating areas, opportunities can be created to cost effectively increase revenue generating programs. For example, consolidating or shifting office areas into less "valuable" space (such as a basement) can allow for a company to expand its "billable square footage".

One of the keys to success in implementing such strategies is an organizational acceptance at the "cultural level" since the changes are both operational and architectural. Flexibility in planning and execution are critical to managing current change and increasing "reaction time" to future changes. Open space planning using systems workstations instead of hard partitions and furniture instead of built-in millwork will reduce construction costs by avoiding expensive relocations of HVAC outlets, sprinkler heads & ceiling light fixtures. This approach also allows for the salvage and re-use of newer furniture components from other locations. Parallel operational strategies such as hoteling and telecommuting allow fewer workstations to serve the same number of staff.

By using technology effectively in tandem with new operational approaches, the first costs of renovations can be reduced. For example, the use of wireless information networks eliminates the costs of running cabling from point to point inside walls and above ceilings. Correspondingly, the use of notebook versus desktop computers fosters the concepts of hoteling and telecommuting. Conference, meeting and training spaces can be overlapped if designed properly for staggered dual use, thereby reducing the amount of space renovated. To support this multi-use concept, modular furniture that can be configured in different functional arrangements should be specified. Simple, neutral finishes such as paint should be used to reduce construction costs and make the aesthetic blending of salvaged furnishings easier to achieve.

Even during tough economic times, successful organizations do not stand still. Solid companies do not allow market forces to dictate undisciplined change. Even contraction is managed to allow avenues for growth.



John W. Baumgarten - Architect



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with Icon Interiors