



The Organic Workspace

White Paper

HAWORTH®

SUSTAINABILITY EQUALS SUSTENANCE

We've been wholly committed to the 'green' agenda for years now, up to the point where we find ourselves in the latest generation of sustainable thinking, where buildings and interiors are designed and created according to the very widest definition of the term. The Organic Workspace concept falls naturally under the 'Eco' heading, carrying as it does lessons learnt from nature and the sense of a self-sustaining, almost biological entity. But to Haworth, now – and to the leading thinkers in this area – 'sustainable' does not mean simply energy efficient, recycled or recyclable, waste-minimal. It doesn't just mean a product, interior or building that will survive longer than ones made a generation ago. A sustainable workspace must now actually sustain, give sustenance. It must enable people to live and work in better and more humane conditions, promote the social and health-giving elements of an interior, and support the widest possible range of work styles. That is why the Organic Workspace is truly organic, and truly sustainable.

There are strong human and business cases for sustainability, as well as the strictly environmental one. From the beginning of the 'holistic' Organic Workspace concept, the idea has been to provide our customers with products and environments that respond to change and move with it.

Since the arrival of the world wide web and powerful digital communication technologies, companies are more decentralized, less stable, with flatter management structures, operating in faster changing markets and

employing 'knowledge workers' who are getting used to the fact that change, more than ever, is the only constant. Teams and collaborative groups are formed and re-formed almost daily; globally, up to 40 per cent of office space per year is subject to 'churn'.

With Organic Workspace's flexibility, ease of adaptation and ability to re-configure and re-use all the elements that make up a work interior, including floors and walls, we can save a company up to 90 per cent of the cost of churn – a very persuasive argument. Here is where sustainability becomes one with adaptability; we have been able to help our customers re-use their furniture and wall systems over and over again, allowing up to 50 per cent more office changes than would previously have been possible.

Naturally, in sustainable product design, Haworth is deeply committed to the 'Cradle to Cradle' manufacturing philosophy of William McDonough and Michael Braungart, and all our recent product innovations enjoy certification under that exacting standard. For example the Very chair family is made with up to 71 per cent recycled content and up to 98 per cent recyclable materials, while the Brazo task light, with its LED light source, uses up to 65 per cent less power than compact fluorescent lamps.

Similarly, our commitment to sustainability throughout the workspace covers recycled and recyclable (or re-used and re-useable) materials, the maximum amount of natural

light, an abundance of clean air delivered under raised access floors to individual desks, and an overall unending quest for energy efficiency. It even goes back to the building's beginning, seeking ways to cut construction waste and helping our clients to achieve their own environmental certification.

The concept of sustainability can also be applied to the organization as a whole. Personal comfort is key to this, in that a comfortable workforce is a happier and more productive one – and one, crucially, more likely to stay in the organization longer, with all the benefits that implies. A sustainable workspace makes for a sustainable organization. Natural light and fresh air are the most important factors in human comfort – 33 per cent of respondents in Blumberg's Office Worker Poll of 2008 said they had accepted or left a job because of the condition of the building they worked in.

It all adds up to what Franklin Becker, the distinguished workplace theorist, has called 'organizational ecology', a term he uses to describe the combination of physical environment and social interaction conducted over time. Such an idea demonstrates how important it is that the entire workspace design and management strategy should be joined up – organic – with all the elements affecting all the others. But the key element of the Organic Workspace is the people.

It's no secret that we are very proud of One Haworth Center, the new headquarters building in our corporate home of Holland, Michigan. With our designers and architects, and with massive input from our staff members, the building has been conceived and executed as a living, breathing exemplar of all the concepts discussed in this paper. Its LEED Gold certification, its almost obsessive insistence on recycling and re-using 99 per cent of the old building's fabric and fittings, its (for example) green roof and rainwater collection and management systems, its emphasis on natural light, its ability to configure and re-configure the range of work styles, all demonstrate to the world that we take sustainability, in its 'soft' as well as 'hard' forms, very seriously indeed.

One Haworth Center is also an eloquent expression of a radically overhauled corporate identity, by which Haworth makes the transition from a manufacturer to a trusted advisor, who by its own highly visible admission is going through the same processes as its clients or partners. We are committed to long term relationship with those clients; the Organic Workspace is the key concept which will give those relationships trust and meaning over many years, and One Haworth Center is the best possible proof that we have put our money firmly where our mouth is. What other company in this industry can say that?