Think tank tests 'user friendly' meeting area

CAN CERTAIN office environments block the work activities of employees? "You bet," say office design experts. They point to the growing exporate trend of removing the obstacles from the work environment and making offices more "user friendly," General Motors is a good example. In an attempt to free executives from the mind constraints of the every-day work environment, General Motors has created a new "think-tank" meeting facility in the Sheffield Plaza office

building in Troy. In this specially designed, frustration-free setting, GM menangers collectively plan the company's future.

"PEOPLE WHO have used our "PEOPLE WHO have used

"PEOPLE WHO have used our meeting space want to bring this type of experience to their own organizations." sail David Beas, organization development consultant with the organization development consultant with the Activity.

(NAVSA).

"While facility users meet together most of the day, advanced design work conference facility." We are getting requests from all around the corporation to hold meetings here."

Modular offices are stocked with personal computers, communications equipment and other updated technolo-gy to provide users access to their own home office systems when necessary.

"THE GOAL here was to facilitate individual and group creativity," said Bess. "We wanted to create an environment where company executives could get away from distractions and would be stimulated to look at things in a new

Bess said the recent restructuring of the GM divisions necessitates doing business differently. The company cre-ated the NAVSA group to help facili-tate the new thinking that must accom-

while the GM facility may be ahead of the times, the concept of quality work environment is gaining attention.

furniture. Now we fit the furniture to people. . . . If we can increase the comfort of the employee, we can increase their job safisfaction and work efforts.'

— Gloria Coffin, manager Officenter, Furniture and Accessories

THE MOVE to make the office envi-ronment more attuned to the needs of the office worker orginated during the 1950s and '60s with the postwar infor-

white the CAM facility many of the times, the concept of quantity the cordering work environment is gaining attention.

"I DEFINITELY think the trend is to design work environments to accommodate the needs of the users and facilitate certain special types of behavior," said architect Carl Roehling of Giffels/ Hoyem Basso.

Roehling, whose firm designed the NAVSA facility, noted that before the think-tank was available, GM personnel met in makeshift spaces around the Detroit area.

"They were just kind of vagabonds, "They were just kind of vagabonds," they rented didn't reinforce where rented didn't reinforce make things worker-adaptable office environments.

"Robert SNYDER, an administration of offers some caution—and the confortable and productive with comfortable and productive with co

work Now the space supports them," he said.

The architect said the work environment can reinforce the company culture and support the way a company conducts business. He uses his own office as an example.

"Our present physical arrangement doesn't reinforce our philosophy of operation, namely teamwork aided by casual communication," Rochling continued.

"Our principals' offices, while near their staif, are apread away from each other. When we redo the office, we will amke unrealistic claims about Increase in ordinates and their staif, are apread away from each other. When we redo the office, we will amke unrealistic claims about Increase in ordinates and their staif, are apread away from each other. When we redo the office, we will amke unrealistic claims about Increase in ordinates and the stain of the stain of the staif, are apread away from each other. When we redo the office, we will ark of the staif of the st

Ways Means
The Capability Center

having a hard time defining productivi-ty in the white collar setting. "Is it longer memos? Longer megtings?"

ON THE OTHER hand, Snyder said it is easier to identify inhibitors or obstacles to production. He named a few:

• Long rows of private offices with doors closed.

• Too much noise, separation and isolation of staff members.

isolation of staff members.

Status symbols — making office space a factor of status rather than function.

"The key is to not let the office environment become an obstacle to getting the job done," emphasized Snyder.

"WE USED TO try to fit people to the furniture. Now we fit the furniture to people," said Gloria Coffin, manager of Officenter, Furniture and Accesso-ries in Bloomfield Hills.

"If we can increase the comfort of the employee, we can increase their job satisfaction and work efforts." A key element to creating comfortable office environments is well-designed office furnishings, said Coffin.

"With Ethospace we have created an adaptable workspace that should give an individual the flexibility to change the space at will." said Bonner. Ethospace work stations are being used at both the NAVSA facility and the new Domino's Pizza Headquarters outside Ann Arbor.



Executives attending planning sessions at GM's North American Vehicle Systems Activity in Troy are able to keep in touch with home offices using

computers, telephones and other technical equipment in this area.

Focus:HOPE offers training as machinist

Focus:HOPE has announced openings in its eight-month machinist training program.
Contact should be made with either an Oakland County Social Services caseworker for information on the Michigan Opportunities in Skills training pro-gram, or by calling Focus:Hope in Detroit at 883-7440 during business hours.

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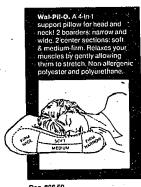
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