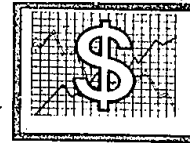


Monthly

Business

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2000

suburban life inside



(F10)

Perfect fit

Design engineers tailor functional interiors

By Penny Wright
special writer

What's out: the "cookie cutter" approach to designing office and industrial buildings.

What's in: adaptable design, integrating an owner's current and future needs with the latest technology.

For building design engineers, the change is touching off new challenges and a need for new engineers with new skills.

"There was a time when our work was done by draftsmen who learned to design buildings by drawing the same design over and over again," said Ralph Steele. He is executive vice president of Giffels/Hoyem-Basso Associates Inc., a Troy architectural and engineering firm.

"TODAY OUR engineers design building systems under conditions where the state of the art changes daily. Engineers have to be innovative and adaptable," Steele said.

Take, for example, the new \$20 million CBS/Fox Video Operations Center

at the northwest corner of the I-275-Seven Mile interchange in Livonia. The russet, brick-and-glass sheathed building still is a few months from completion, but Steele can't say enough good things about the 460,000-square-foot facility.

"It's a project where we really had a hand on what the owners needed and put our people in a position to give them what they wanted," Steele said.

CBS/Fox Video is a high-volume cassette manufacturer. It required specialized technical production areas along with work spaces suited to a professional staff.

STEELE'S FIRM answered those needs by designing a combination office-manufacturing-warehouse complex sited against a backdrop of ponds and woods.

The sprawling building combines advanced communication and laboratory systems with such employee amenities as a videotape library, exercise facility, and scenic jogging/nature path.

To accommodate future growth, there are open-office furniture and un-

derfloor duct systems.

That is the type of project which engineers and architects are increasingly apt to face in the future, said Steele, whose firm has extensive experience designing high-tech research and laboratory facilities.

"OWNERS ARE becoming more sophisticated and are demanding different building functions," he said.

"Our clients are becoming more informational. Along with computing facilities, the CBS/Fox building will have teleconferencing (video-telephone communications) capabilities."

Giffels/Hoyem-Basso has more recently designed communication systems for General Motors, Chrysler and the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce.

Steele believes his company must respond to such sophisticated needs or risk being passed by. "It's the job of our whole office to know what's happening and be up on the latest technological developments."

RAPID CHANGES in technology

have influenced the kind of person his firm hires.

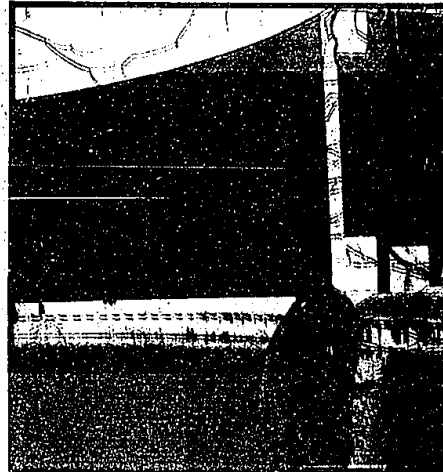
"We need highly technical people" — people who are able to apply updated technology to entire building systems, including communications, security, fire, heating-cooling, ventilating and energy-monitoring.

Steele maintains that advancement in the engineering profession still requires being a self-starter, doing what it takes to get the job done, doing more than you get paid for, striving for professional and personal growth and having a good attitude.

"Those particular requirements will probably only be around for the next three or four millennia," he laughed.

Steele is "bullish" about the current business climate in Michigan. "I have never known a time when we have had so much construction going on. Most of the architectural and engineering firms that survived the downsizing in 1982 are doing great."

The outlook for engineering jobs in the building design and construction fields also is bright, according to Steele.



Ralph Steele, of the Troy architect-engineering firm of Giffels/Hoyem-Basso, shows off the CBS/Fox Video building under construction along I-275 in Livonia.

Going it alone with help from others

By Teri Denas
staff writerStrengthen business
with a winning team

Jan Zupick is not particularly commanding, but the head of the Cincinnati-based Entrepreneurship Institute does know how to get attention when he describes how a business person should phrase an answer to the question, "How's business?"

Speaking before a business conference recently, Zupick gave a big grin and, stretching out both arms, replied in a booming voice — "Unbelievable!"

Maybe it's a bit of an exaggeration, especially if you've just filed for Chapter 11 in bankruptcy court, but the message does leave you with a clear sense of optimism. And positive attitude was the order of the day when nearly 55 business experts were drawn together for two days last month to share business tips for the aspiring entrepreneur.

AT THE ANNUAL Entrepreneurship Forum held in the Southfield Hilton Inn, local successful business people gave practical, first-hand advice to nearly 150 people on topics ranging from personnel matters and business promotions, to using professional resources and the role of the corporate chief executive officer.

Dwight Carlson, head of Farmington Hills-based Perceptron Inc., knows something of what makes up a successful corporate officer. Since he founded an auto-emissions firm in his basement in 1968, he has brought it along and now employs 160 people.

In a small firm, he advised that a corporate executive officer should be willing to "take risks in order to lead change," but he or she must first understand what needs to be done, and then how to communicate that to others. As long as you clearly describe that corporate strategy to others who can implement it, it's not important that you're able to perform every function, yourself, he said.

Carlson said one of the biggest motivators that should be projected to employees is the perception of being part of a "winning team."

FRED COURIER, founder of Market Opinion Research in Detroit, said treating employees as valuable resources is a key to success and that means ensuring that the job helps an employee grow as a person. "If you help people to grow, your company will grow," Courier said. "That's one thing I know, and I didn't even realize it until I was 40."

Besides professional growth, which he listed second in a group of motivators, peer group approval is important. Money is important also but rates third.

Courier emphasized people skills, saying corporate officers should get to know their employees, even if casually over lunch, to learn what they need as professionals.

In evaluating employees, he stressed fairness and a 90-day trial period because everyone "makes mistakes."

And not to be overlooked was this tidbit: "When you hear gripes on housekeeping conditions, you act," he said, "even if you think you can't spend the money. Those are the kinds of things that screw up productivity."

A LIVONIA business owner, Carmen Munoz, broke gender barriers as a woman business chief in the auto industry. In the process, the owner of Munoz Machine Products learned not only how to sell herself as a tough business person but also how to promote her company. Since she started her business in March 1984, sales have risen to \$1.3 million in 14 months.

Her message was simple: Promotion should never be undervalued. "The more time you devote to it (selling), the farther along you'll get."

Munoz' work in a highly competitive field taught

her that problems, such as complaints from customers, need to be addressed immediately. "I had to provide a product that they never found a problem with or within two hours I had a quality man show up," she said.

"Mediocrity doesn't sell anything," she said. "You have to give service that's above the competition."

Above all, she stressed, "Know your product, and don't let anyone represent you who doesn't know your product."

FINDING PROFESSIONAL help also is important. Jon Greenwald, senior consultant for Executive Consulting Services, warned against hiring a consultant "who has lived in an ivory tower. Get someone with experience and will deliver an agreed-upon result within budget and on time."

Greenwald said that many business people make the mistake of waiting too long to seek outside assistance, thereby being left in a vulnerable position.

On the other end was James Luzzello, president of Edgewood Tool and Manufacturing, who said, "I always thought I could do it better myself." But he realized that as a company grows it is impractical to expect to be able to perform every job well.

He advised first looking within your own business for capable help before going outside the firm. He told of a personal experience that showed the error of simply "throwing a problem at an outside professional."

During one season's labor negotiations he decided to hire a labor attorney to handle negotiations, which had become increasingly complicated.

He found that the resulting contract didn't reflect his management style or personal feelings. Employee relations also became strained because workers felt "I didn't want to talk to them face to face."

Today, he still doesn't sit at the bargaining table but he does draft the contract and asks the attorney to review it and put it in proper legal terms.

In summary, he said: "Know your problems, plug in the right resource person, but stay involved."

Authors' vision incompatible with reality

By Marilyn Fitchett
staff writer

Don't be misled by the title. "Re-Inventing the Corporation" (Warner Books) probably should be called "Megatrends II."

Following the success of the best-seller that described the social, political and economic changes this country will be facing, John Naisbitt and co-author and wife Patricia Aburdene don't tell us how to reinvent the corporation as much as tell corporate leaders what demands are going to be placed on the workplace for the rest of the century.

Meeting those demands will mean a major overhaul of how corporations do business and especially how they deal with their employees, Naisbitt and Aburdene say. Consider:

By 1987 more people will be leaving the labor force than will be joining it. If, as the authors predict, full employment is just around the corner, personnel departments will be beside themselves trying to fill positions with competent workers.

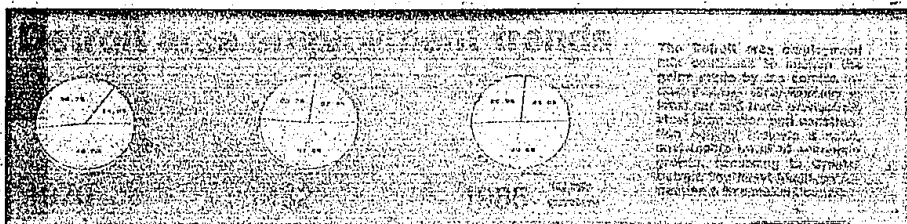
BUT BEFORE grappling with issues, Naisbitt

and Aburdene contend that the first step in reinventing the corporation is "a powerful vision — a whole new sense of where the company is going and how to get there."

Who has such a vision? Roger Smith in transforming General Motors with the development of Saturn Corp. and the purchase of Electronic Data Systems. W.L. Gore & Associates, maker of Gore-tex, the sports and military fabric, a company that has no titles, no bosses and no lines of authority and whose only two objectives are to make money and have fun.

After deciding on a vision, the "new information" corporation must decide on a structure and "help attract people who can help realize it by adopting the vision as their own and sharing responsibility for achieving it."

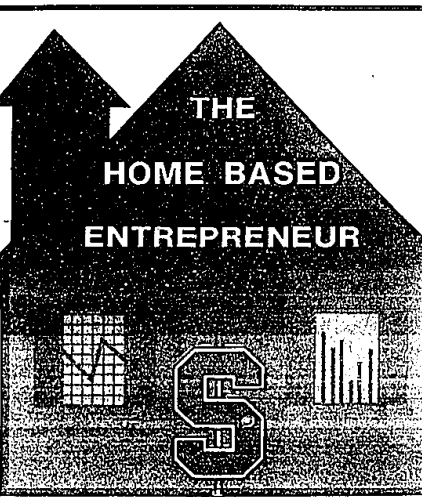
NAISBITT AND ABDURDENE see the "corporation" as an analogue for the rest of society. "Education and health care will become increasingly important to business, which will have to abandon its 'condescending' attitude toward corporate social responsibility."



business books

Maybe, but I think you'll be hard pressed to convince much of corporate America, and therein lies the problem with "Re-Inventing the Corporation." It's a book that tangles its ideas in more confusion with teaching the principles of job sharing instead of offering suggestions for our ailing smoketask industries. The examples paraded in front of us are of fledgling firms that have not withstood the test of time. Foreign competition is all but ignored. A price tag is never stamped on workplace improvements.

There's no doubt that corporate rigidity is costly in terms of lost production and disgruntled employees. And that corporations are going to have to offer more carrots to a shrinking workforce. But to think of this book as a prescription for corporate woes is expecting more than the authors can deliver. Stick with the trends, folks.

By Sharon Dargay
staff writer

For partners Lorraine Fenster and Barbara Gash, a business lunch may mean a quick snack over a telephone call.

Their working day often starts around 5 a.m., stretching well into late evening and dodging household chores, family commitments and leisure activities along the way.

A cluttered laundry room in Gash's Bloomfield Township home and a kitchen table in Fenster's West Bloomfield residence, serve as their offices.

"The family has to be supportive," Gash said, with Fenster interjecting, "But the clutter sometimes..."

"Working late hours, understanding that the cutting board has to be off the table before dinner. We work until midnight sometimes," Gash continued.

"I'll midnight only?" Fenster chided, adding "I never expected glamor."

What may sound like self-imposed slavery is business as usual for the neophyte entrepreneurs. The fagging pace and thick-skinned determination are almost a necessity for these women — not because the pair create and sell their own line of suede accessories — but because they work at home.

They're among 10 million home-based entrepreneurs nationwide, according to Ruthann Brodsky, a Bloomfield Hills communications consultant who also teaches a workshop for home-based businesspersons in Cranbrook's PM series.

The number of home-based businesses is expected to jump another five million by 1995. And the majority of those firms will be run by women, like Fenster and Gash, two of Brodsky's star graduates.

"Two million women now are running their own businesses," Brodsky noted. "That's an increase of 43 percent from 10 years ago, and it's estimated that (the number of) women who run their own businesses is growing 10 times faster than men."

"Why are women starting their own businesses? If you're a woman, I don't care how good you are, it's hard to make it to the top of the corporate ladder. And if you do, you're usually sacrificing something."

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES, personal satisfaction and flexibility are major advantages to home-based firms, formerly called "cottage industries." They're also especially attractive to women who want to maintain careers while raising their families and to those with "wacky nests."

"Some people feel they're wasting their time doing what they're doing. Some people are disenchanted with the corporation. Some people go into their own business because they want added income. Some want to do what they really love doing," she explained.

"You name it, you probably can be it."

Brodsky said nearly any kind of business can survive in a residential setting, if planned and operated with professional savvy. Dog-grooming, catering, miniature-making, architectural design and psychiatric counseling are just a few of the dreams that her students hope to turn into profit-making ventures.

Undercapitalization is a major reason why some of them will fail. Another is the failure to integrate work and family under the same roof.

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