

WHO USES workplaces, and WHY?	<i>Individual goals</i>	<i>Organizational goals</i>	<i>Societal goals</i>
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I. WHO USES WORKPLACES --AND WHY?

"My first priority is to the citizens of this county, to give them the best, most effective criminal justice system we can provide. But we've got to do that with a budget that's far too small. That means that we're going to have to have to handle more cases more quickly, and process defendants through the building faster. This old shell just won't handle the workload we're delivering. We've got clerks working in corners of hallways on temporary desks, working in spaces where defendants are waiting before their appearances at the bench. I have to be fair to my workers, too; that's a dangerous situation for them that they shouldn't be subjected to." -- a Circuit Court justice on the need for a new court facility.

We began our process by doing some basic thinking about what a workplace was all about -- and by workplace, we mean to say any place where organized activity goes on, whether that is an office or a school or a factory. Why are workplaces built or bought? In order to satisfy a set of goals -- the goals of the organization in particular, but also the goals of the society that surrounds it and the goals of the individuals who are a part of it.

These goals have varying degrees of specificity, as seen in Table 1. At the largest scale, there are what we can call **philosophies or ideals**, things we believe in and which guide our decisions. These will include such philosophies as TQM or outcome-based education for organizations; ideals of equal rights and progress as a culture; and ideals of fairness and excellence as individuals. These are only examples -- there are thousands of others.

In each case, these ideals are translated into a series of **goals** to be achieved-- the philosophy of TQM spawns goals such as 100% customer satisfaction and zero defects; the ideal of equal rights has led to the goal of non-discrimination in hiring; the ideal of personal excellence may lead to the goal of continuing education. Attainment of these goals can often be measured or otherwise evaluated. But even these goals are still one step away from what happens in action. Goals have to lead to a set of **operational strategies**, or put more simply, a system of things to do in order to achieve the goal and thus satisfy the basic ideals. The goal of customer satisfaction may lead to the act of holding focus group meetings with current customers, for instance.

What we are arguing in this framework is that *environmental quality is simply defined as how well a particular place allows and assists the achievement of all of the goals that are set for it.* It's always a relative definition -- the same environment may be highly suited to one use or one group and not to another, or it may be satisfactory for the organization but not for the larger society around it.

	Society	Organization	Individual
Philosophies, Ideals and Beliefs	Equal rights for all citizens	Total Quality Management	Continual advancement and self-improvement
Goals	Non-discrimination in hiring practices	Complete customer satisfaction	Completing a university degree
Operational Strategies	Affirmative action and fair-hiring laws, promotion of minority scholarships and training programs, etc.	Immediate-response service practices, holding focus groups with customers, strengthening guarantees, etc.	Enrolling, attending classes, doing homework, studying for tests, applying new knowledge to work problems, etc.

Table 1 -- An Example of Philosophies, Goals and Strategies

When we look at these three levels of goals, we need to understand that people, organizations and even societies do not always act in a consistent fashion. They may strongly adhere to a particular philosophy and still act in ways that are counter to it, either through misunderstanding the nature and effects of their actions or through the pressing needs of some particular circumstance or larger context. Thus, one of the first questions that must be asked when examining the workplace is to what extent the operational strategies that are carried out in that place are reflective of and supportive of the participants' larger goals and ideals? This is not an environmental question, and the answers to it are likely not going to be architectural; but a remarkable number of expressions of building dissatisfaction stem from this sort of failure of correspondence between ideals, goals and acts. This is crucial knowledge for those involved in workplace assessment.

Ultimately, the ability of the workplace to fulfill the full range of goals of individuals, organizations, and larger societies determines its overall success. A valid and comprehensive evaluation of workplaces must examine each of these three unique perspectives.

Individual Goals

The desired goals from the individual's viewpoint include *economic gain* in the form of income and benefits, of course, but it also includes *biological needs* such as comfort,

healthful conditions, and personal safety; *psychological goals* including satisfaction, stability, delight, identity and security; and *social goals* such as status and group membership.

If the goals of the individual are not recognized and achieved, the workplace will suffer from workers who are frustrated and resentful, who are limited in their ability to function, who feel that work is a burden rather than an expression of themselves and their skills, who may in fact be ill more often and may stay with the company for a shorter amount of time.

Organizational Goals

Because organizations are different kinds of entities than people, the desired goals from the organization's standpoint are different. Organizational goals generally begin with *survival and growth*, the need to make a profit and continue operations. But within that large goal lie several others: the *need for productivity and efficiency* which allow a company to be competitive in its field; the *need to change* in response to new conditions and new opportunities; the *need to reduce risk* in order to avoid sudden and unforeseen problems; and *a desire for recognition* or social status, symbolic expressions of position both in the market and within the larger culture.

If the goals of the organization are not recognized and achieved, the workplace will suffer from management who feel as though the place is inappropriate to their larger mission, that it is no longer viable as a capital asset, that it stands in the way of their market and product needs, and that it should be sold, closed or even abandoned.

Social Goals

The goals which the larger society holds for the workplace are again different. They include the *need to uphold cultural ideals* by creating things which are broadly valued and behaving in ways which are generally accepted; the *need for conservation and sustainability* in order to ensure the continued viability of the culture; the *need to maintain order and community*, through conformance to established regulations and the practice of fair relations with neighbors and competitors; the *need to push for progress*, to go beyond current standards and help us become a better society; and the need for *ethical and equitable behavior*, ensuring that the success of any one party does not come at intolerable expense to others.

If the goals of the larger society are not recognized and achieved, the workplace will suffer politically by being seen as a "bad neighbor;" it will suffer economically by unnecessarily and repeatedly expending energy and resources confronting cultural standards rather than moving with the stream of society; and the larger society will suffer by unnecessarily spending its time and energy in combative efforts, by contributing resources to a particular workplace beyond the benefits it will receive, or by spending too much to maintain the present without sufficient consideration for the future.

In general, then, workplaces are used by individuals, organizations and societies in order to achieve a remarkably diverse set of goals. The failure to meet these goals will result in workplaces which unnecessarily absorb human and material resources and which do not provide the conditions for human, organizational or cultural health and satisfaction.

We need a closer examination of the aspects of the workplace which allow us to reach these goals. This is the subject of our next question: what exactly is a workplace, and how does it work?