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Comments on Control Is Beautiful: Measuring Facility Performance as if People (and Buildings) Really Mattered by James A. Wise

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There were for me two very important statements in Jim Wise's Kaynote paper. The first notes that criteria met at one performance level distribute effects to other levels. How difficult it is to get to people to realize that the investment in "good things" (proper building design, proper seating, proper jobs) pays off in ways beyond the original focus. In dealing with my clients, this often gets referred to as 'soft benefits'. There is very little room in investment calculations for soft benefits. The more that A.S.T.M. can quantify these interactions, the sooner we will all benefit in creating better work and living environments for people.

The second important point, for me, was his acknowledgement that applying the control systems approach to facility performance measurement will not be easy. This is because it requires people to work across disciplines and to ask questions in new ways. I see so much potential if only we all can learn to respect and take into account the skills and knowledge of others. Systems theory helps us to integrate various perspectives and the control systems approach presents an opportunity to further this integration.

Two issues were not mentioned that I would like to add to the 'measurement pot'. The first is the time dimension. How do we take into account the long term effects of a facility that must be measured, in terms of turnover, ability to recruit new staff, etc.

The second issue is the need to recognize that other aspects of one's life can totally overwhelm the impact of the facility. In my area, we use the same scale: Safety - Performance - Growth (presented as Maslow's hierarchy of needs). We combine it with other measures to look at the appropriateness of jobs. How do we combine these with your measures to help us appreciate that all our measures look at only part of the larger system we are all trying to understand?

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