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Comments on Establishing Appropriate Measurements for the Performance of Buildings and the Serviceability of Facilities by Francis T. Ventre

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An important quote from Dr. Ventre's Keynote paper stipulated that, "The users of measurement must define the concepts that are important to them and indicate the empirical variables that reify or realize them."

In order for us, the 'users' of the office environment to function properly, whether we be facilities or design professionals, architects and engineers or 'lay' employees who have a function to perform, the space must meet certain demands. It must be safe, comfortable and functionally responsive. For the sake of discussion, I would propose that we look at the office environment from two perspectives; those concepts that are important to us from the *planning* side and those that are important from the *construction* side.

When planning the space, standards like identifying the planning module, layout strategies and footprint sizes, expansion guidelines, circulation sizes and strategies, core location and definition, and space requirements, combine to form the facility masterplan upon which all initial planning is based and future planning efforts guided. Standards defining all the elements of construction or renovation (e.g. walls, electrical systems, structure, etc.) then form the basis for the measurement of the building proper. Each element, extending from exterior walls and windows, roofs, skylights, foundations and structure, to doors, floors, ceilings, walls and partitions, to mechanical/electrical systems as well as lighting and acoustics could and should have some performance measure associated with them to gauge their success.

Further, once this measurement system is in place, the effectiveness of the building could be assessed on a regular basis, (ideally before the onset of each business planning cycle), signal when something needed to be done, and provide an effective gauge for prioritizing building improvement and justifying capital expenditure spending. Additionally, it could become an assessment gauge on our own performance as well as on what practices to continue as we plan and build for the future.

The challenge before us, as users, is to define these concepts or standards or as Aristotle said 'define the purpose and use before any discussion of technique'. Only after this has been accomplished, can the metrologist or organizations like ASTM begin to *package* this information together in such a way that building performance and serviceability can be measured in a meaningful and internationally accepted and proven way.

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