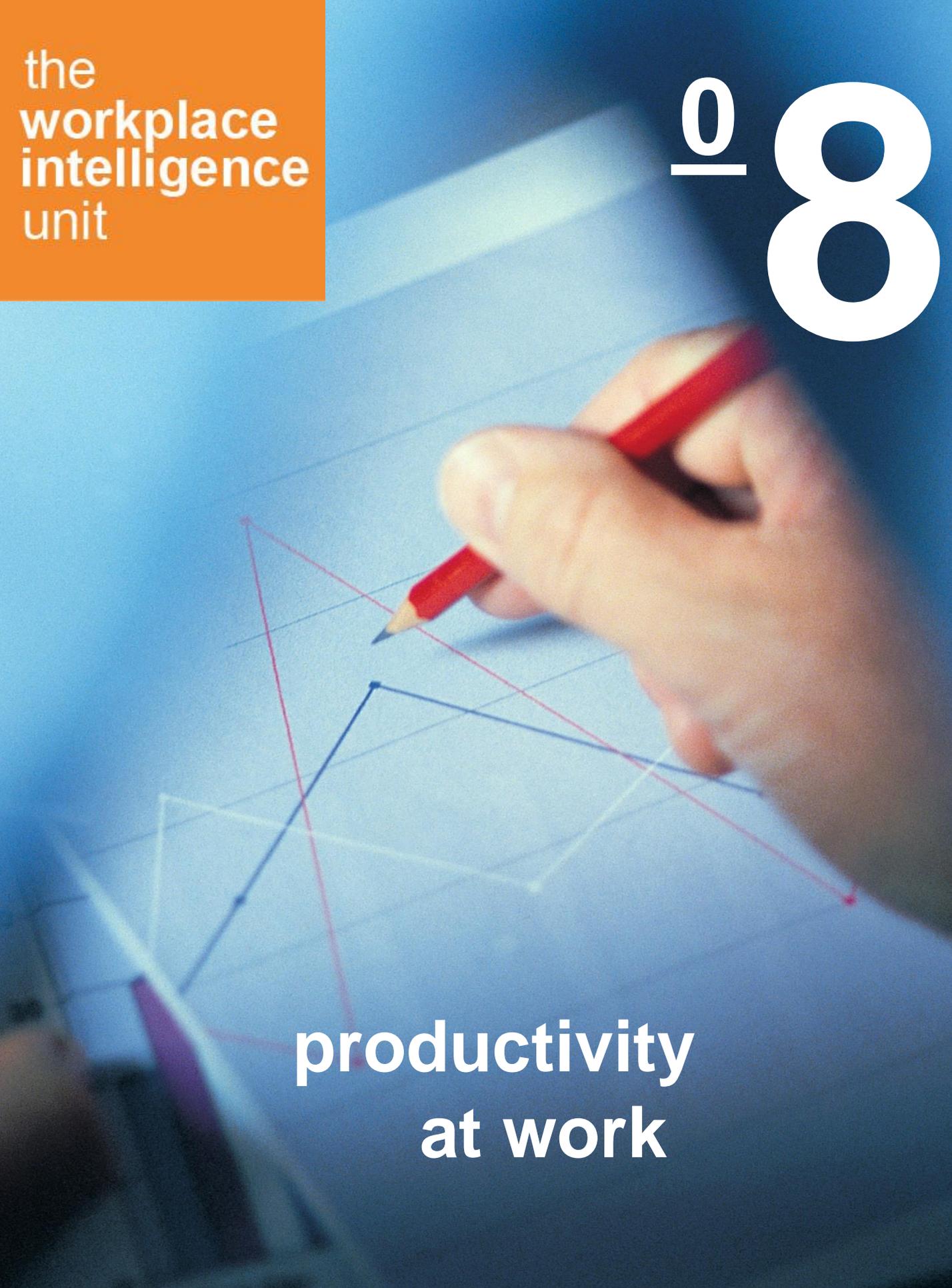


the  
workplace  
intelligence  
unit

08

A hand holding a red pencil is pointing to a line graph on a grid. The graph has several lines in blue, red, and yellow. The background is a blue gradient.

productivity  
at work

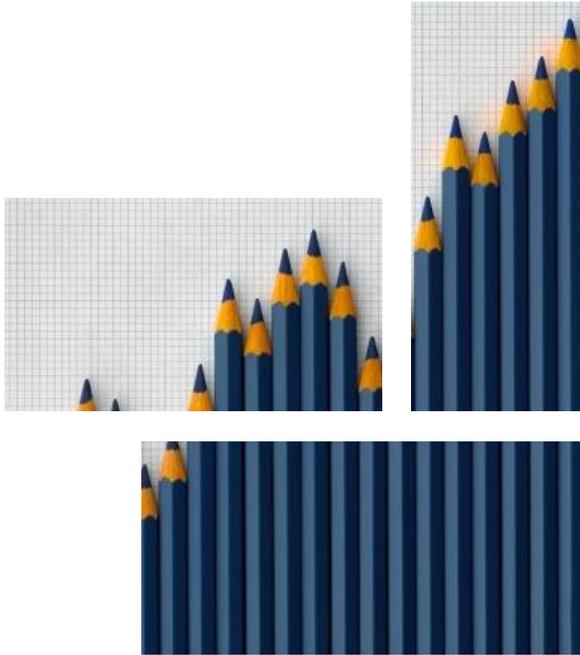
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# productivity at work



Much of the work undertaken by property professionals revolves around the need to reduce or manage costs. Very often such programmes lead to increased densities and elements of flexible working. The benefits are clear but not so compelling if, in the process, impacted employees become frustrated, demoralised and less productive.

Self evidently, this is an issue of high interest to business leaders, but the problem has been that it is very difficult to measure the impact of workplace change on employee productivity. At present, most companies take no steps to measure productivity. Those that do tend to rely on the rather blunt instrument of the self assessment survey. The problem with this, of course, is that assessing your own productivity is a complex judgement and highly subjective too. To make things harder still, not many people, if asked, choose to rate their productivity as low, whatever the circumstances!

Recently the Workplace Intelligence Unit began a research programme in conjunction with The Department of Psychology at University College London and the statistics department at Reading University to come up with a better way to tackle the problem.

The result is the Workplace Productivity Index, a methodology

built around understanding changes in the productive mindset of employees and the relationship with workplace satisfaction. Rather than asking people how productive they think they are, the approach identifies and analyses changes in a battery of dynamics which psychologists identify as describing the 'productive mind set'.

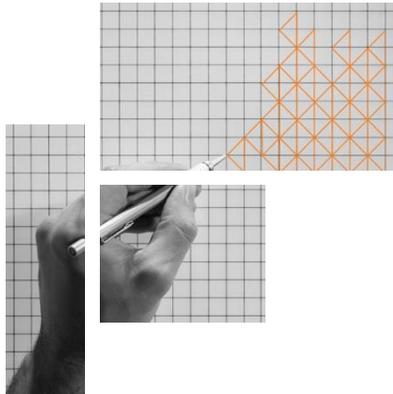
This article gives an insight into the approach, illustrated by results from an early pilot programme.

## using psychometrics

The approach is based on two simple data sets: a psychometric evaluation of occupant productivity and an occupant appraisal of working environment. The data is obtained via two separate questionnaires completed pre and post move, to establish the degree of change. A control group strips out other factors which can impact productivity, for example corporate climate, seasonal changes etc. A statistical correlation is then used

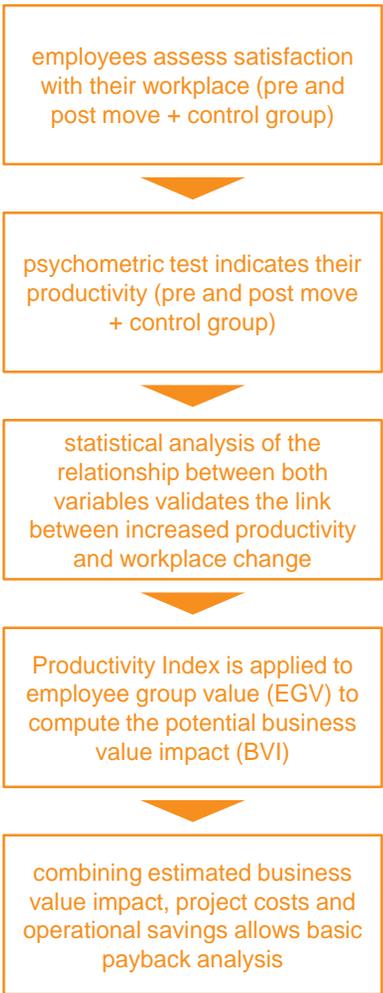
to measure the extent to which enhanced occupant productivity and improved workplace satisfaction are linked and highlight which aspects of the new working environment are valued most highly.

In summary, the methodology allows firms to derive an understanding of the overall impact on productivity resulting from the workplace change and also generates valuable diagnostic information on those aspects of the design which have worked best. The Workplace Productivity Index can be applied to a proxy for value (for example combined salaries) to give an indication of the value of the productivity impact.



### methodology – approach

The schematic below summarises the methodology.



### pre move results and analysis – productivity

The average productivity indicator score suggested that respondents were operating at around 60% of their total productive potential in the old space.

### combined productivity score

group	average
study	61.5
control	63.0

**case study**

Set out here are illustrative data from a pilot programme in a major financial services corporation in the UK. The pilot involved moving a group of over 250 executives from a traditional environment to a modern open plan workplace with few cellular offices, new touchdown areas, breakout spaces and an element of desk share.

In general the responses appeared to reflect a positive, motivated group of individuals with a strong sense of personal responsibility.

Management level respondents felt that they could be more efficient and concentration was an issue. A large proportion of staff who had worked for the company for more than 18 months felt a lack of buzz in their office. This group also found it more difficult to concentrate.

### pre move results and analysis – workplace satisfaction

The average scores for workplace quality were low, at 45.1%, clearly leaving significant room for improvement in the new workspace.

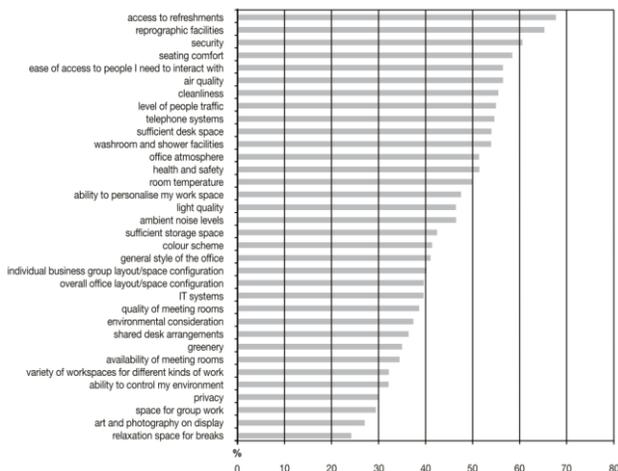
Overall, the respondents were fairly positive about their working environment in terms of basic functionality such as lighting, air quality, ambient noise and seating comfort. However, respondents rated certain areas as poor, for example:

- the visual environment i.e. the art on display, greenery and colour scheme
- quality of support services such as IT systems and the availability of sufficient storage space
- choice of work-settings and working environments for carrying out different types of work
- the ability to control the work environment, which is fast becoming an important consideration for worker satisfaction

In summary, an analysis of findings from the pre move survey gave a clear indication of the opportunities for improvement. These were fed into the final design process along with outputs from employee workshops. Pre move results and analysis



## post move results and analysis



Factors such as an upswing in the markets, or bonus payments may have led to an increase in productivity among members of the control group. To accurately measure the impact of *workplace change* on productivity, it is necessary to be able to remove these factors from the change group score.

Once the extraneous factors had been stripped out, relative change in productivity could be shown as +3.4% in the group undergoing change, representing significant improvement.

## combined productivity scores

group	pre-move	post-move	actual change	relative change
control group	63.0%	64.6%	+1.6%	
Mangers & team members	61.5%	66.4%	+5.0%	+3.4%

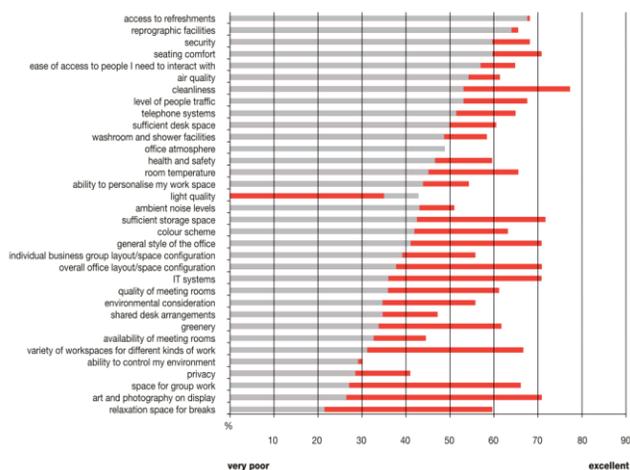
## workplace satisfaction scores

group	pre-move	post-move	actual change	relative change
control group	45.1%	48.0%	+2.9%	
Mangers & team members	43.0%	60.2%	+17.2%	+14.3%

Similarly, workplace satisfaction within the control group had improved by almost 3%. However, this is overshadowed by a relative improvement of 14.3% within the change group.

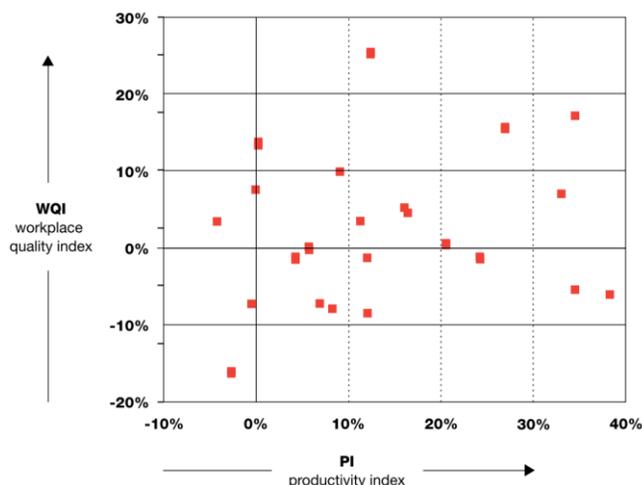
The diagnostic results showed that the areas of greatest concern in the pre-move working environment had delivered the most significant improvements post move.

## impact of workplace change on workplace satisfaction of data sets



## analysis of data sets

The graph below shows the change in productivity plotted against the change in workplace satisfaction for core respondents. A Chi Squared test was used to demonstrate a significant relationship between an increase in both variables.



## understanding the psychology of workplace change

The methodology does not represent perfect science but is the most sophisticated model yet developed to analyse this complex issue area.

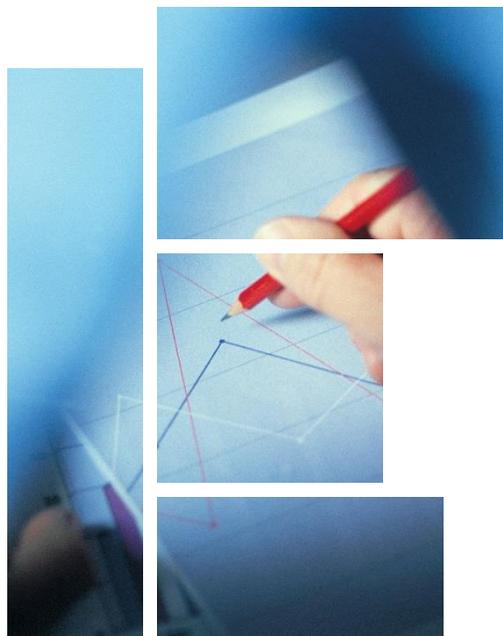
The approach is simple to understand and administer and produces valuable data both to help understand the impact of workplace decisions and to analyse which aspects of the change programme are working most powerfully to enhance worker satisfaction and productivity (or the opposite!)

As more and more companies use the methodology it is providing a growing body of insight into the whole area of workplace change and the psychological impact on employees. A workplace increasingly liberated by the application of developing digital technologies combined with a growing pressure on space costs means that this areas looks set to become a growing focus of attention both for property professionals and the senior management of major companies. For them, getting this particular value equation right is turning into one of the major strategic challenges they face.

## about the workplace intelligence unit

The Workplace Intelligence Unit was established by forward thinking inc in 2004 in partnership with Herman Miller to conduct original research and develop thought leadership into the workplace, its link to business strategy and its role in developing long term corporate value. The unit is now a research arm of strategy consultancy forward thinking inc.

We believe a successful workplace is one which facilitates distinctive ways of working, reflects and reinforces the corporate identity, and improves the productivity of the occupants.



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The Workplace Intelligence Unit is a research branch of strategy consultancy forward thinking inc

[www.workplaceintelligence.co.uk](http://www.workplaceintelligence.co.uk)

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