



CONSULTANT'S CORNER

Collaboration Fosters Innovation

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On April 8th, I had the opportunity to attend the SHFM Critical Issues Conference at CitiField. Working for a foodservice consultant, I was very eager to see what the seminars were all about and what the underlying theme of the day was. The invite and email spoke about Space Utilization so I thought that the conference would focus on flow and functionality as it pertains to the front of the house servery and not so much the dining room — I thought wrong! The conference was mainly about consulting and space planning related to new spaces for the front of the house, dining room, and work spaces but what caught my attention was the amount of lost opportunity clients miss out on when they keep their dining room only a dining room.

A dining room... it seems pretty cut and dry, right? Purchase your food from the servery and sit down at a table and when you are done eating, leave and go back to your desk or office. I have seen dining rooms range from 900 sq. ft. to 20,000 sq. ft. so why should a space which sometimes accounts for ¼ of a building be only utilized for eating? The answer is it shouldn't.

Multipurpose dining rooms are becoming the norm when you are talking about new building construction; why is this? Businesses are starting to realize that their employee population and culture are changing. There are potentially far fewer employees that enjoy working alone in their office and a lot more young adults who prefer to work from their laptop in a different space every day, collaborating with other employees. Consider the shift in employee population to and take into consideration that the dining room should be used as more of a multipurpose space so it can be utilized 8 hours a day instead of 4 and what do you get?

Employee Collaboration + Multipurpose Dining Room = Innovation

This is a very important idea that businesses are going to have to grasp if they want to capture emerging talent. The multipurpose dining room is a place where the employee population can go to eat as well as collaborate. During peak meal periods, yes it will be utilized as a dining room but what about before and after? Creating collaborative work spaces as well as different seating destinations through furniture selection will promote collaboration which fosters innovation. Who doesn't want to get up from their desk and go sit on a couch with other employees to speak about solving a problem and creating a solution? Or attend a meeting in the dining room in a private seating nook rather than a conference room? By introducing a multipurpose dining room, you are creating a collaborative space, more thoroughly utilizing the space, and increasing productivity. More people working together and more problems being solved, the culture of your business will literally change for the better just by introducing a multipurpose dining room.

Collaboration: The Action of Working Together. **Innovation:** The Process of Introducing New Ideas.

"Collaboration Fosters Innovation" literally means that working together increases the creation of new ideas. The conference really hit on a lot of facts that justify the change from a normal dining room to a multipurpose dining room. I think all would agree that if there is a way to make your employee population more productive, wouldn't you do it? Through proper space utilization and collaborative furniture specification, any business can achieve a multipurpose dining room which will not only attract new talent and retain existing but will also increase productivity and quality of life for your employees.