



CORPORATE USER

Serious Play

Johnson Controls Board Game Measures Facility Effectiveness

By Eugene Gilligan

Last May, Renee Leach turned to a board game to help set facilities goals for the coming 2006 fiscal year. The director of real estate services and workplace services for the Americas for Hewlett-Packard Development Co., as well as executives from the company's indirect procurement and global real estate and workplace services divisions, joined with their account manager from Johnson Controls Inc. to use the Solutions Navigator, a two-year-old planning tool developed by Johnson Controls.

Leach was skeptical when she first learned of the tool. "I said, 'Oh yeah, a board game.'" But it proved useful.

"It allowed a diverse group of people who may have had different objectives to align themselves on strategy going forward," Leach said. "We talked about why a participant moved a certain game piece to one location and not the other. It was a collaborative process that allowed us to draw up a short list of key objectives that we could work on over the next year, and we also found gaps that we were able to do work on."

Though making sure corporate real estate is operating at maximum efficiency is serious business, Hewlett-Packard is not the only corporation whose real estate executives are turning to the board game from Johnson Controls to gauge the effectiveness of their facilities and to implement improvements.

Solutions Navigator has been the centerpiece of about 250 workshops conducted by Johnson Controls consultants, with groups ranging from 10 to 100 participants. Overall, more than 1,000 people representing hundreds of organizations around the world have used the tool.



"We must optimize the space we have and improve how we utilize space," said Renee Leach, director of real estate services and workplace services for the Americas for Hewlett-Packard Development Co.

Last fall, Solutions Navigator received the H. Bruce Russell Global Innovator's Award from CoreNet Global.

"We're seeing a need from all real estate professionals to improve workforce productivity, to align their facilities strategy with organizational objectives and to reduce downtime due to infrastructure failure," said Clay Nesler, vice president of innovation services for Johnson Controls and the inventor of the board game.

Through "navigation sessions," clients can address an array of challenges that range from the design of new facilities to improvement of existing infrastructure to the development of a strategic facilities plan.

The game board is laid out in a five-by-five grid, with axes customized for each exercise. Participants individually place "needs" and "practice" cards on the game board to assess current performance and prioritize improvement opportunities.

The board game aspect of the exercise sometimes engenders initial skepticism among session participants, Nesler said, but the format makes a lot of sense.

"We would collect wants and needs that executives expressed in our surveys and plot them as a bubble chart," Nesler said. "We finally said, 'Aha! Let our clients push around the bubbles themselves.' Some have said to us, 'We don't have time to play a game.' But we feel the game format makes the sessions friendly and approachable."

The format also presents two key advantages, he said. "It allows each participant to go through an assessment individually," Nesler said. "In sessions done in a traditional meeting format, there is the potential for one or two people dominating the proceedings, and certain participants could be biased by their peers. Also, it allows the assessment to be done quickly." A typical navigation session takes from 90 minutes to two hours, he said.

Data and Discussion

Indeed, users of the Solutions Navigator are able to perform a "needs-and-practices assessment of their facilities' performance compared to other organizations," Nesler said. "We're able to overcome that skepticism. This is really a clever discussion and data collection tool."

The Solutions Navigator begins with the completion of a facility needs assessment. A set of organizational needs, identified from customer research, defines critical areas of facility performance, including operational performance, financial performance, risk management and relationship management. These needs are printed on cards and are placed by session participants on the game board at locations indicating relative importance and current levels of satisfaction. Blank cards also are included so that needs not covered by the printed cards can be addressed in the session.

The second step is the completion of a facility practices assessment. A set of facility practices is defined that identifies potential areas for improvement that cover the life of the entire facility, including planning, design and construction, and operations/ maintenance. Participants place the

cards containing these practices, along with definitions, on the game board at locations that indicate potential value and current effectiveness.

Each need and practice is rated for average potential value and current effectiveness and compared against an appropriate benchmark, which may include results from the corporation's different departments, its different locations or different organizations contained in the Solutions Navigator industry database.

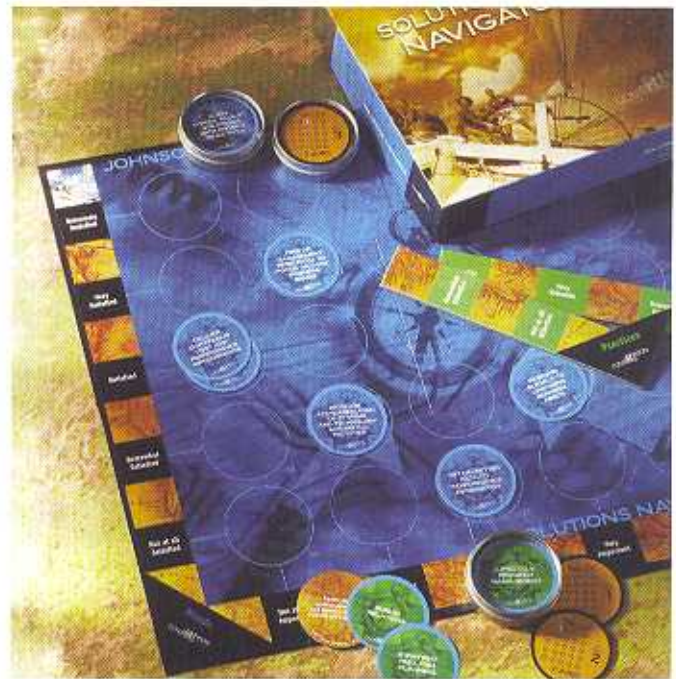
Hewlett-Packard's approach to work had changed over the years, and the tool helped analyze newer methods of working. "There is more collaboration between workers now, and less 'individual, head-down work,'" Leach said. "That presents challenges. We must optimize the space we have and improve how we utilize space."

The navigation session identified four high-priority needs for Hewlett-Packard: Deliver continuous cost performance improvements, reduce facility operating expenses, assure high levels of critical system uptime and improve workforce productivity.

The session also identified a number of new practice areas, including supply-and-demand utility management and security management, as key areas for improvement.

The security management area was addressed through an additional navigation session with Hewlett-Packard's corporate security team, using a version of Solutions Navigator that focuses on corporate security needs and practices.

Other specific versions of Solutions Navigator have been developed to support



Solutions Navigator from Johnson Controls Inc. offers a fun way to perform the serious business of gauging facilities' effectiveness.

planning activities for technology, manufacturing and sustainability, and Solutions Navigator is adaptable for other types of users, with educational institutions and healthcare organizations both steady clients of the product, Nesler said.

As Solutions Navigator evolves, Nesler sees developers using the methodology with their clients and end-users to assess their needs.

While the initial focus of the tool was on facilities management, future enhancements will focus on real estate issues like portfolio management and workplace design. "We think it would be very powerful in these areas, and we're currently investigating ways to do this," Nesler said.

A major selling point for Leach was the speed with which she and other participants obtained the results of their session.

"The whole process took about three hours," Leach said. "Later in the day, we got a document detailing the results. That was most impressive. I really enjoyed the process. In a couple of years, I would absolutely use it again." ■