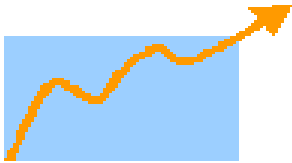


# SpaceMed Trendline

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## What is the Most Effective Facility Planning Process? Bottom-Up or Top-Down



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### Background

Historically, facility planning was often based on the wish lists of physicians and department managers. Unfortunately, some of the individuals who dominated the planning process move on to other organizations by the time the new or expanded facilities are ready for occupancy. Today, healthcare organizations realize that investments in facility expansion and reconfiguration must meet the needs of changing patient populations and providers over the life of the building. They cannot allow the planning process to be driven by the idiosyncrasies of a few individuals. Some healthcare organizations are challenging the more traditional “bottom-up” approach to functional and space planning and are choosing to embark upon a more “top-down” approach.

### Bottom-Up Approach

The traditional bottom-up approach involves the establishment of department user groups based on strict adherence to the organization’s existing organization structure. For the traditional grass-roots or bottom-up approach to be successful, healthcare organizations must:

- Deploy a multidisciplinary team or task force to encourage department staff to think outside their individual silos. Cross-departmental task forces, focused on common operational processes and patient needs, facilitate the planning of flexible space.
- Prevent specific individuals from dominating the functional and space planning process.
- Use some of the new collaborative planning tools to facilitate the gathering of input and the review of preliminary outputs. This allows multiple constituencies to participate in the process. For example, project websites can be constructed that accommodate online publishing of draft documents, 24-7 review at the participant’s convenience, and easy integration of their comments.
- Use industry benchmarks and external consulting expertise to validate internally-generated space requirements and to introduce the planning team to new concepts and best practices in the industry.
- Consider site visits by selected task force members to peer institutions who have implemented unique operational models or incorporated new technology as part of their facility planning effort.
- Require approval and sign-off of the functional and space program prior to commencing the schematic design stage. A formal process should be established for use by facility management and the design architect to address proposed space program changes during the schematic design and design development phases.

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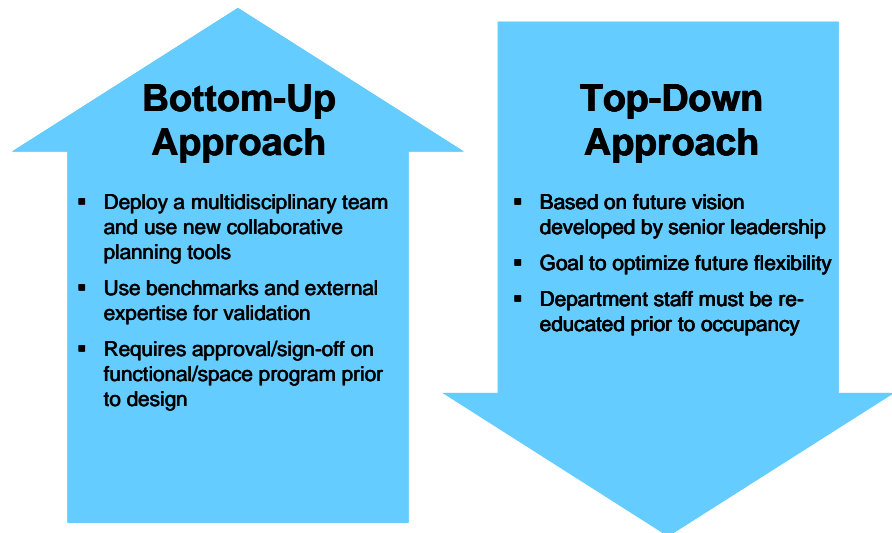
## What is the Most Effective Planning Process?

Continued

### Top-Down Approach

Some healthcare organizations prefer a more top-down approach, particularly when capital dollars are tight, when employee turnover at the department/service line manager level is high, or when market dynamics make program and workload forecasts difficult to discern. This approach is often used when a new or replacement healthcare facility is being constructed, particularly when the leadership team wants to implement entirely new and innovative operational processes and technology. For this approach to be successful, healthcare organizations must:

- Have a senior leadership team with a well-thought out vision for the organization that can be communicated effectively.
- Bring in outside expertise to translate a future vision for the organization into flexible facilities that can accommodate future changes in medical practice and technology, varying patient populations and providers, and promote quality and cost-effective patient care.
- Re-educate department staff about the vision and the new operational concepts and technology to be implemented prior to occupancy.



### Conclusion

Regardless of the facility planning approach, the planning process should facilitate the rethinking of the current organization of services, operational systems and processes, and the use of technology.

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