



HOW ALL BUILDINGS CAN BE MADE HEALTHIER – AND MORE PRODUCTIVE

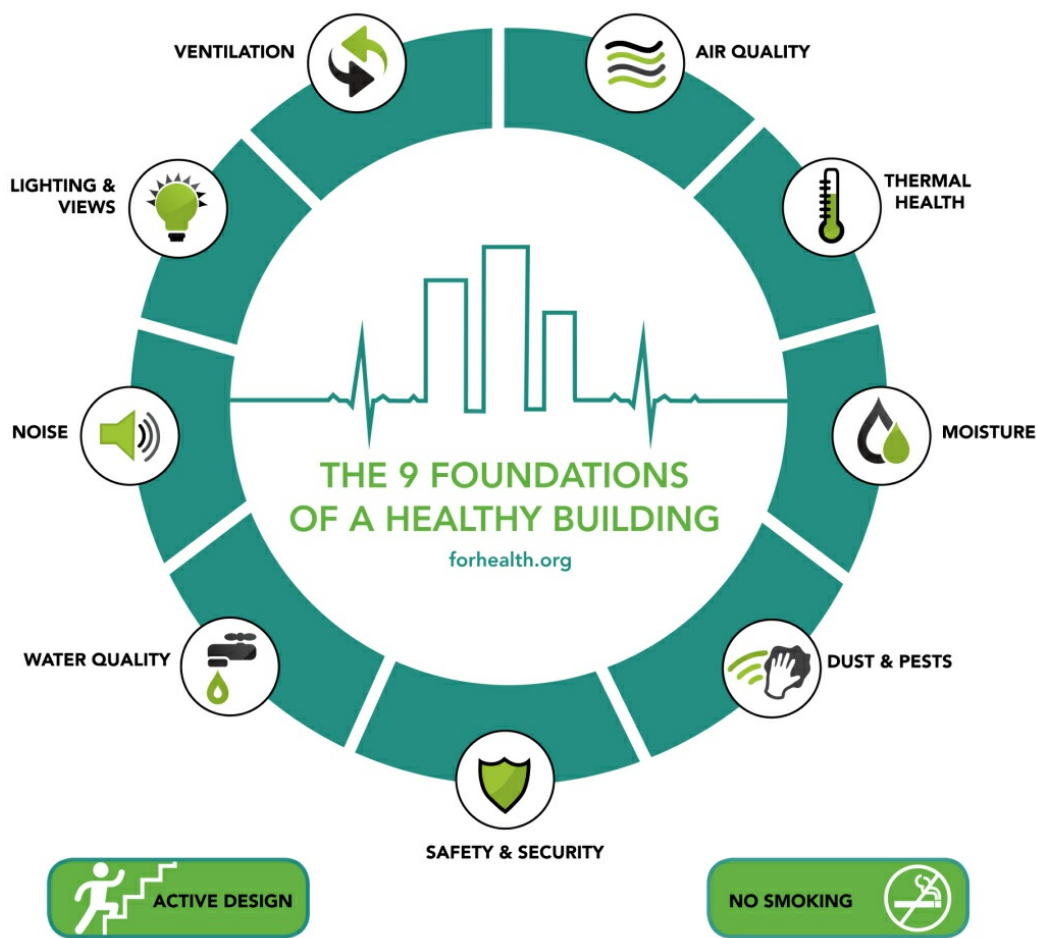
During the last half-decade, the debate around ‘healthy buildings’ has become more intense and, at times, somewhat confused. This has not been lost on academics such as those at Harvard University’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who often found themselves observing that “the idea of a healthy building has been made too complicated. We know how to make buildings healthy. There are a few simple foundations.” (1)

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Led by Dr. Joseph G. Allen, the team resolved to bring clarity to the subject by establishing ‘The 9 Foundations of a Healthy Building’. Acknowledging that one of the primary obstacles to improving buildings can be an over-abundance of information and a lack of time to digest it, the 9 Foundations are accompanied by ‘curated summaries’ that provide actionable insight into the core elements of healthy indoor environments. Collectively, they remind us that achieving healthier and more productive working spaces need not be as demanding as we sometimes imagine.

“Achieving healthier and more productive working spaces does not need to be as demanding as we sometimes imagine. With a clear plan of action, virtually any building can be made significantly healthier”, says Priva Building Automation’s General Manager, Jerry Vermaas.

Although it will always be preferable to design a new healthy building from the ‘ground up’, these principles can be readily applied as retrofits to existing buildings. In light of current events – where the need to maintain fresh air supplies and cleaner working environments has become even more critical – we would encourage everyone to become familiar with the 9 Foundations, which are explored in detail in Dr Allen’s acclaimed new book, *Healthy Buildings: How Indoor Spaces Drive Performance and Productivity* (2).



- 1) **Air quality:** this ‘foundation’ calls for low-emission building materials and a maintenance of humidity levels from 30-60 percent.
- 2) **Dust and pest:** use high-efficiency filter vacuums and clean surfaces regularly.
- 3) **Lighting and views:** provide as much daylight and/or high intensity blue-enriched lighting as possible.
- 4) **Moisture:** avoid moisture or mold build-up by regular inspections of roofing, plumbing, ceilings and HVAC equipment.
- 5) **Noise:** protect against outdoor noises and control indoor noise such as mechanical equipment.
- 6) **Safety and security:** ensure safety and carbon monoxide standards are satisfied, and put an emergency action plan in place.
- 7) **Thermal health:** meet minimum thermal comfort standards for temperature and humidity.
- 8) **Ventilation:** on many people’s minds due to current events, this calls for users to meet or exceed local guidelines for outdoor air quality.
- 9) **Water quality:** ensure relevant national standards are met, which may require the installation of a purification system.

The report backs up these principles with extensive background on the connection between working environment and performance. For instance, multiple studies, including one by Harvard, “have shown that substandard ventilation rates negatively impact cognitive function”.

At Priva the connection between buildings and wellbeing has been a preoccupation for several years now, informing both our solutions development and sector commentary (3). In light of the global health crisis, we expect this kind of thinking to become much more commonplace, and the 9 Foundations provide an excellent basis for progress. As well as offering the potential for a healthier and more productive workforce, the foundations' clarity will help building managers secure funding from CEOs and finance directors – and, this is a subject we will return to in future blogs.

Sources:

(1) ‘The 9 Foundations of a Healthy Buildings’, available in full here: https://forhealth.org/9_Foundations_of_a_Healthy_Building.February_2017.pdf

(2) Published by Harvard University Press, April 2020: [www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674237971)

[isbn=9780674237971](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674237971)

(3) See Priva White Paper 'Investing in Health and Comfort: What are the Benefits?'

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