

ARTICLE // SEPT 2014

WORK SPACE DESIGN: HOW IT AFFECTS EMPLOYEES' HAPPINESS & PRODUCTIVITY



i2C Stand Up Meeting Room

Everyone enjoys a great office environment; happy team, happy days - but you may not realize the number of design factors that contribute to how people work.

We recently attended a design forum by Architecture Media – Design Speaks Series “Work Place, Work Life 2014”, where the discussion was focused on the pros and cons of the workspace formats of Cubical Office Vs Open Plan design.

These planning formats have been experienced by many of us over our work careers, and Companies looking to refurbish or build new premises are often torn with passionate debates about how to design the most productive, fun, engaging work space.

Well, in truth there is no one size fits all when designing for work environments, but it is important to understand the culture of the Company and it helps to consider some of the evidence backed research that covers the following aspects.

- Interaction of Workers
- Hierarchy (Directors/ Associates) location within the office.
- Fun
- Health
- Psychology

Cubical Plans

The traditional “Cubical” office plan design, creates separation and segregation within the space and limits co-worker interaction, however this format defines hierarchy of the various personnel within the organisation.



A sense of home

Obviously the “fun” aspect is somewhat removed from the Cubical design and the interaction or social connection of

workers is limited to designated locations such as the “water cooler”. Studies have identified that productivity and attendance are closely linked with the fun aspect and office health.

Workers want to have a sense of a “home” or “their space” in an office, often marking their designated territory or workspace with barriers or personal items such as family photos, etc. This all stems from the tradition where office workers were assigned a desk or “home”. This tradition still exists in some cultures, and even to the extreme where employers are providing rollaway trundle beds designed into the workers cubical.

Open Plan

The “Open Plan” design removes the office separation, but can make workers feel they are now being “supervised” or “watched” by their superiors.



Conversely, the superiors have a more positive reaction in that they now feel “part of the team”.

Research also shows that this format is a more clinical environment from a health point of view, limiting airborne viruses, but impacting negatively on the social / psychological aspect.

Health and the open airborne environment is a psychological mindset. People often submit to the notion that if one person in the office falls ill, they too will eventually fall ill.

Creating Flexibility and Fun

Whilst both traditional designs have a “fit for purpose” use, more and more companies are investing in the research of how their office and employee’s interact, move, communicate and associate with one another.

New office design trends, led by Companies like Google Corp create flexibility in their workspaces using hot desking where employees don’t have designated workspaces. They also incorporate less structured environments for meeting and working.

Hot desking and flexible workspaces have shown to increase employee attendance, health, interaction and positive psychology due to the overall enjoyment of being in the office.



Meeting Spaces at Google Corp



Foosball Fun at our Sydney Studio



Scott Palmer,
Design Manager.

View Scott's [profile](#)

Conclusion

Workplace design contributes fundamentally to the productivity, and ultimately the health of the Company and its people. We aren't suggesting everyone installs cafes and tv rooms in their office space, but you should give significant

thought researching your workspace and employees' needs in order to optimize your Company culture and goals.

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