

BOF



Variety in the Workplace

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Sound Off: Variety in the Workplace

BUSINESS OF FURNITURE BELIEVES CONVERSATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET. WE WANT TO KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE LATEST TOPICS AFFECTING THE OFFICE FURNITURE INDUSTRY. THIS IS THE FIRST IN WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE AN ONGOING CONVERSATION, A NEW FEATURE CALLED "SOUND OFF." THIS WEEK'S TOPIC IS "PROVIDING VARIETY IN THE WORKPLACE." OUR NEXT TOPIC IS "PLAYFULNESS IN THE WORKPLACE: DO WE REALLY NEED PING-PONG TABLES IN THE OFFICE?" SEND YOUR THOUGHTS ON PLAYFULNESS TO ROB@BELLOW.PRESS

Are cubicles dead? If so, where should we work? Variety has become an important part of modern office design — providing many places for workers to go through the day to fit the task at hand. Office workers are no longer stuck in one place. Some of the best new office layouts cater to a variety of tasks.

With a workforce that includes all generations from baby boomers and Gen X workers to millennials and Gen Z employees, this means offices should incorporate a range of spaces that accommodate the diverse preferences and working habits found across generations. Here are your thoughts about variety in the workplace:

TEKNION



“As office layouts continue to trend toward more open workspaces, not only are employees complaining about the lack of privacy they experience in an open office floorplan, but the size of the actual workspace designated to any one employee continues to get smaller and smaller. We are seeing more furniture pieces designed to offer modern workers flexibility and privacy from the distractions that run rampant in today’s workplace. Our Zones collection, for instance, does just that. Zones is comprised of seating, tables, screens, easels and accessories, as well as semi-private enclosures which can act either as an intimate collaborative setting or as a place of retreat when privacy is desired. We developed this product because we’ve noticed a larger movement toward separate spaces that offer employees additional areas to focus outside of their work stations.”

— Steve Delfino, vice president of corporate marketing and product design

POPPIN



“Zones are more important than ever. While the ratio of desks to employees drops further, companies are investing in alternatives to desks, whether it’s soft furniture in a lounge; cafe-style seating near the office kitchen cum coffee bar; semi-enclosed furniture that provides temporary spaces for focused work; or communal workbenches for working alongside your team of choice — rather than your team of report.”

— David Branham, director of merchandising

KIREI

“One of the most effective ‘quick-fix’ ways to address the need for creating semi-private zones within a larger open space is to incorporate partitions. If your company doesn’t have private office spaces in your building, sound-absorbing partitions are a great way to zone off sections within a larger space to optimize sound quality and create designated areas for employees to take phone calls or hold

team meetings. In addition, when the layout isn’t set in stone, it can nimbly adjust to the rhythm of project work. Teams can move from one project phase to the next by rearranging partitions into different permutations of collaborative and individual work zones.”

— John Stein, president

WORKWELL PARTNERS



“We’re seeing a significant shift away from wide open floor plans to open ‘areas’ separated by groups or departments. There are ways by which a space can be designed to be open, but at the same time not look like the world’s largest trading floor. You can have open plan clusters of 40-50 people within a space, as opposed to hyper densification of 300-400 in one area. The idea is that you walk into a space, and in place of a sea of sit-stand desks, you walk up a central staircase to a floor that has four to five areas separated by line of sight that house separate departments. When walking the space, it’s almost as if you are discovering hidden areas. The key to this type of space is that the feel is still very open, without the distractions associ-

ated with densifying a space with hundreds of tightly configured desks.”

— Scott Lesizza, principal

HLW INTERNATIONAL



“The first zone is the areas of initial encounter. Branded spaces such as lobbies and welcome areas often serve as an organization’s first impression to guests, and they reinforce key messages to organizational members. Focal points throughout the work area draw people together to create and affirm a sense of community. These spaces create prospecting opportunities where ideas hatch from potentially unexpected encounters. Frequent interactions in these familiar places help build social capital within the organization. Peripheral nodes in the workplace create places of refuge where individuals and teams can huddle together, work through the details of projects or focus their attention on concentrative tasks. Zones are connected by various pathways that help users navigate the territoriality and functionality of a space. ‘Tour routes’ are public pathways that visitors can easily navigate without disrupting certain privileged

organizational activities. Buffers can help separate zones so that activities in one area don’t distract people in another.”

— Peter A. Bacevice, director of research

“Creating zones that enable folks to be more effective at work. Co-locating social and recharge zones and then buffering them from more focused areas helps to prevent disruption. Similarly we often design for a ‘tour’ route for our clients — a discrete path that is more public facing and doesn’t intersect with team space. This allows them to bring guests and partners through the office — showcasing their brand and values — while simultaneously maintaining focus space for their workers.”

— Matthew Triebner, director of strategy

SYDNESS ARCHITECTS

“We are finding that many zones in offices are becoming less defined and overlap with one another; where lounge areas are becoming work areas and conference rooms are blending into project focus areas, so the bottom line is that distinct zones are not exactly what they used to be. Creating them successfully is getting more challenging, but that’s the most exciting part.”

— Jeff Sydness, principal and founder