

Design Features Supporting Group Work

Research overview: In 2005, Kupritz in conjunction with Haworth, Inc. conducted privacy studies for office workers at a large Midwestern manufacturer. The Phase I and II studies were undertaken to identify architectural privacy features that impact individual and group work across four job types: Business Professionals, Technical Professionals, Managers, and Administrative Support Services. These job types were selected because of their broad relevance to organizations at large. The office workers completed a Beliefs Matrix where they answered the question “Is this design feature important for doing this activity?” These studies determined that a three-pronged design solution that provides for a proportionate balance of privacy and communication/collaboration as well as the ability to complete basic job functions appears to be the ideal design for today’s workplace. The privacy studies also determined that design needs for privacy and communication/collaboration can vary by job type.

The Four Job Types Selected for this Study:

- Administrative Support Services
- Business Professionals
- Managers
- Technical Professionals

The following design features were found to be important for all four job types when performing group work:

- Having a larger personal office (141/200 or 70.5%)
- Having sufficient lighting and controls (147/200 or 73.5%)*
- Having sufficient temperature/ventilation/air conditioning and controls (169/200 or 84.5%)*
- Having informal meeting areas, including break areas (173/200 or 86.5%)
- Having a collaborative area for group work with no panels or walls (140/200 70%)
- Having a collaborative area for group work with 64” or 68” high panels (163/200 or 81.5%)*
- Having a collaborative area for group work with 80” high panels (155/200 or 77.5%)*
- Having a conference room available when needed (194/200 or 97%)*
- Having flexible furniture and equipment that can be rearranged to fit work needs (178/200 or 89%)
- Having a sufficient work surface to spread out work (179/200 or 89.5%)*
- Having sufficient office equipment/reference materials/supplies and easy access to them (177/200 or 88.5%)
- Having coworkers who work together located close together (189/200 or 94.5%)

Special note: Three of the four job types (administrative support, technical professionals and business professionals) strongly agreed that having a collaborative area for group work with 50” high panels supported group work (137/200 or 68.5%).

* This design feature also supports privacy activities across all four job types. See “Design Features Supporting Privacy Activities” for more information.

Reference: Kupritz, Virginia W., & Haworth, Inc. (2005). *Ethnographic assessment of individual and group privacy needs: Phase I and II Studies.* Haworth research paper.