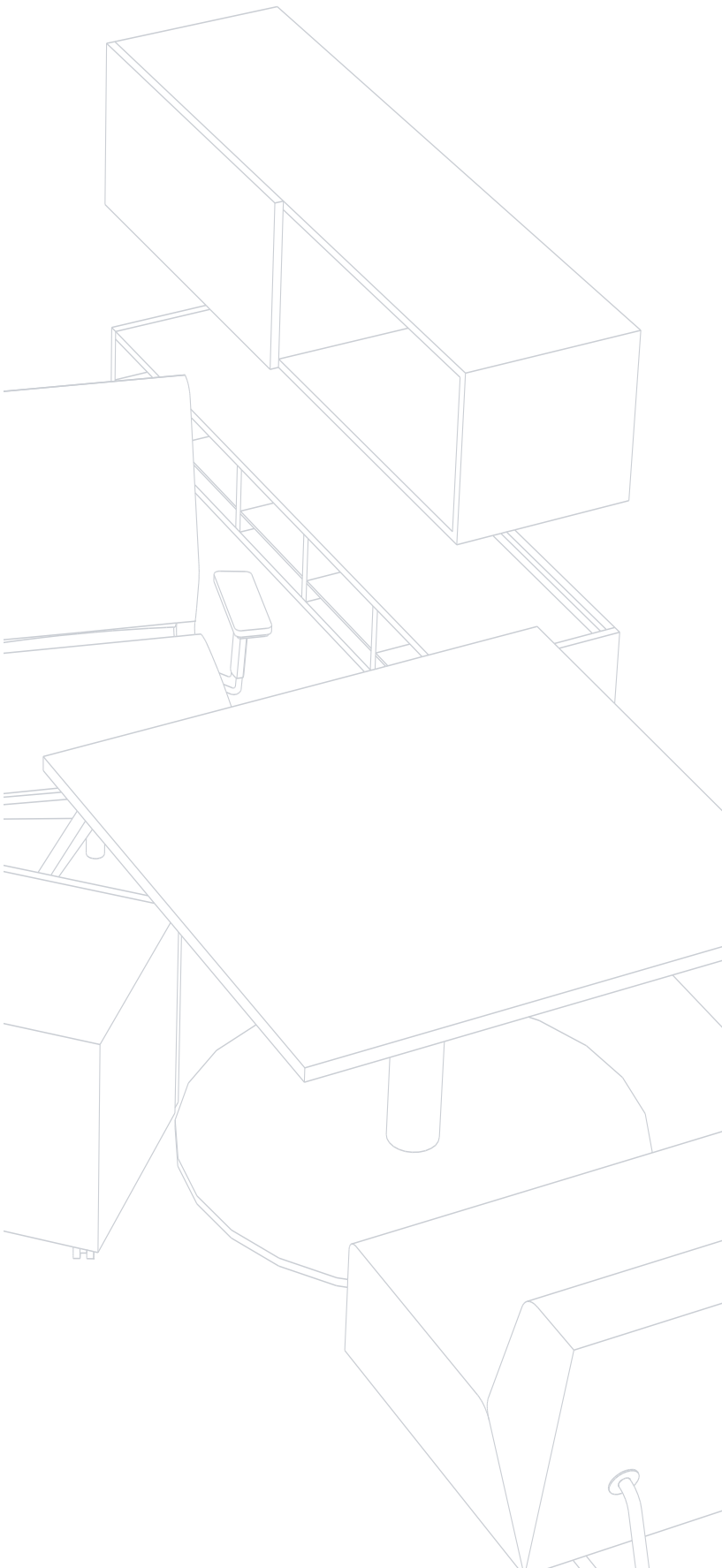


EXTREME MAKEOVER

FOR THE PRIVATE OFFICE

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What image comes to mind when you think about private offices? For many people, it's a huge double-pedestal desk with a high-back chair, a credenza behind it and maybe a bookcase off to the side.

That image hasn't changed much in the last 50 years. Nor has the desire for the peace and quiet of a private office. Data collected from more than 2,500 responses to the Steelcase Workplace Satisfaction Survey reveal that 70% would like more privacy and 80% believe more privacy would improve their productivity. While nearly everyone wants a private office and at least 30% of all office workers have one, many private offices haven't kept up with the times. Like an expensive dress watch, they look great, lend style and cachet to the owner -- but their functionality is often limited.

If the lowly wristwatch can be transformed into a web-surfing PDA, can't innovation be applied to the private office too? The answer is yes - and there are solid business reasons for doing so.

Private offices typically house the highest paid workers in an organization, and they usually allot more square footage per person than open plan. While many private offices have remained essentially unchanged for decades, the rest of the workplace has changed dramatically -- cross-functional teams, multitasking, creative thinking, group processes - the grown-up equivalents of "plays well with others."

Private offices can "play" that way too, based on recent research conducted by Steelcase to find out what does and doesn't work in private offices. Private office workers at culturally and geographically diverse organizations in the U.S. were interviewed at length, and behaviors were closely studied through more than 100 hours of video ethnography and other observational research techniques.

Behind Closed Doors No More

Many people tend to see the private office as a trade-off:

- choose privacy or interaction with others
- provide for concentration or invite collaboration
- furnish a private office for image and status or for function and flexibility

A well-planned private office, however, can have it all: privacy and collaboration, efficient use of space and flexible furnishings, and the independence, comfort and image inherent in a private workspace.

Different Thinking, Different Working

It's a challenge to meet the demands of today's private office worker. The private office is no longer an isolation tank. Workers need support for multi-tasking, collaboration and changing technology needs.

Unlike their pristine popular image, private offices are often messy offices. The private office worker tends to be older, more educated and have higher income, and these workers are more often pilers than filers. A study by Ajilon, a subsidiary of human resources giant Adecco Group, says that about two-thirds of employees making \$35,000 or less call themselves "neat freaks." Among workers making \$75,000 or more, however, only 11% call themselves the same. And the Steelcase Workplace Index, a recurring survey that gauges workplace trends in the United States, shows that younger (18 - 34 years) and older (55 years and up) workers are most likely to feel they are "neat freaks" (40% and 37%). Middle-aged workers (35 - 54 years) tend to be "pilers."

Piling arrangements may seem random, but they're often purposeful. People tend to pile work by priority. What's hot is often stacked next to the phone, what's needed soon camps near the edge of the desk. Back-burner stuff - completed projects, just-in-case materials, etc. - piles up on any available horizontal surface. Pilers are reluctant to "hide" materials in files, because out of sight means out of mind.

The bottom line: space can support, enrich and stimulate the mental functions of thinking, memory, imagination and learning - or shut them down. A user-centered, flexible private office can boost the productivity of an expansive -- and expensive -- mind. And better doesn't necessarily mean bigger. The Steelcase research revealed opportunities to trim square footage while making the space work smarter.

Technology Is Causing People To Work Differently

Y-generation workers may be first to embrace technology, but all age groups quickly adopt and adapt. For example, according to a recent study conducted by the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre at the Royal College of Art in London, many office workers over 50 embrace technology. But the study, supported by Steelcase, IDEO and DEGW as research partners, also showed that these older workers, to a much greater degree than their younger counterparts, want both access to and separation from new technologies as their work and lives demand.

Greater numbers of older people are remaining in the workforce in the U.S., Europe and Japan. It's a trend driven by an aging workforce, the need and desire for many workers to work longer and the realization that businesses need to retain and tap into the knowledge of experienced workers. Many of these workers work in private offices.

IDEAS FOR SMALL PRIVATE OFFICES

- 1 Position the area for conversation and collaboration closest to the entryway.
- 2 Orient surfaces for future work to the left or right side of the user (not behind).
- 3 Eliminate visual barriers between the occupant and the guest.
- 4 Locate storage for archival information out of the way behind the user.
- 5 Don't use fixed P-shaped or bullet-shaped tops that limit flexibility.
- 6 Choose guest seating that's small-scale and nest-able under the worksurface.

People who work in private offices today expect technology to be there and easy to access - whether they're working alone, with another person or collaborating with a small team in their space.

User Control Drives Work Effectiveness

People are apt to create "workarounds" when their natural ways of working aren't supported. Often, these can be inefficient time-wasters that are accepted without much question as necessary to get the job done - getting down on your hands and knees to find a power outlet, for example.

What's more, frequent distractions -- visual and acoustical -- strain comfort and productivity. While most people crave connections with co-workers, they also require space and time for reflection. According to Steelcase research, even people who typically think aloud need 15 minutes of uninterrupted quiet to reach peak concentration and performance. And, once disrupted, most of us require an additional 15 minutes to reach it again. Says time management coach Joy Baldrige of Baldrige Seminars International, "Interruptions are the biggest time robbers and focus busters."

One way to minimize distraction is to plan private offices in terms of zones: a zone for conversation closest to the door, a zone for concentration (alone or working in a dyad with another person) farther inside the space and a sheltered zone for private, contemplative work in the area farthest from the door.

Too-small worksurfaces limit productivity, too. A common problem in private offices is that people have to work in cramped corners just to reach power and data outlets on the wall. What's more, cords, cables and power strips often hinder access to storage, documents and other parts of the office.

People want to be able to take control their space and technology access - versus being controlled by them. Giving more control of the environment enhances productivity, creativity, comfort and satisfaction with the office.

Space Expresses Esteem

Status, achievement and hierarchy are often expressed through a person's workspace. Many people believe that a

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private office formally recognizes achievement and communicates a person's standing in an organization. Therefore, offering private offices may help bolster recruitment and retention efforts in an organization.

Private offices also send a message about an organization. In many companies, they house key employees who are often visited by important external audiences: customers, strategic partners, prospective employees, etc. So it's especially important to integrate the furnishings and design to present a coherent organizational aesthetic and a clear brand message.



IDEAS FOR PRIVATE OFFICES

Here's a short list of ideas for creating user-centered private offices that let people customize and adapt the space to how they work.

- Moveable tables and files allow your work to move around with you.
- Include simple tools to help manage and display information: tackboards, markerboards and sliding screens that can hide or reveal information as needed.
- Open storage with adjustable and angled shelves displays work, schedules, etc.
- Adjustable lighting improves focus, comfort and productivity.
- Lounge seating supports contemplative work, welcomes colleagues and adds a relaxed feel.
- Wireless networks support virtual and in-person collaboration and boost information sharing.
- Equip private office furniture with worksurface power and data access, ergonomic keyboard supports and monitor arms.
- Provide power and data outlets that let people work away from walls and corners and closer to visiting colleagues.
- Consider casual barstool-height chairs and tables to convey egalitarianism and promote collaboration with visitors.
- Low tables with markerboard tabletops spur conversation and capture spontaneous thoughts.
- Power and data access should be obvious, intuitive and easily re-positioned by the user.
- Choose casegoods that combine open storage and lift-up collaboration surfaces that don't use floor space when not in use.
- Adjustable ergonomic seating is a must.
- Worksurfaces that adjust from seated to standing height add ergonomic and productivity benefits.
- A raised floor is a way to control and regulate the temperature.