2018 OPEN OFFICE WOES REPORT

How U.S. Office Workers Truly Feel About The Open Office
Recent studies have taken a look at the science behind the open office plan, revealing what those of us working in them already know – open workspaces fall short on promises of improved collaboration, productivity and happier employees.

While these scientific and academic studies have unearthed the impact of the open office plan on businesses and employees, they tend to focus more on economic outputs as opposed to its effect on workers at the individual, human level. That’s why we’ve taken a look at the attitudes toward the open office for U.S. office workers both across the country and within the top 10 most populous U.S. cities – including New York, LA, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Detroit, Seattle, San Francisco and Houston.

Findings suggest that employers must listen to their employees – how they are feeling and how their office space is impacting creativity, efficiency and even personal satisfaction within the office. Understanding this perspective will allow businesses to provide their employees with an office environment that enhances the work experience across the board, something that will become vital in an increasingly competitive job market.

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Foreword

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Current state of the office and what workers want for tomorrow

Today’s most common iteration of the office layout, the open office, is not working for businesses or their employees. Countless studies have proven the disadvantages of open layouts, yet businesses continue to opt for them – in 2017, almost 70% of U.S. offices had low or no partitions.

When asked what type of office layout employees would prefer at their next job, they made a clear and definitive statement in favor of closed offices:

U.S. Office Workers: Just over 3 in 5 (62%) would want their next job to have a closed office layout where they’d have separate, private or semi-private work stations available to them

U.S. Office Workers in These Major Cities: 66% would want their next job to have a closed office layout where they’d have separate, private or semi-private work stations available to them

Closed Office Workers in These Major Cities: 83% would want to stay in a closed office layout where they’d have separate, private or semi-private work stations available to them at their next job
Open office workers across the country are encountering a slew of emotionally toiling experiences each day when they head to work.

In just the past six months, open office workers in major cities across the U.S. have:

- Gone to a closet or hallway to take a phone call: Almost 1 in 3 (31%)
- Had difficulty finding a private area within their office to take a work-related call: More than 1 in 4 (27%)
- Gone to the bathroom to take a phone call: 1 in 8 (12%)
- Held back their true thoughts and opinions while on calls in the office because they don’t want co-workers to hear and judge them: Nearly 1 in 3 (31%)
- Found it hard to effectively complete the work expected of them: 1 in 5 (20%)
The stressful incidents encountered each day suggest that open office environments are conducive to less meaningful collaboration and employee interaction, while simultaneously breeding tension among staff.

Here’s what nationwide office workers are feeling based on their workday experiences:

Almost 1 in 3 (29%) U.S. open office workers feel distractions and noise from their office hinder their productivity

1 in 6 (17%) U.S. open office workers feel the office layout they work in hinders creativity

1 in 8 (13%) U.S. open office workers feel resentful towards more senior staff with private offices

1 in 4 (27%) U.S. open office workers feel self-conscious on work-related calls because they feel as if their co-workers and bosses are eavesdropping, suggesting a lack of focus in the office

1 in 7 (16%) U.S. open office workers feel as if their overall quality of health has declined

The culmination of all these experiences is driving workers across the country away from their jobs. 1 in 8 (13%) U.S. open office workers feel that their company’s office layout has pushed them to consider leaving their job.
Many companies today tout quirky office additions, events or policies to position their workplace as fun and productive. Yet in reality, neither these add-ons nor a trip back in time to cubicles are the cure to the current dilemma around open office environments. Rather, employees crave simple yet functional additions to the workplace like private workspaces.

ROOM found that open office workers across the country are willing to give up these benefits in exchange for more private workspaces:

- Sunlight and windows: 1 in 6 (17%) U.S. open office employees
- An end of year bonus: 1 in 8 (13%) U.S. open office employee
- A coffee machine: more than 1 in 4 (27%) U.S. open office employees
- Holiday parties: 1 in 4 (25%) U.S. open office employees
- Summer Fridays: 1 in 6 (16%) U.S. open office employees
- Five vacation days: 1 in 8 (13%) U.S. open office employees
ROOM is reinventing the modern workplace. With modular and creative office solutions, ROOM helps companies of all sizes build a better work environment.

ROOM’s flagship product, ROOM One, is a soundproof phone booth that brings privacy back to the open office. It’s engineered with recycled materials to do more by using less, and it’s easy to assemble and move around. ROOM ships flat directly to businesses and focuses on simple, functional design to keep costs low, becoming the first to solve the problem of noise at scale.

Launched in May 2018 by serial entrepreneurs Morten Meisner-Jensen and Brian Chen, ROOM is already building the workplace of tomorrow with clients such as Nike, JP Morgan, NASA, Salesforce, Reddit, Walmart, Google, and more.
Research methodology

ROOM commissioned YouGov PLC – a third party, professional research and consulting organization – to conduct two surveys. The first polled the views of a nationally representative sample of 4,037 adults (which comprised of 434 open office workers). Fieldwork for this survey was undertaken between September 12th - 17th 2018 and was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).

The second polled the views of 3,037 adults in each of the top 10 U.S. cities by population (New York, LA, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Detroit, Seattle, San Francisco and Houston – around 300 in each city). Fieldwork for this survey was undertaken online between October 12th – 19th, 2018. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Detroit, Seattle, San Francisco, and Houston adults (aged 18+). The data points included from each survey are clearly noted as such.

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