

# Staff Productivity & Office Design

Your first economic consideration  
not your last



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Independent research shows that 60% of staff's productivity is affected by office design. So the feel the look and the flexibility of your workplace is vital to the overall organisational performance of your company.

Productivity and the growth of productivity must be the first economic consideration at all times not the last.

Trying to get the best out of your employees is difficult. Every day your employees come to work you expect them to be productive. But are they?

In this article we will explain the five key elements which effect staff performance.

## Key Stages:

01

Spatial  
Arrangements

02

Workstation  
Furniture

03

Noise

04

Lighting

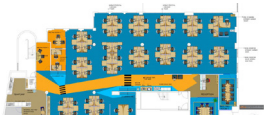
05

Temperature

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## 1. Spatial Arrangements

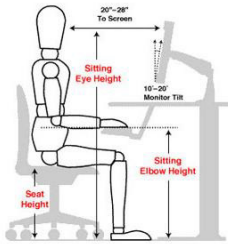


The objective of good space planning is to achieve the most appropriate and cost effective solution to meet your specific requirements while maximising the use of space, facilities, equipment and staff. It deals with issues of how much space is available, what functions need to be carried out, how people, teams and departments act and interact.

### Considerations:

**Communication** - Promote productivity through creating collaborative workspace areas where team members can still chat during work but also provide the appropriate level of privacy to allow them to concentrate when needed.

**Workstations** - Create areas of low risk distractions. Where possible avoid placing workstations along high traffic corridors or beside noisy equipment.



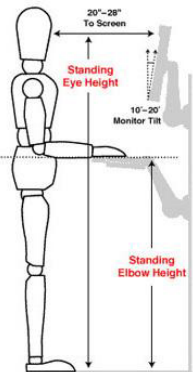
## 2. Workstation Furniture

The elements that make up a workstation are the desk, chair, monitor stand and desk privacy screen. Together proper design and use of these furniture items can substantially increase employees' performance.

### Considerations:

**Job requirements** - Recognise the fact that even in a small office there are different types of work. For example the privacy and the storage needs of a receptionist will differ from that of an IT developer.

**Ergonomics** - Seat staff comfortably. Provide the appropriate desks and chairs with options for personal control and adjustability to allow them to satisfy their own level of personal comfort.



## 3. Noise

Employees identify speech as the leading factor which lowers their concentration and increases stress levels. As a result creating adequate noise privacy is a key element especially when designing open plan areas.

### Considerations:

**Demographics** - Are your employees predominantly male or female? Keep in mind that women get less distracted by noise than men.

**Desk screens** - Provide appropriate privacy using desk screens that block the direct path of speech from one employee to another.

**Enclosed office spaces** - Enable employees to carry out noisy activities in meeting rooms or kitchen/social areas.

**Sound absorption materials** - You can significantly improve productivity levels in open plan areas by using the appropriate flooring and ceiling materials to optimise sound absorption. This along with acoustic materials in desk privacy screens will lead to less distraction by noise.



#### 4. Lighting

Productivity is often most affected in offices with low light and especially low natural light.



##### Considerations:

**Natural/Artificial** - Most people prefer natural to artificial lighting. To maximise the daylight reaching the desks, place the workstations perpendicular to the window. (Note: daylight does not reach further than two workstations deep into the office space, so compromise is inevitable).

**Luminance** – This is the amount of light reflecting off a surface, which affects our perceptions of brightness. Avoid darkly shadowed areas and dark walls, because this will create a “cave-like” atmosphere. Instead, specify your wall, ceiling and materials with high surface reflectance.

#### 5. Temperature

Pleasant office temperature and oxygenated air positively affects productivity. However, complaints about thermal and air quality conditions are common, especially in open plan areas.



##### Considerations:

**Fresh air** - Because fresh air is so important, the mechanical ventilation system must have the capacity to provide the required volume of air for the number of people in the space.

**The Air Conditioning system** - The system should be balanced, cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

**Temperature** - Indoor temperature between 20-25 °C is proven to be ideal for office productivity (Helsinki University of Technology). However, one set of thermal conditions will never suit everyone.

#### Conclusion

Inevitably, as described in this article, some design goals will conflict with others. For example, maximising window exposure will benefit the lighting and visual comfort of employees, but may lead to complaints about thermal conditions.

However, if you follow these guidelines and work with an experienced office interior designer - you will not only fulfil the needs of your employees, but also boost their productivity.