Overview

A healthier, happier employee is more productive. A workforce that feels positive about its individual and collective work environment also tends to have less staff turnover, which can cost employers thousands of dollars. The quality of the indoor environment directly affects employee well-being and performance.

Healthy work environment contributors include:

- Fresh air
- A sense of enclosure and privacy
- Natural daylight and window views
- Ample lighting with a natural daylight color
- Sensory variety
- Personal control over environmental conditions

Each of these contribute to work effectiveness, job satisfaction and commitment, stress reduction and less absenteeism.

Benefits

- Increases productivity
- Less staff turnover
- Fewer sick days
- Reduces stress
- Greater commitment to the organization
- Higher job satisfaction

Quick Fact

In the U.S., absenteeism averages 3% — about 6 days each year for a typical office worker. In the new, daylit Lockheed-Martin Corporation facility this rate dropped 15%.

LEED®-CI v2.0: Commercial Interiors

By implementing various design strategies that contribute to employee well-being, your project may be eligible for:

Energy & Atmosphere

EA Credits 1.1–1.2: Optimize Energy Performance, Lighting Power & Controls

Indoor Environmental Quality

EQ Credit 1: Outdoor Air Delivery Monitoring

EQ Credits 6.1–6.2: Controllability of Systems

EQ Credits 7.1–7.2: Thermal Comfort

EQ Credits 8.1–8.3: Daylight & Views

Strategies

A creative work environment promotes social interaction and fosters more collaborative work teams, resulting in a more competitive workforce. In today's modern open office plans, it can be a challenge to balance visual and acoustical privacy with a collaborative environment. Providing employees with the tools, resources, space (including layout and enclosure) and personal affects to optimize their work typically pays dividends in increased productivity and dependability.

Privacy and noise reduction can be achieved with a variety of techniques, including workstation enclosures, thoughtful furniture arrangement and small meeting and work rooms dispersed throughout the space.

Collaboration and interactivity are facilitated by informal and flexible common spaces where employees can engage more spontaneously. Posters and exhibits of work often invite conversation beyond the immediate task at hand.

Flexibility and variety in the types of work areas and collaboration technologies available to employees accommodate the diversity of tasks and working styles found in the workforce.

Restorative space helps employees stay productive all day long by offering connections to natural materials, textures and views.

Personal meaning and expression promoted in the workplace often increase the sense of pride and dedication among employees.

West Bend Mutual Insurance Company

In the early 1990s the West Bend Mutual Insurance Company built a new 150,000 square-foot headquarters and conducted a study to ascertain productivity improvements based on facility design. The study verified a minimum 2.8% productivity increase by tracking the number of claims processed per week in the old building versus the new one. With an annual payroll of $13 million at the time, this increase amounted to a $364,000 productivity gain. This performance boost was attributed to workers enjoying direct control over their immediate environment. Being able to regulate temperature, airflow, task lighting and white noise made workers happier and increased their productivity.

Resources

www.wbdg.org Search the "Health and well-being" section for articles of interest.

Obtain the article, *Health and Productivity Gains from Better Indoor Environments and Their Relationship with Building Energy Efficiency*, by William J. Fisk.

Obtain the book, *Sustainable Commercial Interiors*, by Penny Bonda and Katie Sosnowchick.

Checklist

Privacy and Noise Reduction

☐ Provide spatial features that support visual and acoustical privacy. Some workstation designs provide sound buffering elements. Small private telephone rooms can minimize disruption of noisy or personal phone calls.

☐ Provide screen enclosures for team space.

☐ Arrange guest chairs so they are away from confidential information.

☐ Provide spaces with doors where appropriate.

☐ Provide personal project rooms to protect territorial privacy.

Collaboration and Interactivity

☐ Allow opportunities for informal encounters with ample corridors and informal seating or meeting areas.

☐ Invite conversation and collaboration by providing open dining and café areas and comfortable furniture, tables and chairs in common areas.

☐ Use visualization tools and graphics that illustrate the different work in which employees are involved.

Flexibility

☐ Provide a variety of spaces to allow for staff to alternate between solitary and team work.

☐ Provide mobile technologies (phones, computers, wireless connectivity), hoteling workspaces, and teleworking that support diverse work styles and work practices such as working at home (telecommuting), job-sharing and videoconferencing and podcasts for long meetings.

Restorative Space

☐ Design to reduce stress and facilitate mental rest breaks by incorporating design that connects with nature and quiet spaces to congregate or be alone. (See Tenant Improvement Guide 02: Connecting with Nature.)

☐ Provide an interesting visual environment while designing for a balance between visual access and visual enclosure. Provide views of natural vegetation, indoors or outdoors, when possible.

☐ Provide workspaces with views and daylight for employees that are in the office most of the time.

☐ Create a variety of partition heights to maximize access to daylight. Partitions perpendicular to windows can be higher, while partitions parallel to windows should be lower so daylight is not blocked.

☐ Glazing on interior walls can help open up small spaces, provide access to distant daylight and allow visual connections.

Personal Meaning and Expression

☐ Provide workers opportunities to personalize their immediate environments.

☐ Create a unique work environment to engender a sense of pride, purpose, and dedication for individual workers and the workplace community. Use art, color or playful elements such as games or workplace mascots.