

Introduction to team neighborhood planning

Many people assume that having a private office is essential to their work because a private office provides a quiet environment for concentration and affords privacy for interaction. They may also argue that the office needs to be big enough to hold meetings of two to four persons and to have storage for all their paper documents. However, the more floor area taken up by private offices, the less square footage left for shared support spaces such as meeting rooms, group file storage, break-rooms, mother's room, etc. As a result, employees often find their workplace inadequate at supporting their work. Other space planning solutions might better support what they do.

One option for employees with a concentrative work pattern is to provide small private offices that have enough work surfaces for day-to-day work, with a guest chair for one-on-one meetings, and with enough storage for files accessed on a daily basis. Small meeting rooms nearby can be used for meetings of two or more people. Open meeting tables nearby can be used for spreading out and working with unusually large amounts of paper. Shelves and file cabinets near the workstations can store infrequently accessed files.

Another option for people with concentrative work patterns is to provide workstations in a quiet open work area. In this case, noisy activities should take place in nearby enclosed spaces—focus booths for long phone calls, small meeting rooms for both ad hoc and scheduled meetings. Mobile work technology such as laptops and voice over IP phones should be in place to enable people to work away from their desks. The workstations should have enough work surfaces for day-to-day work and enough storage for files accessed on daily basis.

Shelves and file cabinets near workstations can be used to store group files and infrequently accessed individual files. Open meeting tables near workstations can be used for working with unusually large amounts of paper.

Employees with an interactive work pattern may occupy workstations in collaborative open work areas. Each workstation can have one or two guest chairs for a meeting of two or three persons or for two persons working collaboratively. In addition to desk storage for frequently accessed files, shelves and file cabinets near workstations can store infrequently accessed individual and group files. Focus booths and enclosed small meeting rooms near workstations provide easy access to quiet places for concentrative work, conference calls, and meetings. It is important to have mobile technology in place so that employees can fully utilize the variety of work settings.

Employees who primarily interact over telephones may be accommodated by workstations without guest chairs. However, open meeting spaces and small meeting rooms should be accessible for face-to-face interactions. Focus booths should be provided for both heads-down work and conference calls. Mobile technology should be in place to allow employees working away from their desk.

No matter which solution one may adopt, the goal is to plan a work environment that can effectively support the full range of activities employees must perform at work.