

Fool's Gold: Why Open Office Space Won't Work For Your Company

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There's been a lot of hype surrounding open office space for the past few years. Some claim that the borderless workspaces often favored by tech-companies are destined to become the wave of the future. In fact, the largest commercial real estate company in the world has been touting an office space revolution, where open benches throughout all of their remodeled offices reign supreme, and no one has a cube (let alone office) to call their own. They claim that the abundance of other office amenities makes up for the lack of personal space.

Don't get me wrong. At Hughes Marino, we welcome change. We love innovation. We wholeheartedly embrace new ideas, so long as they achieve the results they are designed to achieve. The problem we've seen time and again with the open office design, is that the unintended consequences of switching to this type of layout far outweigh any benefits.

While the open office concept may

seem "cool," it's important to remember that this type of workspace initially arose out of desperation. Years ago, when many of the now famous tech companies were just barely getting off the ground, they had to maximize usage of the space at all costs, in the name of survival. Every conceivable corner was –literally- cut in an effort to save money. Employees were haphazardly thrown into one big room, and told to make the best of it. Make no mistake, the office-less office arose out of necessity, rather than any sort of strategic design.

Over time, these companies began adding amenities in order to keep their employees happy, despite the fact that they had no space to call their own, nor any place to escape when they needed to buckle down and think. They added onsite car washes, monthly visits from massage therapists, and dry cleaning pick-up and delivery instead. The result has worked for a handful of companies. However, far too many other companies have found that the promise of the open plan is



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nothing more than fool's gold.

The reason is simple. Employees need quiet areas to be able to think. They need personal space much more than they need "collaboration" areas, which rarely get used. Unfortunately, many companies have had to learn the hard way that the unintended consequence of trying to cut



As companies try to cram more employees into less space with open office floor plans, workers are finding it harder to focus and get anything done.

expenses via putting more bodies into less space, is that production plummets. Amenity-rich environments, which were supposed to promote unity and teamwork, result in employees wearing headphones to block out the noise around them. Suffice to say, the price they pay trying to be trendy has been costly.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating: professionals by and large need a workspace to call their own. If you're considering this type of office plan, we encourage you to first read this workplace study, which illustrates in detail the struggles employees face when trying to work in an open plan office, and consequently the price their companies have had to pay.

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