

Open Debate: Open vs. Private Workspaces

Many Canadian Companies Feel They Offer Collaborative Workspaces, but do Workers Agree?

TORONTO, Aug. 24, 2017 /CNW/ - Canadian companies may want to consider mixing things up when it comes to their office arrangements. While 81 per cent of workers surveyed by Robert Half reported open arrangements help collaboration, they also noted at least some privacy contributes to a more productive, less stressful office environment; yet only 35 per cent of workers said their employer offers both options. A separate Robert Half survey of HR managers revealed the majority (57 per cent) feel their workspaces are already collaborative, and most don't have plans to update their offices.

"Workspaces should be as unique and versatile as the employees who use them," said Greg Scileppi, president of Robert Half, International Staffing Operations. "By taking into consideration various workstyles and preferences, companies can establish an office design that encourages improved performance, comfort and productivity."

Additional findings from the surveys:

- While 81 per cent of workers conceded that open floor plans help with collaboration they also said that other office configurations, including semi-private cubicles (62 per cent), a combination of open and private spaces (58 per cent), and private cubicles (54 per cent) can be collaborative.
- Employees who work in semi-private cubicles and a combination of open and private spaces cited the least amount of productivity due to their workspace. Workers with private offices felt the most productive.
- Nearly one-third (30 per cent) of professionals working in private cubicles said their workspace configuration hinders collaboration.
- Sixty per cent of those with private offices said their workspace makes them feel relaxed compared to only five per cent who reported feeling stressed. Those working in semi-private cubicles (33 per cent) reported the most amount of stress due to their workspace configuration.

Added Scileppi, organizations need to be aware of the effect office design can have on current and prospective employees. "The look and feel of an office represents the company and reflects the corporate culture; the right layout can attract candidates in the hiring process, and keep current staff feeling engaged and supported."

Robert Half identifies pros and cons of different workspace configurations to help managers decide what's right for their office:

- **Private offices**

Pros: Employees and management can make business and personal phone calls, hold meetings or have private conversations without being seen or heard by other staff members.

Cons: They're expensive and require more space to implement. Workers who close their doors can seem unapproachable.

- **Private cubicles**

Pros: They provide some privacy.

Cons: Outside discussions can be distracting, and employees worried about disrupting others might avoid conversations, prohibiting collaboration.

- **Semi-private cubicles**

Pros: Professionals can see each other, making it easier to have spontaneous conversations. This option offers an open floor plan feel, but also allows workers to feel ownership of their space.

Cons: Impromptu conversations can be disruptive to nearby workers trying to focus.

- **Open floor plan**

Pros: This option saves on overhead costs, and is best for roles, departments or industries that require a high level of collaboration.

Cons: It's not ideal for introverted personalities or those who require a quiet space for concentration. It also lacks private spaces for confidential discussions.

- **Combination of private and open spaces**

Pros: It isn't as disruptive as other types of configurations, and allows for employees to gather in common areas.

Cons: It's more expensive to implement and can take more time to design this type of space.

About the Research

The surveys were developed by Robert Half and conducted by independent research firms. The HR managers' survey includes responses from more than 300 HR managers at Canadian companies with 20 or more employees. The survey of workers includes responses from more than 500 Canadian professionals age 18 and over and employed in office environments.

About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. The Menlo Park, Calif.-based company has 325 staffing locations worldwide and offers online job search and management tools at roberthalf.ca. For career and management advice, follow our blog at roberthalf.ca/blog. Follow Robert Half Canada on Twitter at [@RobertHalf_CAN](https://twitter.com/RobertHalf_CAN) for additional workplace advice and hiring trends.

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