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*How Office Space
Affects Behavior*

GETTING STARTED

Discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- ▶ Where do you work best? Do you like to study in the privacy of your own room? Or are you happier in the library with a group of friends around you?
- ▶ What conditions are important for you to work well? What makes your study space comfortable?
- ▶ How important is it for you to interact with others to complete your assignments?

TARGET WORDS—Assessing Your Vocabulary Knowledge

Look at each of the target words in the box. Use the scale to give yourself a score for each word. After you finish the chapter, score yourself again to check your improvement.

- 1 I don't know this word.
- 2 I have seen this word before, but I am not sure of the meaning.
- 3 I understand the word when I see it or hear it in a sentence, but I don't know how to use it in my own speaking and writing.
- 4 I know this word and can use it in my own speaking and writing.

TARGET WORDS

___ administrative	___ considerable	___ exclusion	___ restrict
___ allocate	___ cycle	___ facilitate	___ seek
___ approach	___ debate	___ flexibility	___ status
___ assign	___ decade	___ maximum	___ trace
___ code	___ eliminate	___ percent	___ traditional
___ concentration	___ enhanced	___ phase	___ widespread

The following passage is adapted from an introductory textbook on management. This section focuses specifically on the relationship between work space and employee behavior. As you read, pay special attention to the target vocabulary words in **bold**.

WORK SPACE DESIGN

1 Businesses large and small now realize that physical work space influences employee behavior. As a result, businesses are redesigning their buildings and workplaces with the intent of reshaping employee attitudes and behavior. As firms redesign their offices, they focus on three main factors that have a strong impact on employee behavior: how much space employees have, how the space is arranged, and how much privacy employees have.

SIZE

2 In relation to work space, *size* is defined by the number of square feet per employee. Historically, the amount of space an employee had was primarily related to the employee's **status**. The higher an individual was in the organization's hierarchy, the larger the office he or she typically got. That, however, no longer seems to be true. As organizations **seek** to develop more equality, the trends have been toward reducing space dedicated to specific employees, lessening or **eliminating** space **allocations** based on hierarchical position, and making more space available for groups or teams to meet in.

3 According to recent estimates, the amount of personal office space organizations give to **administrative** employees has shrunk by 25 to 50 **percent** over the past **decade**. This change is due in part to economics. Space costs money and reducing space cuts costs. But a lot of this reduction can be **traced** to changes in the organizations. As jobs have been redesigned and **traditional** hierarchies replaced with teamwork, the need for large offices has lessened.

4 In the past, it was not unusual for organizations, especially large ones such as IBM and General Motors, to define square footage for each level in the hierarchy. Senior executives, for instance, may have been **assigned** 800 square feet plus 300 square feet for a private secretary's office. A section manager may have



Open work spaces

gotten 400 square feet, a unit manager 120, and supervisors only 80 square feet. Today, an increasing number of organizations are replacing closed offices with cubicles, making the cubicles constant in size, and acknowledging little or no differences because of managerial rank.

5 When extra space is being **allocated**, rather than giving it to specific individuals, the trend today is toward setting it aside to create a place where people can meet and teams can work. These “public spaces” can be used for socializing, small group meetings, or as places where team members can work through problems.

ARRANGEMENT

6 While size is a measure of the amount of space per employee, the term *arrangement* refers to the distance between people and facilities. The arrangement of the workplace is important primarily because it significantly influences social interaction.

7 Research has shown that people are more likely to interact with those individuals who are physically close to them. Employees' work locations, therefore, are likely to influence the

information to which they are exposed and their inclusion or **exclusion** from various activities and events within the organization.

- 8 A topic that has received a **considerable** amount of attention is furniture arrangement in **traditional** offices, specifically the placement of the desk and where the employee chooses to sit. Unlike workers on the factory floor, individuals in offices typically have some **flexibility** in laying out their office furniture. And the arrangement of an office conveys nonverbal messages to visitors. For instance, a desk placed between two parties conveys formality and the power of the officeholder, while chairs set so that individuals can sit at right angles to each other conveys a more natural and informal relationship.

PRIVACY

- 9 Privacy is in part a function of the amount of space per person and the arrangement of that space. But it also is influenced by walls, screens, and other physical barriers. In recent years, a **widespread** work space design trend has been to **phase** out closed offices and replace them with open offices that have few, if any, walls or doors. The two very different perspectives on office space are sometimes described as the “cave versus cube” **debate**. The “cave” provides privacy while the “cube” **facilitates** open communication. In the United States alone, an estimated 40 million people, or nearly 60 **percent** of the whole country’s white-collar workforce, now work in cubes.
- 10 Caves limit interaction. So organizations have sought to increase **flexibility** and employee collaboration by removing physical barriers such as high walls, closed offices, and doors. Yet, while the trend is clearly toward cubes, organizations are making exceptions for employees engaged in work that requires deep **concentration**. Companies such as Microsoft, Apple Computer, and Adobe Systems, for example, continue to rely primarily on private offices for software programmers. People who write **code** need to cooperate with others at times, but theirs is essentially a lonely task requiring tremendous **concentration**. This is best achieved in a closed workplace that is cut off from others.
- 11 A further extension of the open office concept is called “hoteling.” Employees book reservations for space with the company office

manager, get **assigned** a workplace, pull over a desk-on-wheels, plug the phone into a modem jack, and begin their work. The only space that employees actually call their own is typically a bin or locker where they can keep their personal belongings. Employees “check out” each day when they depart. Used by organizations in management-consulting, financial, and high-tech sectors, where employees spend a significant **percentage** of their work time outside the office or in team meetings, it provides **maximum** office space **flexibility**. However, hoteling has some serious downsides. Employees often feel rootless and complain that hoteling **restricts** the informal socializing and learning that come from having a fixed workplace location.

- 12 What about individual differences? There is growing evidence that the desire for privacy is a strong one for many people. Yet the trend is clearly toward less privacy at the workplace. Further research is needed to determine whether or not organizational efforts to create open work spaces are incompatible with individual preferences for privacy and result in lower employee performance and satisfaction.



A private office

WORK SPACE DESIGN AND PRODUCTIVITY

- 13 How does a redesigned work space positively affect employee productivity? Studies suggest that work space, by itself, doesn’t have a

substantial motivational impact on people; rather, it makes certain behaviors easier or harder to perform. In this way, employee effectiveness is **enhanced** or reduced. More specifically, evidence shows that work space designs that increase employee contact, comfort, and **flexibility** are likely to positively influence motivation and productivity. For instance, Amoco Corporation in Denver reported a **25 percent** decrease in product **cycle** time (the time required to make its products), a **75 percent** decrease in formal meeting time, an **80 percent** reduction in duplicated files, and a **44 percent** reduction in overall space costs after offices were redesigned to **facilitate** teamwork. Based on the evidence

to date, an **approach** that matches office space to the sophistication of the work required is probably best. Jobs that are complex and require high degrees of **concentration** are likely to be made more difficult by noise and constant interruptions. Such jobs are best done in closed offices. But most jobs don't require quiet and privacy. In fact, quite the contrary, jobs today increasingly require regular interaction with others to achieve maximum productivity. This is probably best achieved in an open office setting.

Adapted from Robbins, S. P. (2001). *Organizational Behavior*, 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall International, pp. 456–459.

UNDERSTANDING THE READING

Respond to the following in writing. Base your responses on the reading and your own personal experiences.

1. What is the traditional relationship between organizational hierarchy and the amount of space allocated to an employee? Why is that relationship changing?
2. What is hoteling? What are the benefits and limitations of this type of working arrangement?
3. What kinds of effects have recent changes in work space design had on productivity?

FOCUSING ON VOCABULARY

WORD MEANING

Match the words with their definitions. If you are unsure about a word's meaning, try to figure it out from context by rereading the passage on pp. 71–73. Then check your dictionary.

Set 1

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| ____ 1. eliminate | a. a number of related events or actions that happen again and again in the same order |
| ____ 2. allocate | b. a period of ten years |
| ____ 3. decade | c. parts equal to a particular number in every 100 parts |
| ____ 4. administrative | d. to get rid of |
| ____ 5. percent | e. related to the work of managing or organizing a company or institution |
| ____ 6. trace | f. to find the origins of something |
| ____ 7. cycle | g. to decide officially that a particular amount of something should be used for a particular purpose |

Set 2

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. exclusion | a. the ability to change or be changed easily |
| ___ 2. flexibility | b. the ability to think carefully about something for a long period of time |
| ___ 3. widespread | c. to control or limit someone's actions |
| ___ 4. debate | d. happening or existing in many places, or among many people |
| ___ 5. concentration | e. the act of not allowing someone to take part in an activity |
| ___ 6. code | f. to give someone money, equipment, space, etc. for their use |
| ___ 7. restrict | g. a set of instructions that tell a computer what to do |
| ___ 8. assign | h. a discussion of an issue about which people express differing opinions |

Read the row of words and phrases below each numbered word. One word or phrase in each list is *not* a synonym for the numbered word. Cross it out.

1. status

rank position standing system

2. seek

look for search for use up try to find

3. traditional

usual variable accepted customary

4. considerable

famous extensive large significant

5. maximum

most highest rare utmost

6. facilitate

make easy hold back assist make possible

7. enhance

improve praise increase add to

8. approach

method style agreement way

WORD TIP

- The noun **phase** generally means “one stage in a process.” In this chapter, however, the word is part of the phrasal verb **phase out**. The meaning of this phrasal verb is “to gradually stop using or providing something.”

Due to changes in technology, music companies **phased out** record albums and cassette tapes in favor of CDs.

WORD FAMILIES

The table below contains word families for some of the target words in the reading. Complete the rest of the table. An X indicates that there is not a form or that the form is not common. Sometimes there may be more than one form possible. If you are unsure about a form, check your dictionary.

Verb	Noun	Adjective	Adverb
administer	1. administration 2.	administrative	administratively
X	X	considerable	
cycle	cycle	1. cyclic 2.	cyclically
	enhancement	enhanced	X
eliminate		eliminated	X
	exclusion	exclusive	exclusively
facilitate	1. facility 2. facilitator		X
maximize	maximum	1. maximum 2.	
X	1. percent 2.	X	X
restrict	restriction	1. 2. restricted	restrictively

Choose the correct form of the word in **bold** in sentence **a** to complete sentence **b**. Use the word families table you just completed as a guide. For two items, more than one correct answer is possible.

- a.** The CEO's **administrative** assistant provides him with background reports on topics discussed at company meetings.

b. The university financial aid office _____ the distribution of student grants and loans.
- a.** There is **considerable** interest in voice recognition software among people who do a lot of writing.

b. Language experts' views on how grammar works have changed _____ over the last decade.
- a.** The **cycle** of the seasons brings changes in temperature and the amount of daylight.

b. The economy is _____ in nature, so boom and bust periods are to be expected.
- a.** A key cost-saving strategy for companies is the **elimination** of waste.

b. The goal of proofreading is to _____ spelling mistakes and typographical errors from a piece of writing.

5. a. Computer-generated graphics are often used to **enhance** traditional special effects in films.
b. The town center _____ project aimed to minimize traffic in order to create pedestrian-friendly shopping areas.
6. a. **Exclusion** from most jobs on the basis of gender is against the law in the United States.
b. Immigration laws can be used both to welcome and to _____ people wishing to start a new life in a new country.
7. a. In some cultures, teachers are givers of knowledge; in others they are **facilitators** who help students discover knowledge for themselves.
b. A matchmaker's role is to _____ meetings between young men and women of marriageable age.
8. a. Chimpanzee males aim to **maximize** their reproductive success by mating with several females.
b. The French TGV trains are able to travel at a _____ speed of 515 km/h (320 mph).
9. a. Women made up 18.3 **percent** of the United States labor force in 1900, 29.6 **percent** in 1950, and 46.6 **percent** in 2001.
b. Families who prepare a household budget can work out the _____ of income spent on food and other basic necessities.
10. a. Water shortages have led to **restrictions** on the watering of lawns and parks.
b. _____ clothing can cause health problems such as stomach trouble and backaches.

COLLOCATION

Each item below contains three sentences with the same collocation. Write a fourth sentence of your own using the same word partners.

1. a. Relief organizations aim to help people in developing countries **allocate** limited **resources** to long-term development projects like farming.
b. The principal **allocated** equipment and **resources** equally between girls' and boys' sports teams.
c. In the army, it is the job of the quartermaster to ensure that **resources** such as food and clothing are **allocated** efficiently.
d. _____
2. a. The company's **practical approach** to employee training included offering workshops on new software applications.
b. Workers must take a **practical approach** to balancing career and family life.
c. Many hospital emergency rooms use a very **practical approach** called *triage* to ensure that the most seriously ill or injured patients are treated first.
d. _____

3. a. Handling the airplane during the stormy weather required all of the pilot's **powers of concentration**.
- b. These works of philosophy ask too much of the students' **powers of concentration**.
- c. The speaker needed all of his **powers of concentration** to continue his talk after the demonstrators entered the auditorium.
- d. _____
4. a. An **ongoing debate** between environmentalists and traffic planners concerns whether more roads actually reduce traffic problems.
- b. Recent research into ape language has refuelled the **ongoing debate** about language being a uniquely human capability.
- c. The real reasons for global warming will continue to be the subject of **ongoing debate** by scientists for many years to come.
- d. _____
5. a. Digital technology has **greatly enhanced** the fields of photography, video, and broadcasting.
- b. Recipients of artificial hips normally find that their mobility is **greatly enhanced** after the operation.
- c. Lighter building materials have **greatly enhanced** the speed and capabilities of modern aircraft.
- d. _____
6. a. The new contracts offer employees a **degree of flexibility** in how they arrange their working hours.
- b. Newer car models give owners a greater **degree of flexibility** in how they arrange seating and storage space.
- c. Home buyers today are looking for loan repayment plans with a high **degree of flexibility**.
- d. _____
7. a. The size of an office and the quality of the furniture are still clear **symbols of status** in many companies and organizations.
- b. Expensive sports cars are classic **status symbols**.
- c. The invitations given to successful sports teams and athletes to visit the White House are a **symbol** of the high **status** granted to athletic ability in the United States.
- d. _____
8. a. There is **widespread support** among the general public in the United States for a more equitable health care system.
- b. Attempts to limit the use of English words in the French language have not received **widespread support** from the French public.
- c. European women have expressed **widespread support** for increased paternity rights for men.
- d. _____