Work and the city
CannonDesign
2014
Mid 20th century: Rising middle class coincides with the rising knowledge worker
From early on, there’s been concern that homogeneity might not be the best idea

“Compelled by lack of choice, we are forced to conduct most office activity in a sitting position. The result, as medical studies and insurance data make clear, is a steady decline in vitality, energy, and general body tone. Man's physical machine has evolved to do many things well but no single thing continuously.”

Robert Propst, 1968
Early 20th century: The suburbanization of the workplace continues, and territoriality grows.
Today: Despite claiming more space, it gets used less and less

Almost 70% empty on average
Recent trend: more variety and flexibility

Starting point: One-size-fits-all workstations, homogeneity, poor utilization, and often individual isolation:
Recent trend: more variety and flexibility

**Transformed workplace:** Flexibility, choice, and urban-like variety provided, as provided at **Cummins**, a global engine manufacturer:

- **20% fewer settings**
- **30% less square footage overall**
- **More variety for individual work**
- **More variety for teamwork**
Recent trend: individual workspaces are also getting smaller

Executive office: 200-300 sf
Manager office: 110-150 sf
The double wide: 90-110 sf
Standard cubicle: 60-80 sf
Small cubicle: 40-50 sf
Bench: 25-40 sf

Smaller spaces aren’t just more efficient. They also allow the widest variety of configurations to support a wider variety of group needs.
In some organizations desks are even giving way to informal spaces

At Deloitte, use of café work spaces in their buildings has outpaced use of traditional desks. In the latest iteration of their workplace standards, informal settings have been expanded from 4% to 23% of work areas.
Overall, workplaces are getting more efficient

**RSF and typical costs per person** (rent, operational costs and depreciation)

100
$9,000

Touchdown workplaces with resident support

150
$13,000

Mobile workplaces with “free address” spaces for mobile staff

200
$17,000

Mixed open and enclosed workplaces (1/2 to 2/3 open)

250
$21,000

Mostly enclosed office workplaces

300
$26,000

Open collaborative workplaces (all assigned space)

150
$13,000

Call centers

200
$17,000

250
$21,000

300
$26,000

Overall, workplaces are getting more efficient

*RSF and typical costs per person* (rent, operational costs and depreciation)
At Cummins, even though there are few assigned spaces, satisfaction with ability to concentrate rose from 42% before the move to 74% after. Time lost to distractions dropped 26%, from 25 to 18 minutes per day per person.
Efficient workplaces can also be healthier

At Cummins, choice mean movement and change of posture. “I love the treadmills...in fact, they're my favorite thing about the Cummins workplace.”

Cummins employee
Today’s flexible office is redemption for Probst’s 1960’s challenge to homogeneity

Probst originally helped develop “Action Office” to provide variety and diversity, but the system was ultimately used to create cubicle.

Action office as intended 1968:
Flexibility *in the office* is a common aspiration

“Would you use alternative work spaces in the building if you were enabled and encouraged to use them?"

Most attractive options for those interested:

1. A quiet area for concentration 54%
2. A café work area 47%
3. Small private rooms 32%
4. A staff lounge 30%
5. Brainstorming areas 27%
Energy and connection are desired as much as quiet

Peaks represent the percentage of people who identified that the item was a major problem in the current workplace:

- **Too open?**
  - Too much buzz/energy: 24%
  - Access to natural light: 36%
  - Workplace appearance: 29%
  - Remote access to files, email: 16%
- **Or not open enough?**
  - Not enough buzz/energy: 31%
  - Reserving meeting rooms: 39%
  - Virtual meetings: 16%
  - Getting colleagues to respond: 17%
  - Ability to share files: 18%
  - Coordinating meetings: 16%
  - Physically finding colleagues: 21%
  - Storage space: 24%
  - Space for paperwork: 24%
  - Meeting room technology: 46%
  - Distracting conversations: 24%
  - Quick informal conversations: 29%
- **More than twice as many want more “buzz” than less**
  - 36% more buzz/energy

And a higher demand for ad hoc than formal interaction

In fact, when asked, knowledge workers say they want to interact **38% more frequently** than they do today.

Cannon benchmarks through 2013

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Cannon benchmarks through 2013
A higher calling for the workplace: connecting people

Recent studies at MIT, for example, found that the **breadth and frequency of ad hoc face-to-face interactions** accounts for 35% of the productivity gap between the best and worst teams in organizations.¹

Connections also drive innovation

Proximity and connections are key:

- The density and diversity of knowledge networks predicts innovative outputs (e.g., patents) in R&D teams.¹

- Physical proximity between coauthors predicts citations of research articles.²

- Face-to-face interaction between teammates drops to random beyond 50 meters.³


New ways of enhancing how teams work

CME Group 2013

71% said that they interact more with teammates than they did before. Productive time lost per day to waiting for responses dropped 53%, from 38 minutes per person down to 18.

“It feels like a team, rather than separate competitive individuals. The environment is more conducive to asking questions rather than feeling stifled when the silence is hard to break.” – CME employee
Global consumer products company headquarters

Taking advantage of circulation as a performance factor rather than a loss factor
Global consumer products company headquarters

Using **transparency** to connect people and showcase creative thinking
“Corporate culture alone is the strongest driver of radical innovation across nations.”

Perceived organizational values as an indicator of culture

Percentage of people who feel the following traits described the CannonDesign organization in Chicago in 2012:

- Encourages individual independence
- Seeks consensus
- Experiments with new things
- Follows consistent procedures
- Is supportive
- Is careful and thorough
- Is open and transparent
- Has fun
- Moves fast
- Emphasizes individual achievement
- Celebrates group success
- Has fun

In the average organization only 50% of perceived values overlap with what people rate as ideal values.
Showcasing creative activity within teams
New CannonDesign Chicago office

Making all common surfaces writable or tackable
New CannonDesign
Chicago office

Consolidating shared resources
to produce collisions
Overall, improved satisfaction and no generation left behind

Percentage who say they are satisfied with the workplace overall in CannonDesign’s Chicago office:
People are interacting more frequently in Chicago

Frequency of various team activities (times per day) in CannonDesign’s Chicago office:

On average, team interactions have increased 86%

Intra-team awareness and coordination have become nearly continuous, but brainstorming has increased the most, by 144%
Most importantly, there’s been a measurable shift in the culture

Organizational values at CannonDesign in Chicago now versus before

Percentage of people who feel the following traits describe the organization:

- Encourages individual independence
- Seeks consensus
- Experiments with new things
- Follows consistent procedures
- Is supportive
- Is open and transparent
- Is careful and thorough
- Is social
- Has fun
- Moves fast
- Emphasizes individual achievement
- Celebrates group success

Marked change:
- Openness to experimentation
- Transparency
- Celebrates group success
Next wave: after bringing the city into the office, the office is going back out to the city.