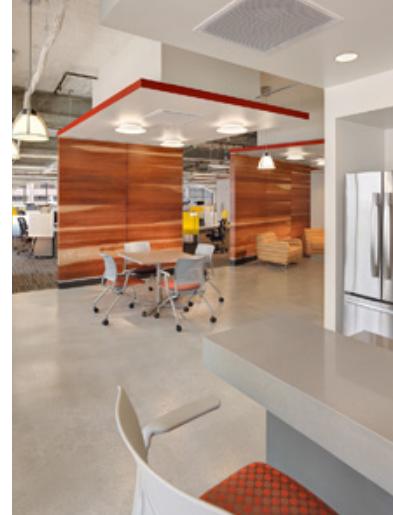


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## Collegiate Design: A New Model for Workplace Design

As more Baby Boomers retire and Gen Y and Gen Z members snap up more spots in the workforce, companies can't afford to ignore the priorities of recent college graduates. Today's recent college grads are strongly scrutinizing potential employers based upon their environments, far more than any previous generation. But are companies continuing to overlook the impact of their work environments and policies when trying to recruit the best and brightest from college campuses? Recent research conducted by **KI** and **HOK** explores how collegiate campus design can and should inform our workplace environments.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...



## Handled with Care: Stories From a Brooklyn Furniture Maker

At the **Foundrywood** studio in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, **Mats Christéen** produces an artisanal furniture collection born from a fusion of Brooklyn's industrial edge and the pure, modern lines of Scandinavian design. His pieces, in both meticulously handcrafted limited editions and more approachable versions, amplify the natural beauty of organic and often reclaimed materials, all sustainably sourced.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 10...



## Side Effects from the Evolution of the Workplace

For organizations to be successful, creating human-centric solutions that focus on empowering the employee is imperative. In a two-part series, officeinsight contributor **Kay Sargent** examines the side effects of current workplace environment trends. This week, topics include an exploration of our human nature as relates to our physiological-environmental needs; the power and nuances of connecting with each other; and technology's impact on work and place.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 18...

CITED:  
"THE MORALITY OF AN ACT  
IS A FUNCTION OF THE  
STATE OF THE SYSTEM AT  
THE TIME IT IS PER-  
FORMED."

—J. FLETCHER, SITUATION  
ETHICS (WESTMINSTER,  
PHILADELPHIA, (1966),  
CITED IN THE TRAGEDY OF  
THE COMMONS BY GREG  
HARDIN



## Side Effects from the Evolution of the Workplace

by Kay Sargent

In today's competitive and rapidly changing world, businesses are seeking to align their workplace with their organizational needs to create a place that is both efficient and effective. But in doing so, many have focused on following trends set by others and are creating open plan environments that often result in spaces that detract rather than support the way their organization or people truly work.

As a result, productivity and employee engagement has suffered in recent years. This side effect of the modern workplace is one that most organizations cannot afford. But new evidence is starting to emerge that there are other side effects of new workplace environments as well.



Kay Sargent, director of workplace strategies at Lendlease

Today we are designing for people and organizations that have unique attributes. At the end of the day, human resource cost is a business's greatest expense, but also its greatest asset. People costs are 10-15 times the cost of space, so doing anything that negatively impacts your staff's ability to be productive can be catastrophic. For organizations to be successful, creating human-centric solutions that focus on empowering the employee is imperative.

In a two-part series, we'll examine the newest side effects of current workplace environment trends. This week, topics include an exploration of our human nature as relates to our physiological-environmental needs; the power and nuances of connecting with each other; and technology's impact on work and place.

### Know Thyself

To gauge how we are doing, we can start by looking at the basics. We are human, and therefore, most of us are creatures of habit – territorial and social, pack animal-like. Many open environments disturb our ability to meet those basic human needs, and prevent us from meeting the basics per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

To do so, an environment must first meet the physiological needs of the occupant – lighting, temperature, movement, air, and noise. Once those basics are met, we can begin to address additional concerns of safety, privacy and ergonomics.

But if those needs aren't met, it is subconsciously or even consciously unsettling, and we are unable to achieve at a higher level. Before open benching plans, enclosed offices and

**People  
are the chief currency of business success.**



**People cost is  
5 -10x the cost of facilities.**

Costs for Typical Large Organization  
■ People  
■ Property  
■ Technology

workstations allowed people to feel somewhat grounded and protected. But when we move people into an open environment, they often feel exposed and constantly distracted.

The open environment may have addressed issues of more open communication and collaboration, but it often came with an unwanted side effect – unsettling unease. Employees often feel more vulnerable in open plan environments, and that effect prevents people from achieving at a higher level.

When we create environments that address the basic needs of people and allow for a healthy balance of focus work and collaboration, via variety and choice that encourages movement, we put the power of place in the hands of people. Solutions that allow for adjustability, control of lighting at the task level, and air flow all help maximize human comfort. Adjustable screening solutions aid in noise reduction, limit distractions and enable privacy as needed.



**Know Thyself**

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Once those needs are met, people begin to seek a sense of belonging and social connection. Culture and team dynamics can be established. Providing team tables and areas for social interaction can aid in establishing a strong sense of place and community. Placing people in silos or spaces where they are isolated all day does not reinforce a communal spirit.

After tertiary needs are met and social order is formed, individuals seek esteem.

Trust, respect and transparency are important at the fourth level, and these elements

are where an employee truly becomes engaged in an organization and his/her work.

Self-actualization and fulfillment, the fifth level, is where employees find values, empowerment and purpose. These higher levels of user fulfillment can be achieved by employing space and furnishing solutions that empower the individual and encourage connectivity, openness, and transparency. But designers and employers must first

build a strong foundation of meeting basic needs.

### Connecting and Collaborating

True collaboration happens when people connect. When people connect, they bond. When they bond, they trust. When they trust, they open up. When they open up, they think outside the box, and that's when collaboration and real innovation happens.

Throwing everyone into a big, open floor plate doesn't mean they will collaborate. We need to design spaces that give people room to connect

with each other in smaller, more intimate settings.

Studies show that people can form tight bonds in groups of four to six. By creating smaller groupings that are more tightly connected, we empower the "camp" mentality that enables innovation. And those camp areas can be grouped in clusters that form a "clan" of up to 24, which then feed into a larger neighborhood, or a "tribe" of 48.

By adding 'scrums' or work areas that are meant to be messy, with tables and moveable equipment, we create spaces where people can come together, swarm and connect. Research shows that people tend to hatch ideas alone, but they extrapolate those ideas in a group. 58% of people indicate they come up with new ideas and solutions to problems outside of work. The result is a working lab for knowledge workers. It's about creating livable spaces at work where people can come together and connect, ideate and innovate. That mix and balance of space is often what's missing in workplaces today.

### Technology's Impact on Work and Place

Alongside the many benefits of new technologies in the workplace, new challenges have also popped up. It's getting harder to focus, concentrate, and think at work. There seems to be no relief from all the distractions. Noisy co-workers, visual distractions and the constant 'pinging' of our technology are all adversely impacting our ability to concentrate or get to deep meaningful thought.

But today, the problem isn't that the office is too loud, but rather that it is too quiet. With quieter keyboards, more texting and fewer people communicating via phone, there is no background noise, or 'hum' that muffles general office sounds. If you've ever worked at a Starbucks or other coffee shop, you know you can concentrate in those noisy environments quite well.

The real problem is when you are in an environment where you can hear what people across the room are saying as clear as a bell. This can be far more distracting than general background noise. Designing environments that allow for "hum" to be created while balancing it with quiet zones affords people the opportunity to function at a higher level.

## Loss of productivity?

**43%**

Of interruptions caused by traditional activities like phone calls, chatting with coworkers, and ad hoc meetings



**57%**

Of interruptions are digital distractions like email, toggling between application, instant messaging and personal online activities such as Facebook and web searches



As people continue to experience advancements in technology, the fear of “Digital Darwinism,” the inability to keep up with technology, is a real concern for many. The World Health Organization (WHO) has projected that “techno-stress”, the stress of constantly being “on” and overwhelmed by technology, will be the biggest health issues of the future.

To address these growing concerns, many companies are creating quiet areas, technology-free zones and policies that establish tech-free hours to allow people time to think or connect with coworkers. The office of the future needs to be more human-centric. Offices must support how we work through spaces that offer balance and choice.

We work differently today than we did even five years ago. And in the coming five years, we will likely work differently than we do today. The office as we know it does need to evolve to stay relevant. People will continue to work outside the traditional office setting, and so work environments will have to transform into engagement centers, becoming the energizing hub of the company and its workforce, where people gather, share and connect.

We can't lose sight of the fact that we are human, and we need to design spaces that reflect that one simple yet defining fact. ■

*Kay Sargent joined Lendlease as Director of Workplace Strategies in 2014 bringing over 30 years of experience in the interiors industry. Prior to joining Lendlease, Kay served as VP of A&D and Workplace Strategies for*

*Teknion and was a Principal for Interior Architects in Washington, DC. Kay has a BFA in interiors from VCU and studied environmental design at Parsons School of Design in NY. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies on their global real estate strategies*

*and designed workplaces of the future. Kay serves on the Advisory Boards of WorkDesign Magazine, PaletteApp and IFI. She has also served on the International Boards of IIDA, ASID, NCQLP and NCIDQ. She is an active member of ASID, IIDA, CoreNET and IFMA.*

