



Is an Open & Collaborative Office Design
Right for Your Business?



KEY INTERIORS

INTERACTIVE WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS

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Inspired by the likes of Google, Cisco and Pixar, a growing number of businesses – from dynamic new startups to established enterprises – are re-inventing their work environment by embracing an open and collaborative office design approach. In this executive ebook, you will learn about whether joining the trend is the right move for your unique business.

*What is an **Open & Collaborative** Office Design?*

Simply put, an open and collaborative office design is an approach in which the interior floor plan is geared towards maximizing open spaces – and hence minimizing enclosed rooms. Employees can more effectively interact with each other, and more easily access resources, tools and other elements as part of a single, holistic work environment.

As noted above, large enterprises such as Google (with their famous “Google’s Nest”) have implemented an open and collaborative office design. However, many small businesses – including startups with very limited space – have also made the shift; especially since they need to utilize every square foot in a way that aligns with workflows and enhances branding. Walled private offices and rows of cubicles do not support these goals. On the contrary, they work against them!

De-Bunking 3 Open and Collaborative Office Design Myths

As you are aware, the purpose of this ebook is to help you determine if an open and collaborative office design is right for your business. However, before we highlight the reasons why businesses have embraced the approach, it is prudent and necessary to de-bunk some myths that may have caught your attention. There are 3 myths in particular that are quickly neutralized under scrutiny:

Myth #1 : Open and Collaborative Offices are Noisy

This is false. In fact, we have observed the contrary: open and collaborative offices can be, and usually are, noticeably quieter than traditionally laid-out offices. This is because individuals and teams in open and collaborative offices do not have to yell over cubicles to connect with colleagues. Furthermore, overly-loud employees are no longer able to “pump up the volume” with impunity. They must respect the prevailing, reasonable noise level.

Myth #2 : Open and Collaborative Offices are Not Private

When most people imagine an open and collaborative office design, they picture a centralized space in which some team members are on the phone, some are typing on their computers, and some are having an impromptu meeting. What is missing from this picture is privacy – and so the belief can emerge that privacy does not essentially exist with this kind of layout.

Once again, this perception is false. Intelligently designed open and collaborative offices have ample private spaces, including designated meeting and conference areas, rooms and spaces. In other words, privacy is not sacrificed in favor of interaction and collaboration. It is still a main feature, since privacy whether it is required by one employee working diligently on a task, or a small group of employees having a confidential meeting – will always be necessary.

Myth #3 : Open and Collaborative Offices are for Creative Companies

Yet again, this is false. There are many different options and possibilities. As such, a business can stamp its “brand personality” on its unique layout, and does not need to imitate Google – or any other company’s approach or choices. Indeed, many businesses in more traditional and conservative industries, such as insurance, healthcare and financial services (to name a few), have adopted an open and collaborative office design, and are reaping the rewards of better performance and lower costs.

The Performance **Benefits** of an Open and Collaborative Office Design

Now that these myths are no longer a concern or distraction, we can focus on the positives! Below, we highlight the key performance benefits of an open and collaborative office design:

● **Enhanced Collaboration**

As noted by Inc.com, collaboration is essential in today's business environment. However, in many workplaces, employees work in "silos", and as such cross-functional interaction, knowledge sharing and problem solving is the rare exception instead of the standard norm.

An open and collaborative office design tears down these silos so that teams can share and support each other, which boosts productivity, performance, quality, customer service, and most importantly: profitability and the bottom-line.

● **Improved Customer Service**

In a traditional office layout, customers are often routed to voicemail – because the employee who answered the call (and is doing the routing) has no idea whether their colleague is in the office and/or available.

However, an open and collaborative office design allows employees to quickly and clearly see whether a colleague is present and available, which directly translates into better customer service. It is the difference between telling a customer: "I will transfer you over to Doug, and if he is not there you can leave a voicemail" vs. "I can see that Doug is in the office this morning, but he is in a meeting at the moment. If you wish, I can transfer you to his voicemail, or I as soon as he is free I will personally ask him to call you back".



- **Flatter, More Democratic Layout**

In traditional office environments, senior staff is usually assigned the best offices, while junior staff and new hires get stuck in the least desirable workspaces. However, as Harvard Business Review pithily puts it: “hierarchy is overrated”. An open and collaborative office design allows businesses to implement a flatter, more democratic working style that leverages all available knowledge capital, and gives every employee easier and greater access to the people, resources and tools they need to be more productive and, ultimately, more profitable contributors.

- **Improved Space Utilization**

As mentioned above, when it comes to maximizing space utilization, an open and collaborative office design is categorically superior to traditional (i.e. “cubicle farm”) layout. As such, businesses get much more value out of their real estate investment, but without diminishing productivity or employee job satisfaction. On the contrary, better use of space increases both!



- **Increased Staff Morale**

As reported in the journal *Organization Science*, employees who feel isolated or bullied in the workplace are significantly more likely to under-perform or quit. An open and collaborative office design ensures that everyone is part of the team. Isolated employees can be engaged, and would-be bullies can be rooted out. Both of these interventions can have a profoundly positive effect on staff morale, which translates into better recruitment and retention (especially among Millennials), greater productivity and performance, and higher profits.

- **Improved Branding**

An open and collaborative office design is very “now” – and a big hit with both employees (as mentioned above) and customers alike. They see the approach as a clear demonstration that a business is progressive, forward-thinking, and is investing in its capacity and growth. Furthermore, staff can be included in the overall design process, and provide input and suggestions on colors, materials, and more. This boosts morale, and creates excitement and anticipation even before the layout becomes a reality.

The **Cost Benefits** of an Open and Collaborative Office Design

In addition to the performance benefits noted above, there are also significant cost benefits of open and collaborative office design. These include:



- **Reduced Office Furniture Costs**

It has long since been known – and recently proven by researchers from the University of Sydney – that employees dislike cubicles with a passion that borders on visceral hatred. However, aside from boosting employee morale, there is another major advantage to removing cubicles: dramatically reduced office furniture costs. Indeed, even a basic cubicle can cost \$2,000 and more, with higher-end models exceeding \$10,000. And considering most businesses need a dozen or more, the costs rapidly add up (almost as fast as employee morale plummets!).

In addition, employees can more easily share resources and equipment – such as printers, copiers, shredders, and so on – which further reduces infrastructure and maintenance costs.

- **Lower Utility and Energy Bills**

Compared to a traditional layout, an open and collaborative office design has fewer walls, and makes better use of available natural light and HVAC system airflows – all of which combine to significantly lower utility and energy bills. This also helps businesses demonstrate environmental leadership, as well as earn LEED points towards certification.

And at the same time, better lighting and a consistent internal temperature throughout the office (i.e. some areas are not freezers in the winter and saunas in the summer) is a win for employees, who spend an increasing amount of time in the office. According to a Gallup poll, half of all full time employees surveyed typically work more than 40 hours a week, and 40 percent regularly exceed 50 hours. That is a lot of time to be frozen or baking!



- **Affordable**

Private offices can be somewhat costly to renovate or build, because of the materials and labor involved, plus the need to ensure that each office is appropriately lit, wired (telecommunications, network, etc.), and connected to the HVAC system. And if windows are involved, the costs increase even more. However, an open and collaborative office design is surprisingly affordable, since new walls do not have to go up.

- **Rapid**

Furthermore, and again in comparison to more elaborate or complex office renovation projects, implementing an open and collaborative office design is a relatively quick project, and it can be managed in a way to minimize or eliminate disruptions to staff and operations.

Is an Open and Collaborative Office Design **Right** for Your Business?

Now that you have a solid understanding of why businesses are adopting an open and collaborative office design, we can return to the question that launched our journey: is it right for your business?

Simply put, if you are looking to affordably and quickly re-invent your work environment – and reap the measurable performance and cost benefits described above – then an open and collaborative office design makes perfect sense, and Key Interiors is the proven partner to make it happen.



Key Interiors **The Interior Solutions Specialists!**

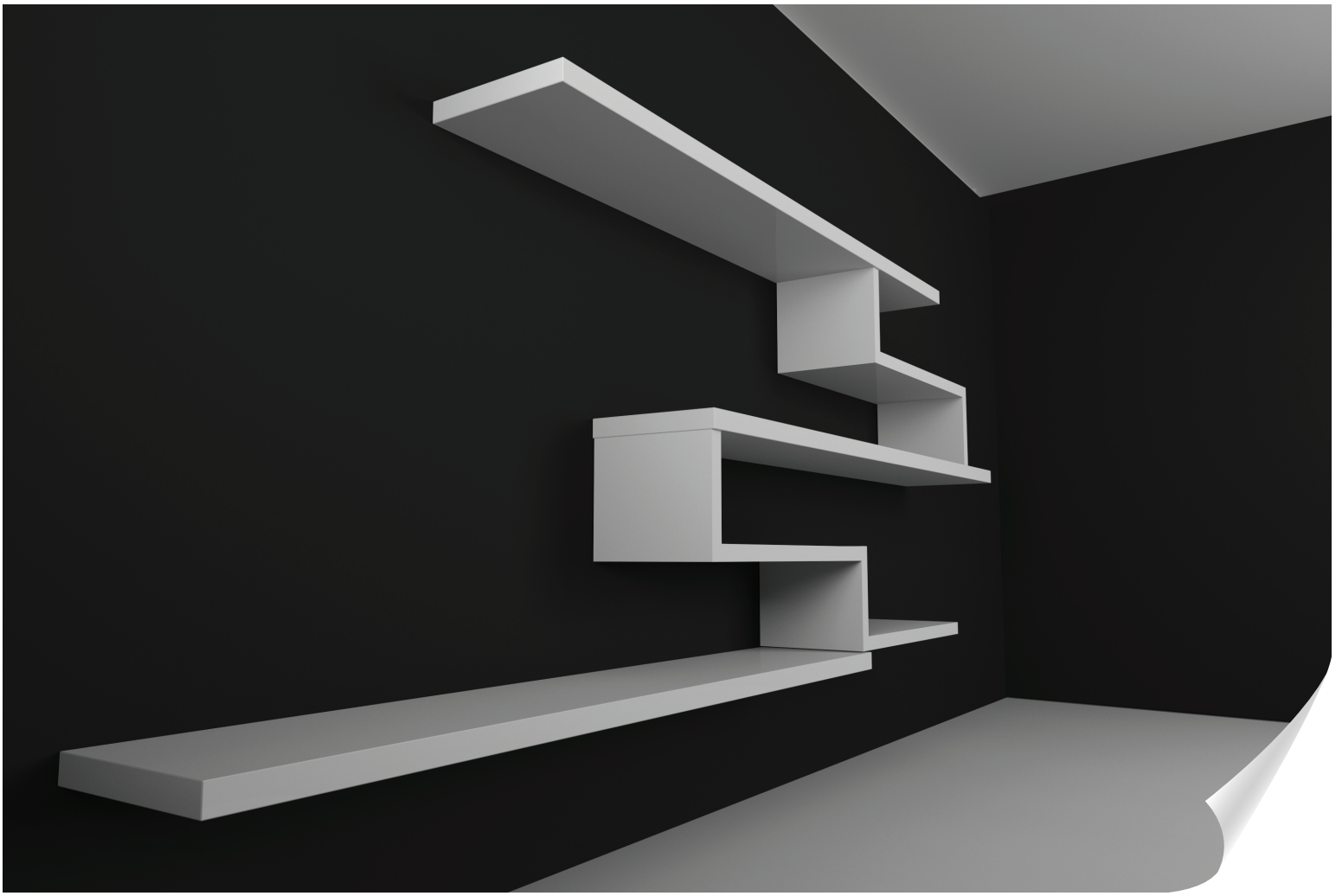
For more than 30 years, businesses like yours have turned to the interior solutions specialists at Key Interiors to design, build and reap the rewards of a successful, cost-effective office renovation.

As a “one-stop shop” that manages ALL relationships with trades, specialists, consultants, city planners and all other stakeholders, we will help you bring to life a customized open and collaborative office design that measurably:

- **Enhances Collaboration**
- **Improves Customer Service**
- **Demonstrates a Flatter, More Democratic Style**
- **Improves Space Utilization**
- **Increases Staff Morale**
- **Improves Branding**
- **Reduces Office Furniture Costs**
- **Lowers Utility and Energy Bills**

Furthermore, we will ensure that your office re-invention is affordable, and is finished sooner and more efficiently than you may imagine.

To learn more about transforming your office through low cost, high impact open and collaborative design, contact Interior Solutions today and schedule your free consultation.



About Key Interiors

Established in 1978, Key Interiors has the proven competence and capacity to manage your office renovation project from initial design, all the way through to completion. Our team of forward thinking collaborative partners and interior solutions specialists have a track record of more than 300 successfully completed projects. We also offer a full range of services, including design-build, architectural design, construction management and more, and we have a design center with over 300 lines of office furnishings and contract furniture.



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