

Press Releases

Seeking Mindfulness: Steelcase Study Reveals How to Help Employees Find Focus at Work

SEEKING MINDFULNESS: STEELCASE STUDY REVEALS HOW TO HELP EMPLOYEES FIND FOCUS AT WORK

New research shows 49 percent of workers report not being able to concentrate easily, while the average person loses 86 minutes per day

Grand Rapids, MI, August 26, 2014 – Steelcase today released findings from workplace research on how the physical environment can support or hinder mindfulness, along with six other dimensions of wellbeing. The researchers found that the physical environment offers behavioral cues, that can promote — or hinder — employee’s physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

A recent multi-national Steelcase/Ipsos study revealed the growing lack of focus in the workplace. Only 56 percent of employees reported their environment enabled them to feel relaxed and calm, while only 54 percent reported being able to work in teams without being interrupted or disturbed. Nearly half of all workers surveyed reported not having adequate spaces that support mindfulness and focus.

“Mindfulness means balancing the intense pace of life with being fully present in the moment,” said Donna Flynn, director of Workspaces Futures at Steelcase. “The rapid changes in technology, the marketplace and the global playing field have caused volatility, uncertainty, chaos and ambiguity leaving workers stressed and overwhelmed. Healthy and mindful employees are a competitive advantage in today’s business world, but to achieve it workers need supportive environments that give them the emotional capacity to interpret and experience events in a way that leads to productive, positive actions.”

The researchers identified and developed design concepts that can be incorporated into the physical workplace to help shift employees’ behaviors to better support business goals such as creativity, agility and innovation.

Steelcase key ideas when designing for mindfulness include:

- Create spaces that help people connect with others one-on-one and eye-to-eye, not just through their technology devices.
- Design areas that allow workers to control their sensory stimulation and choose if they want more stimulation or less stimulation.
- Offer places that are calming, through the materials, textures, colors, lighting and views.
- Create areas where people can connect with others without distractions or interference.

“Workers need physical spaces that help them manage the cognitive overload and be fully present in the moment,” says Arantz. “When we ask people to envision a more focused state of wellbeing, they talk about spas, vacation, yoga or other ways to escape from everyday life. Yet people spend 36 percent of their time working – more than any other activity – and we’re asking ourselves why this feeling can’t come to the workplace.”

“To foster mindfulness, and wellbeing, organizations need to provide a diversity of work settings employees can choose from based on the work they have to do. When employees have choices, they have a sense of control that helps them feel more empowered, engaged and less stressed.”

Six Dimensions of Wellbeing

Mindfulness is one of six key dimensions Steelcase researchers identified in their exploration of the physical, emotional and cognitive aspects of worker wellbeing. The Steelcase team’s research synthesis identified six dimensions of wellbeing that can be impacted by the design of the physical environment. The six dimensions of wellbeing are:

- Mindfulness
- Optimism
- Vitality
- Belonging
- Authenticity
- Meaning

“Creative work is all about making connections, being open to new ideas, taking risks and experimenting. These behaviors are impossible in a stressed state of mind. For creative work to thrive, the workplace needs to be a supportive and positive environment,” noted Flynn.

About Steelcase Research:

The Steelcase research team conducts design research, based in the social sciences that includes observation and other anthropological methods. This study is a meta-analysis of 3 years of Steelcase global primary research combined with external studies.