What Workers Want

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People know what they don't want at work—a sea of bland, uniform spaces where ideas go to die.

In fact, a recent Steelcase study of global office workers found that although 77 percent of people have their own assigned workstation, the vast majority—87 percent—spend two to four hours every day working someplace else. We wanted to know: Why are people migrating away from their desks? What kinds of spaces are they looking for? Is it as simple as adding some sofas and a barista bar to give people the kind of workplace they want?

As it turns out, monotony is a huge motivator—just over half of people (51 percent) say they need an escape from working in the same place during their day, whether they were alone or with others. They're also seeking deeper relationships with colleagues, and 43 percent believe informal spaces can help build more trust.

What people are looking for at the office

Better places for social interactions, such as:

41%

Quick, informal connections with peers

28%

Collaborative teamwork

Privacy

24%

Use informal spaces for quiet or focus work

Comfort
both physical and emotional:

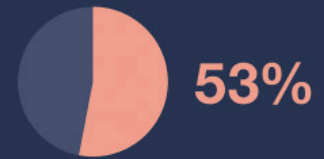**37%**

Want better ergonomics

47%

Are looking for a more comfortable and inviting work space that is inspiring

DESIRE VS. REALITY

People give lackluster scores to the ancillary spaces their companies provide today. Digging deeper we saw what's behind the ho-hum ratings:

53%

say they can't find the right type of spaces they need

40%

say they don't have enough informal spaces

How to Make Informal Spaces Better

45%

More views of nature or greenery

41%

Better support for informal interactions

38%

More access to private spaces for acoustic and visual privacy

37%

Better ergonomics

THE AGE FACTOR

Younger and older generations agree—everyone likes informal spaces and uses them regularly—but for different reasons. Millennials are more likely to use dining/bar spaces to do focus work while older generations use these spaces for collaboration and socialization.

Lounge spaces are used by millennials as a place for privacy while older generations use these spaces socially. Millennials are also more likely to use a wider range of informal spaces and to adjust their furniture, where older employees tend to pick favorite spots to use and leave their furniture settings alone.


CULTURE SHIFT

In China and India, people spend far less time at their primary workstation than in other countries. Organizations appear to be more progressive and provide more informal spaces to their employees.

India and China also offer the lowest percentage of I/Owned workstations and the highest percentage of We/Owned and We/Shared workspaces. This further promotes mobility in the workplace and people in these countries are more likely to seek out other spaces to work.

Organizations in the United States and Germany appear to be more traditional and provide considerably more I/Owned workstations; organizations in India and China are more progressive and offer more We spaces.
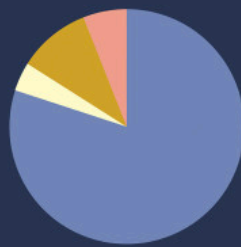
Primary Workstation Type by Country

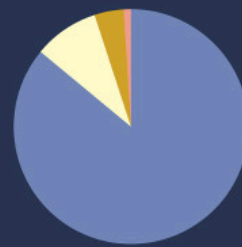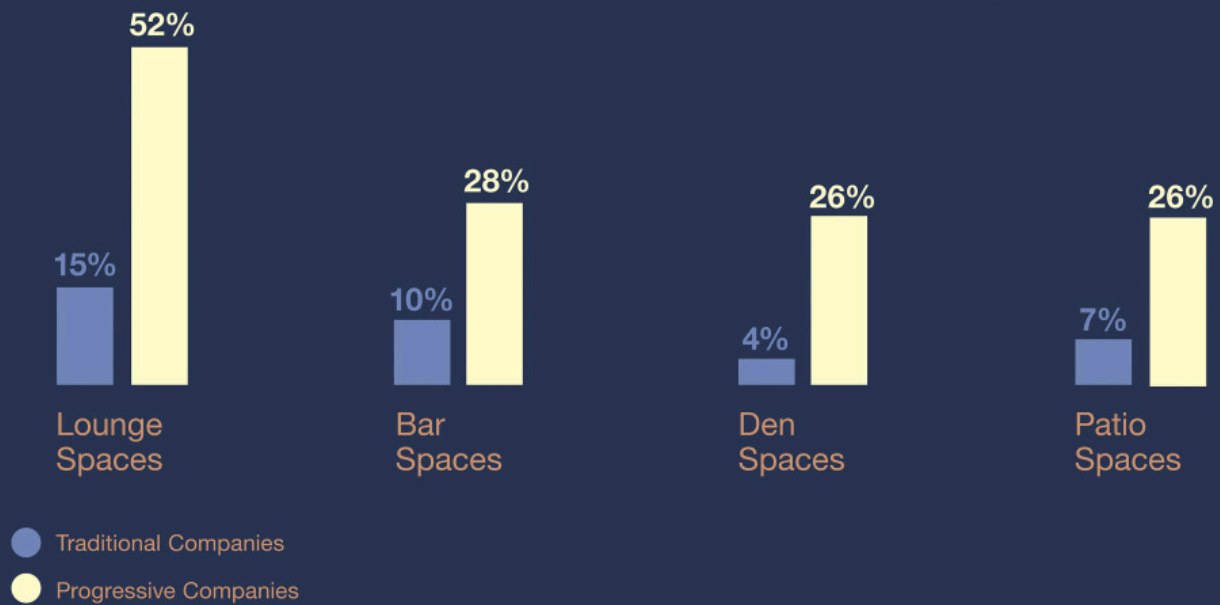China   India   Germany   U.S.

- I-Owned
- I-Shared
- We-Owned
- We-Shared
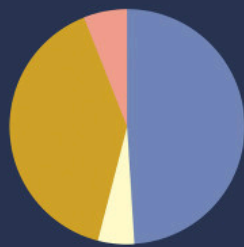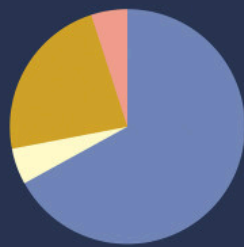
THE MORE THE BETTER

It shouldn't come as a surprise: Companies that offer more casual, inspiring spaces are perceived as being significantly more progressive than those who don't.

Availability of Informal Spaces
Traditional vs. Progressive Companies

- Lounge Spaces: Traditional 15%, Progressive 52%
- Bar Spaces: Traditional 10%, Progressive 28%
- Den Spaces: Traditional 4%, Progressive 26%
- Patio Spaces: Traditional 7%, Progressive 26%

Traditional Companies
Progressive Companies

HIERARCHY OF OFFICE NEEDS

Just as people have basic needs in life life food, water and safety, people have different needs at work too. In the office, organizations must provide people with technology, a diverse range of spaces that support different types of work and permission to use these spaces if they expect them to thrive.

According to the study, most organizations only provide people with the technology and permission to work in informal spaces. But what's missing is the range of spaces where people want to work that support their physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

Hierarchy of Office Needs

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Wellbeing
Physical, Cognitve & Emotional

Organizational Support
Permission to work in new ways

Range of Diverse Spaces
Connections, Privacy & Comfort

Basic Technology
Power & Wi-Fi