

Pods 101: Do's and Don'ts for Today's Office Hot Spot

When choosing the right pod for your office, make sure you know what you're getting.

Forget science fiction. Today's pod people are very real and work in offices around the world. The need to block out distractions, to add private spaces to existing floorplans and to do so quickly has led to the proliferation of pods. And, they aren't just for phone calls. Today's pods come in all shapes and sizes.

Workplaces everywhere are testing them out. And what they're finding is — adding a pod to the office isn't like adding a couch or a chair, it requires different questions on the front end and new protocols on the backend. 360 sat down with Steelcase pod portfolio expert, Niki Watt, to get the download on what you should or shouldn't do as you embrace the pod lifestyle.

DO

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

360: We've seen people put up a couple of two-by-fours and add a door and say "this is good enough." But if you want to do better, what do you need to think about?

Niki Watt: There can be a tendency to say "Well, something is better than nothing." But as more and more people use pods, it's worth considering how to create a great experience inside? Because the two-by-four is not creating a great experience for work to get done. So, organizations are starting to peel back the onion to say, "If these things are going to live within my floor plan, how do they meet my top line needs?"

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

360: When some people envision pods, they think of phone booths. But, today there are so many options. How do you recommend people find the right one for their office?

NW: It's so important to consider what kind of privacy you're solving for. Do you need it for individuals or small groups? How important is visual privacy versus transparency? How close in proximity are nearby employees? You'll want to think about what kind of work you're solving for — such as video conferencing, private phone calls or group work. And, consider how often you need to move it.

PUT A RUSH ON IT

360: Besides offering people privacy, why do you think pods are so hot right now?

NW: One of the biggest benefits of pods is how quickly they can be installed. Construction or drywall for an enclosed space could take a long time. But, the pods we're able to offer today install in half-a-day or less. So, there's a real benefit in terms of time, money and productivity gains in the workplace.

Officebricks, for example, is a plug-and-play solution. These pods can be assembled in under an hour—no drilling, adhesive bonding or screwing needed. So, these solutions are made to solve needs quickly.

DON'T

TREAT IT LIKE JUST ANOTHER PIECE OF FURNITURE

360: What are you learning about the requirements organizations need to think about when it comes to pods?

NW: Because pods are a quick solution, it can feel like buying just another piece of furniture. But, we still need to take into account important safety considerations in the workplace. We always check local codes because we're seeing some different things depending on where pods are being installed. And, we're able to provide people with some game-changing products that put safety first. [Orangebox Air³ Pods](#), for instance, are created with a beautiful louvered ceiling that opens and closes. Its default setting is open. So, not only does it provide great air flow, but it also means in many cases the building's existing fire suppression system will work for this pod.

MAKE IT YOUR OFFICE

360: What kinds of work are you seeing take place in a pod? Are some people camping out inside and refusing to leave?

NW: I'm sure that happens. But, I think office norms would frown upon people refusing to share. We're really seeing two main types of work. These phone booth pods are really designed for individuals to take phone calls, have a quick stand up meeting, or find a place to recharge. Then there's pods that are more suited for smaller teams. So, think two to six people. I would say, depending on what type of work and how long you're going to be in there, that's typically how we see people making decisions on which pod they're going to use.

CREATE A BAD EXPERIENCE

360: Is there a culture that's developing around pods? What kinds of social norms do you see emerging?

NW: I think people are discovering that they want a great user experience when they're using a pod. They want acoustics at the right level. They don't want to feel like they're in a submarine where they can't hear anything or have any sense of the outside. But, at the same time, they don't want to hear their neighbors or have their neighbors hear them.

They want airflow. They don't want to get too hot. They don't want the smell of someone's lunch lingering into the afternoon. They want access to power and the right amount of light. So, people are starting to get more discerning about figuring out how to make the pod a good experience.

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