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Poor workplace design damages productivity

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A well-designed, employee-friendly office can boost productivity by as much as a quarter, latest research has suggested.

The study by the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment and the British Council for Offices has found even simple things such as good lighting and having adequate daylight can reduce absenteeism by 15 per cent and increase productivity by between 2.8 per cent and 20 per cent.

The two organisations are urging business leaders to take more account of the links between good workplace design and improved business performance when planning and designing new buildings, and overhauling old ones.

The report, *Impact of Office Design on Business Performance*, has also argued that how workplaces are design is going to become more important in the future as more and more workers work remotely or outside a formal workplace.

By next year, it has estimated, some 30 per cent of the world's top companies will have adopted a highly mobile work style model, with 35 per cent having a workforce located outside the boundaries of the conventional workplace.

Good workplace design can make a big difference in staff satisfaction, attraction, motivation and retention, it argued.

It can also affect the level of knowledge and skills of workers, how innovative and creating they are, how they respond to business and technological change and how effective the organisation is at attracting and retaining customers.

Poor workplace design, by contrast, is linked to lower business performance and higher level of stress experienced by employees.

An employee's workplace is responsible for 24 per cent of their job satisfaction level and this can affect staff performance by five per cent for individuals and 11 per cent for teams.

In one major UK company, staff turnover at a call centre reduced by 11per cent after a move to new well-designed offices and output doubled during the same period, it argued.

Paul Morrell, CABA commissioner and president of the BCO, said: "As the pressures of competition place new demands on differentiation through quality of knowledge management and creative thought, new environments are needed to encourage interaction and teamwork.

"Those employers who ignore the evidence of office design as an enabler of staff satisfaction and performance risk the loss of key staff and ultimately business success," he added.

Richard Kauntze, chief executive of the British Council for Offices, said: "No part of the BCO's work is more important than developing a greater understanding of the relationship between an office building and the effectiveness of the people who work in it.

"The workforce is by far the most valuable asset of any business, and almost always the biggest cost. A business that gives serious attention to the physical environment of the office is far more likely to increase staff productivity than one which ignores the building," he added.

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