

The Noise Level in your Workplace is Destroying Productivity and Profit

Workers can be up to 66% less productive when exposed to just one nearby conversation. Over 70% of offices are open plan, think of all that lost productivity.

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, September 27, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The hallmark of open-plan offices is the absence of privacy. According to the head of The Sound Agency, Julian Treasure, this is particularly problematic. "There is plenty of research that shows that the most destructive sound of all is other people's conversations".

"We have bandwidth for roughly 1.6 human conversations. So if you're hearing somebody's conversation, then that's taking up 1 of your 1.6. Even if you don't want to listen to it, you can't stop it: You have no earlids. And that means you've just .6 left to listen to your own inner voice."

In offices, irritating noise can come from all kinds of sources: air conditioning, obnoxious ringtones, traffic, nearby construction, unsophisticated sound-masking systems and—especially—from other people's voices, says Julian Treasure, chairman of a United Kingdom-based consultancy, The Sound Agency. Noisy environments tend to only get worse over time, because people start speaking louder as it gets noisier around them (known as the Lombard effect).

Being constantly alert to our environment, and noise easily makes us uneasy. Lab studies on humans as well as animals have shown that exposure to noise arouses the nervous system, causing rising blood pressure and the release of stress hormones. Over time, these instinctive responses can stress the cardiovascular system and give rise to negative outcomes such as anger and exhaustion.

Without an effective [acoustical solution](#), experts say, the negative impacts of day-to-day noise in many office environments can also be significant. The World Health Organization estimates that the annual cost to Europe from excessive noise levels is £30 billion.

The noise level of 60-65 decibels that's common in some open-plan offices is not only too loud for concentration, it can also impede effective collaboration by causing speech interference. The sound level of speech is about 60 decibels if people talk to one another, in normal tones without raising their



Too much noise in today's open office



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voices, at a distance of about one meter (3 ¼ feet). This means any other noise within that same range—someone else talking nearby, for instance—can cause speech interference, so not all the words may be fully heard. “Nevertheless, a sentence may be understood because of cortical processing. This, however, is an active process that may cause reaction leading to adverse effects in the longer run of chronic noise exposure.” In other words, in noisy environments with poor acoustics, workers can as easily get stressed by trying to hear others as by trying not to hear others—a lose/lose proposition.

If you think the acoustic environment in your office could be harming employee productivity and well being, you don’t have to shell out tens of thousands of dollars. Consider a [practical solution](#) to reducing noise levels in your space that can be implemented immediately at little cost.

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