



White Paper

HAWORTH®
PRIVACY IN THE OFFICE

For years, open-plan office environments have been the norm. With them, however, have come the interruptions and distractions caused by, for example, overhearing co-workers' conversations. This has highlighted the issue of workplace privacy and the impact it has on an office worker's performance.

In recent decades, numerous research studies have shown that privacy disruptions created by acoustical or visual distractions are a major complaint in surveys of job performance and satisfaction. According to a Basex study (Wallis, Steptoe & Cole, 2006), office workers waste a quarter of their working day through interruptions and distractions. From 1994 to 2000, BOSTI conducted a study to discover what workers felt was the most desirable workplace quality (Brill, Weidemann & BOSTI Associates, 2001). It turned out to be the ability to perform solo work without distraction.

Generally speaking, acoustical privacy is seen as conversational privacy and freedom from noise distractions while visual privacy as covers the aspects of visibility to co-workers and seeing co-workers in the office. Clearly, privacy is an architectural issue and since the various aspects of privacy overlap, they all have to be considered in coming up with workplace solutions. It is also important to remember that a worker's need for privacy does not exist in a vacuum. Hence, flexible workplace solutions are required to accommodate the privacy needs of specific job types and the collaboration needs of co-workers – solutions that allow groups of

individuals to remain private enough to be productive while enhancing their ability to collaborate. Another Haworth White Paper entitled "Privacy Matters " (Bellinger & Kupritz, 2009) outlines practical recommendations relating to such architectural issues.

Haworth case studies show how the Esedra³ range of demountable wall partitions has helped solve the privacy-collaboration conundrum in office workspaces. In all three cases the work environment was designed to increase both the physical and mental well being of the office workers with the aim of improving their work performance. Client request Because Esedra³ partitions prevent acoustical and visual distractions, individual and collaborative areas could be placed side by side, making individual concentration or group interaction possible. The flexible adaptability of the Esedra³ partitions not only enhanced the efficient use of space but also made their re-use possible as workspace needs changed. And last but not least, the partitions' recyclability is an important consideration when they come to the end of their working life.

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