

Munich, April 2018

Fraunhofer IAO and designfunktion: Study into effective office and working environments reveals top results for multi-space concepts

Together with other partners, the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) and the designfunktion Group have been investigating the importance of working environments for the strategic goals of companies in the study “Effective office and working environments”. Their initial findings were published today at **ORGATEC’s European press conference in Amsterdam**. The study consulted more than 1,000 company experts as well as representatives from the architecture and property sectors who are dealing with the issue of “new working environments” in their organisations. In the survey, the specialists evaluated the circumstances in their respective organisations on the basis of a variety of criteria such as office design, teamwork, information and communication technologies as well as employer attractiveness. Starting in May 2018, designfunktion will be offering a forum for information and discussion about the study in a series of conferences across Germany.

Best results for multi-space working environments

One focus of the study was an investigation into different types of office. “Multi-space” working environments scored more positively than all other office layouts. This format is characterised by predominantly open room structures and a wide range of options in terms of spaces and rooms that can be used flexibly by all employees. The study found that **employer attractiveness** is rated significantly more positively in multi-space offices, that there is a higher degree of autonomy, that teamwork is significantly more common and that the working environment fulfils a much stronger support function overall. Of all workplace formats, the arrangement of space within multi-space working environments reflects company hierarchies the least.

And that’s not all: multi-space workplaces offer far more **opportunities for privacy** in order to focus on work and for brief moments of relaxation than are available in working environments with individual office structures or in other types of office. It also appears to be much more common for those companies that have implemented multi-space working environments internally to take the needs of users into account in their office design. “In eight out of ten projects that we work on as designers and furnishers, companies are already choosing multi-space concepts,” reports Samir Ayoub, managing partner of designfunktion. He continues: “In these projects from 400 square metres upwards, we design zones that meet people’s different needs for concentration, communication and privacy. In order to determine what facilities are needed, we ask for the number and type of communication events held by the company in addition to information about working styles. We advise our customers to create more private areas that can be used by all employees on a temporary basis. Because one thing is clear: flexible working environments lead to further increases in mobility and agility.”

Press Release

designfunktion
Gesellschaft für moderne
Einrichtung mbH
Leopoldstraße 121
80804 München
Tel. +49 89 306307-0
info@designfunktion.de
www.designfunktion.de

Presse Kontakt DACH
hicklvesting PR
Barbara Hickl
Nicole Vesting
munich@hicklvesting.com
Telefon +49 89 383 801-85
berlin@hicklvesting.com
Telefon +49 30 319 903-88

The pace of modernisation in German companies

The speed at which the organisation of work is undergoing modernisation was also examined. The pace of internal change is not perceived as being too fast, irrespective of company size and functional area. As the size of the company increases, the speed of transformation is even described as being excessively slow. Senior managers, on the other hand, believe modernisation of the organisation of work is taking place at just the right pace.

The results of the study make it clear that where the organisation of work is modernising too slowly, office and working environment plays less of a supportive role. In addition, spaces are less well designed, teamwork is less widely practised in the organisation and employer attractiveness is significantly reduced. "We were particularly surprised that, in contrast to earlier study findings, the speed of transformation was criticised as being too slow. The experts obviously see a need for action here," comments Ayoub.

A summary of the study's findings can be downloaded from kongress.designfunktion.de now. The entire study will be available from 16 May 2018.

About the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering

As one of the 72 institutes within the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO is part of Europe's leading network for applied research. Fraunhofer IAO's activities focus on issues affecting working people. The institute supports companies in recognising the potential of innovative forms of organisation and forward-looking information and communication technologies, in adapting them to meet their individual needs and in implementing them consistently. Pooling managerial and technological competence ensures that economic success, employee interests and social implications are always given equal consideration.

About designfunktion

With locations in 16 cities, the designfunktion Group is one of Germany's leading design and furnishing companies and is regarded as the market leader in the conception and realisation of modern office and working environments as well as in the furnishing of properties in the contract sector. designfunktion's teams of experts offer the following portfolio of services from a single source: from individual consultation and design, as well as specific acoustic, textile and lighting design, to furnishing, logistics, installation and additional project management. Furthermore, designfunktion carries a range of brands from the top 100 international manufacturers, which opens up an exceptionally large scope in terms of furnishing possibilities for the industry.

www.designfunktion.de

For further information, please contact:

Barbara Hickl

hicklvesting Public Relations

Mommensenstraße 27

10629 Berlin

T +49 30 319 903 88

berlin@hicklvesting.com

www.hicklvesting.com

Nicole Vesting

hicklvesting Public Relations

Kurfürstenplatz 6

80796 München

T +49 89 383 801 85

munich@hicklvesting.com

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