

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Office Facilities and
Human Interaction Design in Global Organizations

MADE BY

Master Students at
University of Copenhagen
The MA course International Business Communication
Spring 2014

CIRCD Publishing Report

Centre of Interaction Research and Communication Design
University of Copenhagen



ISBN 978-87-93300-01-9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword: IBC 2014 p. 3

Introduction p. 4

Recommendations p. 5

Office Observations p. 13

Frustrations and Needs p. 14

Office Facilities Benchmarking p. 20

FOREWORD: IBC 2014

Organizations consist of people working in a collaborative way in order to reach certain goals. Therefore, a successful organization needs to have its employees working efficiently as well as collaborating and sharing knowledge.

The more an organization encourages the employees to interact formally as well as informally, the bigger the likelihood is to create a work environment, which is both dynamic and innovative. These are key elements in keeping up with today's global competition between international companies. The office design plays an important part as it shapes the interaction between employees as well as the environment in which the individual handles his or her daily tasks. As we will present in this report, a bad work environment caused by a poor office design affects the employees' job satisfaction, work efficiency, and degree of interaction.

The open office environment, which is quite popular in many companies and organizations, surely has the advantage of making everyone aware of what is going on at the workplace and how their job contributes to the complete system.

Likewise, by making employees visually available to each other, the probability of them engaging in an informal conversation and perhaps sharing knowledge and contemplating new ideas is higher than had they been placed in their own closed offices.

However, open offices also create problems if elements such as noise, privacy, and suitable areas for formal as well as informal meetings are not taken into account. In the following we will demonstrate how a poor office design can create various problems in an international company and how other companies have resolved those issues.

INTRODUCTION

This presentation contains recommendations regarding office design in global organizations based on the intensive study of a company with employees in more than 100 countries.

The recommendations are based on analyses of data collected from January to May 2014. The data collection consists of observations, recordings of meetings, and interviews in 11 companies located in Denmark, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. All data has been collected by the students of International Business Communication 2014. The conclusions in this presentation are based on observations, interviews, and a benchmark analysis.

The examined company had the objective of becoming truly global, and in order to transform itself into a truly global organization it engaged into a collaboration with the University of Copenhagen.

Having the right technology will enable a more efficient way of working in a global company. However, the human factor cannot be disregarded - hence having the right human interaction design is equally important. The scope of the International Business Communication Project has focused on these key deliverables.

The first section in this presentation is called 'Our Recommendations' and consists of recommendations and suggestions regarding office facilities.

The following three sections are the basis for the recommendations. They consist of an as-is analysis of the office facilities in the company used in the study, which is based on observations, interviews with employees, and a thorough benchmark analysis of best practices in other global organizations.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on observations, interviews, and best practices in global organizations

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Physical surroundings

- Activity-based working zones. The zones could be separated by sound absorbing room dividers or glass walls.
Open zone = Area for team work. Low voice talking, but no phone calls nor longer informal meetings at desks.
Quiet zone = Area for concentrated work. No talking nor phone calls.
Informal zone = Area for informal meetings, knowledge sharing, collaboration and relaxed work.
- Clean desk policy throughout the office space, for both managers and employees. Only a computer screen and docking station at each desk. To make this possible a cabinet for every employee is needed.
- Hidden electronic solutions e.g. extension cords and cables beneath floor tiles or running through tables. Integrated outlets and plug-ins in tables.
- In meetings rooms: Tidiness, which can be upheld with a clear office behavioural policy or integrated ISS cleaning solution. Hidden/integrated electronic solutions, which diminishes the possibility of people unplugging certain devices that should never be unplugged e.g. VC- and TC-equipment.

- Spacious surroundings creating the feeling of individual working space not interrupted by mess or colleagues. This can be achieved with more space between team desks as well as having fewer desks in the office space in general by the use of hot-seating.
- Hot-seating within the different teams.
- Natural light throughout office to increase usability and attractiveness of all desk spaces. This can be achieved by the use of glass walls.
- Integrated whiteboard walls to increase office space.
- Noisy machines like printers are placed in a separate, soundproof room.



To me it is a poor office environment. Extremely poor...

- employee

Sound absorbing décor

- Sound isolation integrated in walls, furniture, and carpets in order to diminish noise. As it is not possible to completely rebuild the building more comfortable office acoustics can be achieved by the implementation of sound deadening materials e.g. in the furniture.
- Separation of workspace and walking area. One idea could be coloured carpets to show walking paths around the office.

Flex rooms

- Flexible non-bookable rooms for on-the-go meetings, concentrated work, collaborative work between two or more people or phone calls.
- Interactive screens or whiteboard walls for collective brainstorming.



I am too easily distracted by conversations in the office by people moving around and the coffee machine

- employee

Meeting rooms

- More meeting rooms.
- Meeting rooms in various sizes and specifically designed to accommodate different formats - e.g. VC/TC, stand-up or long - and number of participants. Rooms for VC-/TC-meetings must be designed with an eye for acoustics.
- Screens in every meeting room as well as integrated whiteboard walls.
- Easy to use IT-equipment as well as VC and TC. A more simple setup and thorough how-to guides in all rooms.
- Optimized booking system: Electronic screens - e.g. iPads - outside every room for booking overview and on-the-go booking / deleting of timeslots. If a booking is not activated it will be erased after 15 min. to make the meeting rooms available to others. Specific software for booking integrated in outlook with the option to book with specific requirements.
- Moveable walls on the ground floor in order to expand existing meeting rooms.

Flexibility

- Flexible IT-solutions: Fast wireless internet connection throughout office in order for employees to work anywhere. Printers accessible wirelessly from everywhere - including other locations if possible. Possibility for VC-calls from desktop and TC from mobile phones instead of IP-phones - leading to IP phones being removed from desks, which at the moment is contributing to office noise.
- It should be possible to work from home with the same amount of functionality as within the office. This requires access to the company drive to be improved as well as fast Wi-Fi to be installed in every relevant home.
- Every desk does not need an extra screen but there should be some desks with this feature.

Guidelines for behaviour and culture within the office

- In collaboration with employees' explicit regulations and policies for office behaviour and culture must be produced. This could cover rules for cancellations, invitations, content of meetings, do's and don'ts at your desk (small talk, informal meetings, phone calls etc.) and how to signal that you are occupied.
- Facilitating and implementing a mentality for using office flexibility both physically and technologically.



There is a lack of respect for working in an open office...

- employee

Visibility

- Accessibility to both managers and employees so that they must at all times be able to locate each other within the office. One idea could be a desk check-in system so you can see where your colleagues are sitting. This could be integrated into the intranet.

Knowledge sharing and communication between teams and from top-down

- Both should be improved and facilitated better. An important step towards this is having an area for informal conversations and no doors dividing employees from the management as well as having the top management sitting in the open space office.

Intranet

- Reorganized and updated to increase knowledge sharing. A more simple interactive setup is needed in order for employees to locate relevant information quickly.

In regards to permanent workstations vs. hot-seating

- It is obvious from the data that many employees feel strongly against hot-seating. However, from a functionalistic view there are benefits, but we cannot without reservations say that one solution is better than another.

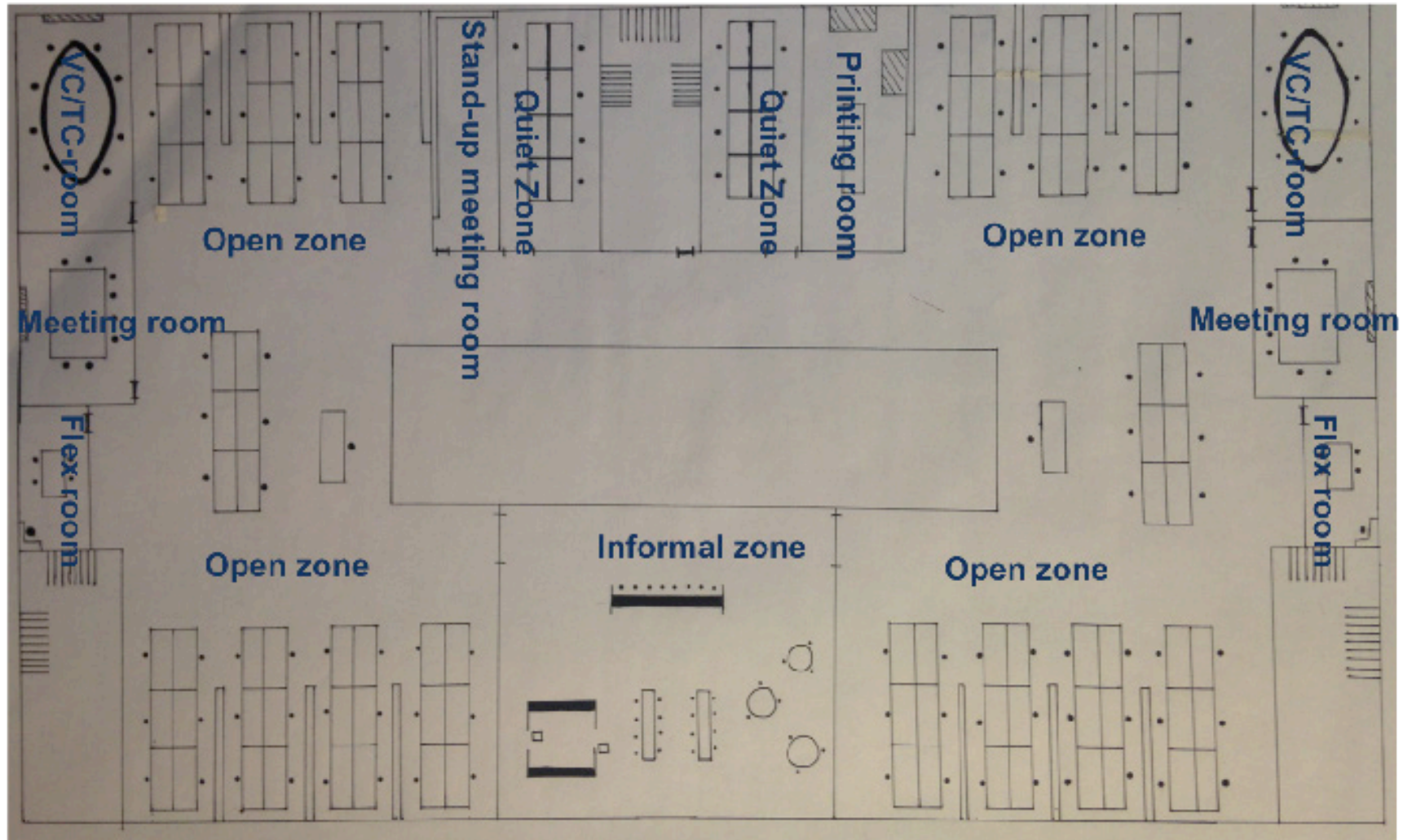


We are building silos...

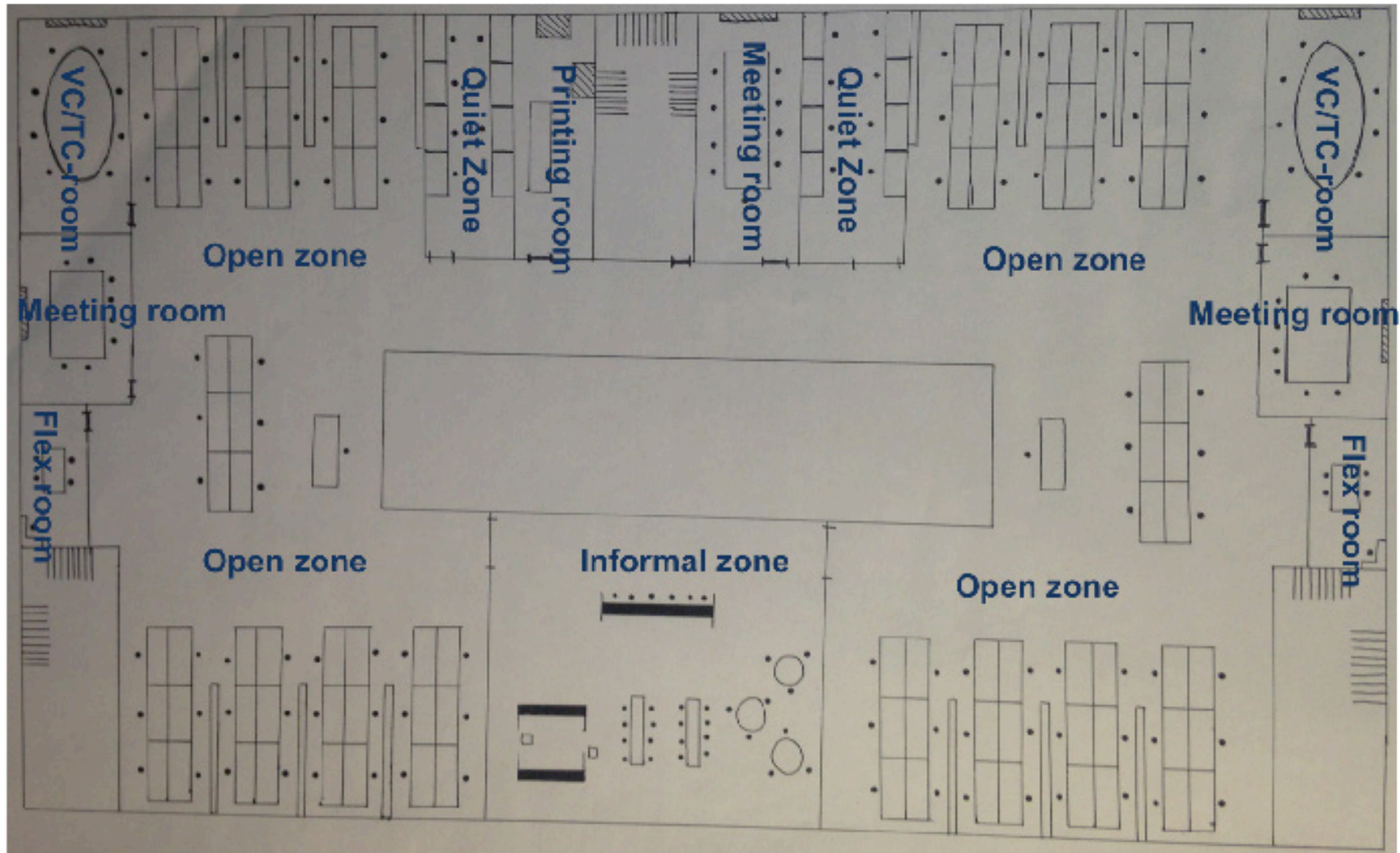
- employee

An example of a solution we developed for a company

1st & 2nd floor



3rd & 4th floor



Explanation of floor plan

Open zone

Area with desks divided by teams. Hot-seating within teams.

Quiet zone

8 desks with screens for privacy and noise reduction. 8 chairs.

Informal zone

2 high tables with chairs.
2 sound-deadening couches with table.
3 round tables with chairs.

VC- and TC-room

One large oval table and 8 chairs.

Flex room

One table with four chairs in the middle for quick meetings or longer team work, another table with one chair in the corner with a computer screen and dock station for individual and concentrated work.

Meeting room

One large square table and 8 chairs.

Stand-up meeting room

One long tall table for stand-up meetings. No chairs.

OFFICE OBSERVATIONS

Most frequent

- Office space is noisy due to employees talking and sounds from “machines” (e.g. dishwashers or coffee machines).
- Office space is messy and cramped.
- Employees are sitting very close.
- Employees are talking on the phone while sitting next to colleagues who are working.
- Many informal meetings are held at the desks.
- Many cables lying around on the floor and tables in the office space and meeting rooms.
- Many empty desks around the office space.
- Some employees are wearing earplugs while working (to signal unavailability or block out noise).
- There are not enough meeting rooms available.
- Colleagues contact each other by physical approach rather than sending an e-mail or making a phone call.
- There is a lot of activity and noise around the kitchen area.

FRUSTRATIONS AND NEEDS




expressed by employees in relation to...

NOTE:

The following classification is based on 13 qualitative interviews that have been divided into three categories; Major issue, Medium issue, and Relevant issue.

These categories are defined in terms of a percentage breakdown of how many employees have addressed the issue during the interview.

The categories are as follows:

-  Major Issue 50%-100%. Major Issues are areas that must be handled soon as they form a large part of the employees' thoughts on the office and daily interaction.
-  Medium Issue 31-50%. Medium Issues are areas that are to be handled in a nearby future as they form a good part of the employees' thoughts on the office and the daily interaction.
-  Relevant Issue 0%-30%. Relevant Issues are areas that should be taken into consideration as they play a relevant part in the employees' thoughts on the office and daily interaction.

WORK STATION

Major

- My work station is not a place where I can sit and concentrate for hours
- I don't want to loose my own desk

Medium

- Lack of access to more privacy

Relevant

- The open office space is too crowded
- Do not want to loose the opportunity to work from home

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Major

- The open office space is very noisy, distracting, and stressful, which makes it hard to focus and concentrate on complicated tasks. As a result, people e.g. use their iPod or work from home when they need to concentrate
- Lack of knowledge sharing
- Lack of communication between teams as well as top-down

Medium

- Too many emails during a work day

Relevant

- There are too many things - like whiteboards - that block your view and make the open office less open
- Lack of recognition for doing a good job
- Competition within and between teams due to the grading system
- No transparency and fairness in the grading system
- Problematic when not possible to meet face-to-face before extensive VC-teamwork
- Missing rules for when to disturb each other and how to behave in the open office

MEETINGS

Major

- Not enough meeting rooms

Medium

- Not enough space/areas for informal meetings
- Too long meetings
- People do not know how to use VC- and TC-equipment
- People should be better at making a strict agenda for meetings and not waste peoples time with unfocused meetings

Relevant

- Not enough meeting rooms with VC-equipment
- The booking system does not work
- Meeting rooms are often used as offices
- People are late for meetings
- Difficult to discuss abstract concepts during VC with people from other cultures
- You need to book the meeting room 30 minutes before your meeting starts to make sure that the IT-equipment is working
- Staff Meetings should be video broadcasts you can watch on your own laptop
- Staff Meetings are too long
- Staff Meetings should not only focus on the local department but also the whole company in general
- No areas for phone meetings
- Need of regular deleting of booked meeting rooms if not used
- People book you unnessesarily for meetings where you do not have much to offer

IT

Medium

- The VC-equipment and IP-telephones are often not working properly and it is a mess

Relevant

- People do not tell the people in charge if the VC-system is down and as a result of that the system is not repaired
- It is too much of a hassle to set up VC-equipment for meetings
- There is no time to read the information on the intranet
- The intranet is unorganized
- Not VC-equipment in every meeting room
- Not possible to do VC-calls from the laptop
- Too much irrelevant online mass communication
- The intranet is not interactive
- Not possible to access all systems with ones own private laptop - so you cannot choose your own device for work
- No good wireless connection so people cannot unplug their laptop and be online everywhere

HOT-SEATING

Medium

- Hot-seating would not work for me - I need to have my stuff around me

Relevant

- The main risk of having hot-seating is that people are taking a bit of the knowledge sharing away and the social atmosphere too
- It would be stressful not to know where my stuff is and it would be frustrating not to be able to reach out to my colleagues easily
- It would be a big problem if everybody needs to be in the same office and there aren't enough seats

OFFICE FACILITIES BENCHMARKING

BEST PRACTICES FROM



Dansk Industri

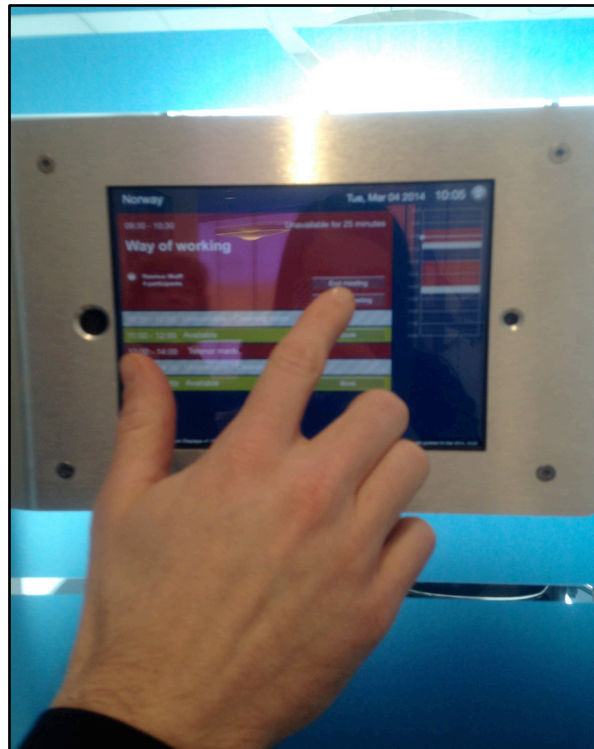


UN CITY COPENHAGEN



Booking system for meeting rooms

- Electronic screens outside meeting rooms for an overview of booked and available timeslots as well as on-site booking, extending, and deleting of meetings.
- Separate software for booking integrated in Outlook with the possibility of booking rooms with specific requirements e.g. refreshments and extra equipment like VC, TC or whiteboards.



Meeting rooms

- Furnished and designed to suit various meeting formats like stand-up, short or long.
- Difference in size in order to accommodate number of participants.
- Moveable walls to create new or expand existing rooms.
- Certain rooms specifically designed for VC
- Wireless hardware or integrated outlets and plug-ins in tables.
- How-to guides for the VC- and IT-system in every room.
- Screens in every room.
- Integrated whiteboard-solution on walls.



Areas for informal meetings, collaboration, and knowledge sharing

- Work is seen as an activity and the employees are therefore encouraged to sit and share knowledge or collaborate on projects at the informal meeting areas.
- Arrangements of furniture scattered around the office for short face-to-face meetings, long informal conversations or collaborations .
- Also a place to go for a break, work more relaxed, or read up on necessary material.



Open office space

- Activity based office with no walls or doors between the different teams and departments.
- Fewer desks than employees since some are always available.
- Employees are sitting with their teams, but no one have their own desk.
- Only top managers have their own desk, but none have their own office.
- Team desks are placed in accordance to who the team should be collaborating with.
- More space between the different team desks in order to reduce level of noise and maintain comfortable working environment.
- Open office space divided into open zone, quiet zone, and common areas.
- Small individual non-bookable offices for people who need to concentrate or make phone calls



- Teams who could not possibly work with hot-seating are placed in glass-offices.
- Clean desk policy - only a computer screen and docking station on each desk.
- Personal cabinets for every employee for documents and hardware.
- Sound-deadening material in furniture, cabinets, and walls.
- Carpets on the floor to reduce walking noise.
- Noisy machines like printers in separate rooms.
- Cables and cords running under the floor or through desks.
- Whiteboards integrated on walls to increase space.
- Policy for office behaviour with explicit rules.
- Values, history, and identity are reflected in the general interior design and decoration.
- Wireless hardware.



**For further information please contact
circd@hum.ku.dk**

Authored by:

Esben Berg Nielsen
Sebastian Brun Simonsen
Thomas Lehman Waaben Toft

Study performed by:

Amalie Malling Dahl
Ann Merrit Rikke Nielsen
Anna Louise Hjorth Andersen
Kirsti Astrid Borch Sørensen
Maja Brandenhoff Hansen
Rasmus Remigius Berg
Sandra Bothmann
Sofie Raaholt Christensen