Importance of solitude in the office

It's all about teamwork and collaboration in the workplace currently. Office walls have come down and co-workers spend their days with their heads together brainstorming and planning. However - are there detrimental effects to not having "alone time" at the office?

Trends come and go and also tend to yo-yo over the decades. In the 80s, for example, employees wanted more privacy, and so the era of cubicles began. A decade later and tiring of their exile, people started to call for better access to their co-workers and this ushered in the era of open plan offices with shared workspaces and communal areas.

"I want to be alone" - Greta Garbo

Now, new research suggests that the pendulum is swinging back toward the need for solitude. Employees always being accessible to their peers and superiors makes it difficult to find alone time to recharge, be creative and get work done. And with research showing that people sometimes come up with their best ideas when they are alone, employers need to seriously consider how to allow their employees privacy at work.

However, the benefits of collaboration and team work in the workspace cannot be ignored - and the old fashioned ways of creating privacy with boring, uninspiring and small cubicles won't cut it in the modern workplace.

So how does a business balance the need for employee collaboration with that of alone time and solitude?

According to AngelShack, a local manufacturer and supplier of tailored workplace solutions, the answer is to integrate quiet zones and areas dedicated to solitude into the workplace.

"By creating physical spaces for employees to seek privacy, you allow them a break from the demands of interactive and collaborative work environments," says David Fish, managing director of AngelShack. "Time alone allows employees to disconnect from the constant stimulus to their senses found in the open plan office. Quiet time to think, plan, strategise and to rejuvenate themselves."

Fish cautions that companies should keep employee preferences and needs in mind if they hope to retain the best and brightest workforce. "Strategically designing your office space with a balance of needs in mind and drafting protocol that allows for this flexibility will allow employees to get the privacy they need to be the most creative and productive they can be."

For more information, visit www.angelshack.co.za

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