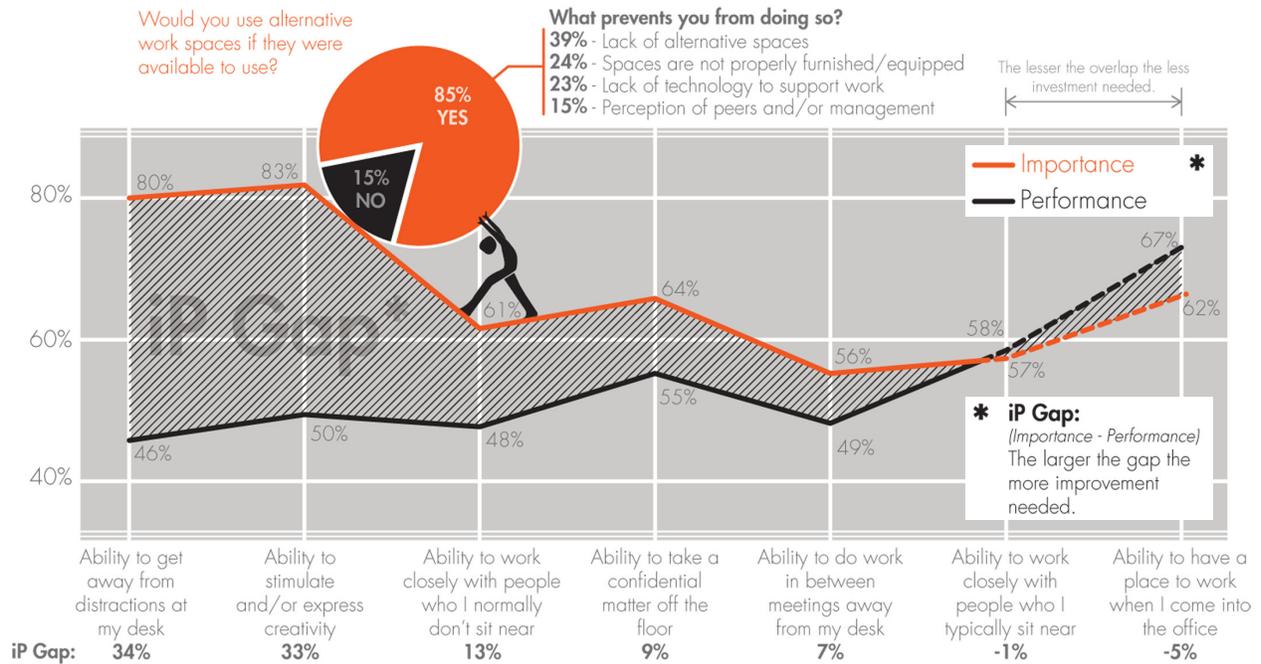## Give the People What They Want

A recent survey conducted by Mancini•Duffy and designed to gain insight into ways that companies can maximize workplace performance to produce successful business results found a large disconnect between what's most important to employees in the workplace and what employers are currently providing. Focusing on the importance and current performance of workplace characteristics in the areas of **brand, talent, agility** and **work patterns,** responses were consistent across the 20 industry sectors represented, with themes recurring across the four categories. Furthermore, many of the characteristics cited as most important to employees were not only relatively easy givebacks, but ones that could increase flexibility and efficiency, better support the way people want and need to work, and enhance the image of the corporation.

Brand is more than just a name and a logo, and can be physically expressed in myriad ways. While 93% of respondents reported that using the workplace to convey the company's brand was important, almost two thirds (61%) said their companies did a poor job of expressing the brand. Increasingly, in companies that see the workplace as a valuable asset, company image is being expressed beyond the corporate level, extending to divisions and departments as a means of inspiring and engaging employees to act as ambassadors of the brand. Physical characteristics reported as most desirable to employees yet under-performing included use of color, visual transparency and variety of space types. Straddling both the Brand and Talent categories, were the "ability of the work environment to promote a sense of community and awareness among employees" while also "making a positive and impactful impression on visitors," providing a strong business case for investing in the workplace as a means of promoting the company's image and brand, internally and externally.

In terms of talent, the characteristics that attracted people to their jobs changed somewhat once they were in the job. Money, growth opportunity and work/life balance remained priorities but – once again - a strong brand and an attractive work environment emerged as new priorities once people were hired. Company performance was reported higher in smaller firms (of 50 employees or fewer) suggesting that projecting a sense of community and working toward common goals might be easier to achieve in smaller companies that tend be flatter organizationally and more (virtually if not physically) connected. This finding also suggests that exploring different types of adjacencies and sharing ratios within the office could promote more connectivity across groups while also increasing flexibility. Characteristics rated as performing poorly across the board were "access to current technology," indicating lack of investment on the part of the firm, inferior building infrastructure (or both) and "the ability to concentrate," reinforcing the demand for a greater choice of settings in the office. Companies willing to invest in technology and explore ways of increasing mobility both within the office and in support of remote work could abate the issue of distractions while also reducing the office footprint and increasing flexibility.

To be agile, companies must be able to readily accommodate change. In addition to the traditional assigned office and workstation, the most common space types provided – reception, informal seating areas, break out spaces and conference rooms – fail to provide the flexibility needed to accommodate change, when, as 22% of respondents reported, these areas are the first to go when occupancy needs increase and these spaces were converted to offices and workstations. In this case, employers may initially "give the people what they want" only to take it away when headcount increases. We see this as a call to action for increasing flexibility within the workplace through any and all means possible. This includes making difficult up front decisions on growth projections; exploring policy changes that incorporate mobility and address entitlements differently; utilizing technology effectively; considering potential changes in P&L cost allocation that would allow more fluid space assignments; and rethinking adjacencies and how space is allocated and assigned.

Would you use alternative work spaces if they were available to use?

85% YES
15% NO

What prevents you from doing so?
39% - Lack of alternative spaces
24% - Spaces are not properly furnished/equipped
23% - Lack of technology to support work
15% - Perception of peers and/or management

The lesser the overlap the less investment needed.

— Importance *
— Performance

* iP Gap:
(Importance - Performance)
The larger the gap the more improvement needed.

iP Gap *

	Ability to get away from distractions at my desk	Ability to stimulate and/or express creativity	Ability to work closely with people who I normally don't sit near	Ability to take a confidential matter off the floor	Ability to do work in between meetings away from my desk	Ability to work closely with people who I typically sit near	Ability to have a place to work when I come into the office
iP Gap:	34%	33%	13%	9%	7%	-1%	-5%

Importance values: 80%, 83%, 61%, 64%, 56%, 57%, 62%
Performance values: 46%, 50%, 48%, 55%, 49%, 58%, 67%

Work pattern analysis revealed that respondents were spending more than half of their work day (55%) performing concentrated work. 83% of them perform that work in an assigned individual workspace, yet 85% said they would be willing to use alternative spaces if provided. 97% of respondents reported working in teams; 67% work with team members who are located remotely. These numbers strongly suggest the need for alternative space types within the workplace and the use of technology (within and outside the office) to catch up with and support the increasing diversity of work. Touch-down/Benches for mobile workers coming into the office and War/Team Rooms used for extended but finite periods of time have been around for quite a while. Now we're also seeing open area Lounges, Café's and Conference Rooms provisioned as solo or team work areas; Quiet Rooms for private conversations and Hideaways for thought generation; and from the retail industry, Pop Ups – literally creating a space in the odd corner from nothing but user-configurable furniture, marker boards and screens – all space types that, in the right application, can at once increase utilization, appeal to a new talent demographic and create a sense of office "buzz."

In conclusion, managing real estate costs and satisfying people preferences do not have to be mutually exclusive goals. An attractive work environment can inspire employees and impress clients. Offering a variety of settings in the office (and provisioning those spaces and people with proper technology) provides opportunity for both collaboration and concentrated work while potentially reducing overall square footage, increasing flexibility and better accommodating the inevitability of change and growth. All, however, require ubiquitous and current technology and a really different look at not only space but the way in which space is allocated so that work can be supported anywhere, anytime. Done right, giving the people what they want can be a win/win for all.

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR WORKPLACE INNOVATION

People are a company's most valuable asset and in today's business environment it is people who make the difference. Our mission is to combine real estate, technology and business processes to create exceptional spaces that empower people to do their best work. We align design solutions with actual business drivers and create performance metrics to establish a feedback loop that continues to inform. This builds agility into the workplace to support the way people work today while enabling its evolution to support the way they will work in the future.