AMBIANCE

Reducing Workspace noise is one of the most common issues in corporate office environments— especially in open office concepts where employees are working in close proximity with little or no separation.

If you've ever worked in a similar environment, then you know how distracting this can be.

But a noisy workplace can be more than just a distraction. Multiple studies have shown that too much noise in the office can seriously reduce productivity, increase stress, lower job satisfaction and decrease employee morale.

Here are some solutions for lowering the noise factor in your open plan office, while simultaneously raising the bar on ambiance:

Reduce Floor Noise

The durability of hard surface floor coverings like wood, ceramic tile and porcelain can wreak havoc in an open plan work setting. They create a massive amount of sound reverberation. For this reason, carpet with padding stepped in to become a staple for workstations and cubicle areas. But wear and tear in high traffic areas means frequent updates and annual cleaning.

Current trends point to vinyl flooring as the best solution to noise reduction. With great modern design choices, and the proper underlayment, they provide the best sound absorption.

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Sound Friendly Furnishings

Textiles do a fantastic job of absorbing sound. The current trend toward more den-like office furniture design is a great opportunity to update your reception area and casual meeting spaces with couches and upholstered seating that can not only make a statement but contribute a stylized solution to noise reduction.

Rethinking your conferencing solutions to incorporate some private meeting areas and dedicated quiet spaces will provide connection opportunities with less stress.

Cubicle and workstation fabrics also perform this task well. More contemporary cubicle design options are being produced today to keep up with design trends. Upholstered wall partitions have helped companies of all sizes separate employees and reduce overall office noise. Even low-level wall partitions that don't completely close someone off have proven effective in buffering sound.

Curtains are also making a comeback in commercial spaces. Multitasking by softening the hard-edged modern lines, while providing both light control and sound absorption.

Separate Meeting Areas & Quiet Spaces

Rethinking your conferencing solutions to incorporate some private meeting areas and dedicated quiet spaces will provide connection opportunities with less stress. Conference rooms and meeting spaces have radically changed into smaller more agile conversation areas.

Glass enclosed spaces are a great solution to keep an open plan light and airy. Products like NxtWall's demountable glass walls give you the ability to add rooms within open spaces. They're

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also flexible and can be removed and reused elsewhere when your needs change. If you have a multi-level office space, you could also relocate the meeting rooms to another floor.

Noise Canceling Headphones

Depending on the type of work your team is focused on, the most obvious solution may be noise cancelling headphones. For instance, accounting personnel, content writers and web developers who need singular focus on their tasks will benefit greatly from zeroing out the surrounding din of noise.

Many headphone sets are wireless, making them excellent additions to a standing desk area or digital nomads who may not work in a traditional desk set-up application.

Controlled Ambient Noise

A proven noise reduction strategy in open office spaces may include fighting noise with noise. Seems counter-intuitive, but ambient noise (white noise) played in the background at a consistent level is proven to help mask unwanted sounds.

Having continuous low-level sound will not distract and will actually increase focus. Some proven forms of background noise include rainfall and waves crashing on the beach. Adding some ambient noise to the background will definitely take the edge off extraneous sounds.

Consider investing in a white noise machine or finding a soundtrack of nature sounds. Playing this quietly throughout your space will greatly decrease the distracting noises people may focus on while working. And create some zen.
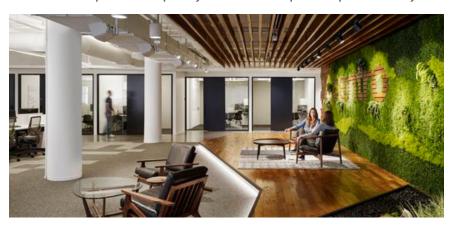
Get innovative with your solutions and find a distinctive look that fits your brand and your overall workstyle.

Biophilic Design Elements

One of the most cost effective and beautiful ways to reduce noise and improve air quality in an office space is plants. They

can also make a design statement. If you have a tile floored reception area, curtains, upholstered furnishings and plants can do wonderful things to create ambiance and control noise. A living wall could also provide a serene backdrop for any design style.

Finding zen in an open plan often seems to be a mammoth task for any size business. But taking the time to work with a space planner and design team, while focusing on noise reduction strategies, can be worthwhile to your team and the success of your office design.

Get innovative with your solutions and find a distinctive look that fits your brand and your overall workstyle. Desks situated close together in clusters help compartmentalize noise, especially when groups are separated by some of the sound-friendly furniture options, partitions or other solutions mentioned here.

Remember to relocate noisy office equipment (i.e. copy machine, printer, fax machine) to a separate space away from employees. This provides a two-fold solution, encouraging moving people away from their desks periodically during the work day, as well as isolating the noise.