INTROVERTS VS. EXTROVERTS:
DO OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS SUPPORT BOTH?
A Cushman & Wakefield Publication
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We provide services across the real estate continuum, advising, implementing, transacting, and managing on behalf of owners, occupiers, investors, and developers through every stage of the real estate process. These services are consistent in every office around the world. Whether you’re in Miami or Moscow, Cushman & Wakefield offers the same resources, same intelligence, uses the same processes, and the same platform.

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INTROVERTS VS. EXTROVERTS

Our clients come first. Every aspect of our platform has been honed to achieve value on behalf of our clients. With a commitment to global collaboration, consistency and creativity, we provide customised services and solutions that see beyond the brick and mortar of each real estate transaction. Whether you are a tenant, landlord, investor, or developer, a global company or a small business, Cushman & Wakefield provides solutions that fit your strategic, operational, and financial goals.
Employees all have very different psychological needs and responses. The most obvious psychological difference, is that between people with a preference for extroversion and those with a preference for introversion. Individuals with a preference for introversion are known as introverts and those with a preference for extroversion are known as extroverts.

**INTROVERSION**
A preference to direct one's thoughts and feelings inwards.

**EXTROVERSION**
A preference to direct personal interest or behaviour towards others.

Entire departments within organisations often have predominance for a particular preference, such as a mainly introverted Research department, or a mainly extroverted Sales department.

Communication and collaboration between the two personality preferences and therefore these types of departments, can be hard to achieve due to differences in approach, priorities and perspective.

But what if it is strategically critical that departments such as Sales and Research or Sales and Engineering for example, work closely together?

Apple provides a great example of when the two personality preferences collaborate successfully – Steve Jobs (the extrovert and face of Apple) and Steve Wozniak (the introvert and brains behind Apple products). Apple would not be the phenomenally successful organisation that it is today, without the combined efforts of both individuals and their teams. The two were worlds apart in their style and approach to working, but collectively respecting each others’ differences, came to a better outcome than perhaps they would have, if they had worked alone and not collaborated.

But how can corporate organisations replicate this success?

The office environment is one of the main catalysts for collaboration amongst employees, but does it support each personality preference on an individual basis and at the same time, provide shared environments in which they can work collaboratively? The answer in most cases is no.

Organisations that are consciously or even subconsciously changing the layout of their offices to encourage and support greater collaboration amongst employees, are typically creating what is known as an activity based workplace, which enables activity based working and recognises the needs of all personality preferences.

**ACTIVITY BASED WORKING (ABW)**

ABW can be found in workplaces where employees have access to a range of work settings that are reflective of the various activities they have to carry out on a daily basis. A workplace that has adopted ABW features:

- On-demand desks
- Touchdown desks (workstations available for use by anyone)
- Collaborative spaces/hubs
- Meeting rooms of varied sizes and formality
- Telephone booths
- Conference rooms (telephone and video)
- Quiet rooms
- Project rooms
- Social and relaxation spaces
- Resource spaces
- Third space environments.

Workplaces that adopt ABW, provide settings that enhance the way employees multitask and collaborate. ABW recognises the different psychological needs of employees and creates a workplace environment that suits and supports introverts and extroverts individually, but also encourages collaboration between the two. ABW is explored in greater detail in a following section.

**WHAT DOES THIS BRIEFING NOTE COVER?**

This briefing note explores the idea that a workforce comprises people with a preference for introversion or extroversion, the roles they typically assume and their psychological needs and preferences surrounding the workplace environment.

The concept of ABW is then explored in greater detail considering the range of activities employees, falling under each personality preference, need to perform on a daily basis.

Finally, the note concludes by looking at how corporate real estate executives are responding to the subsequent need for a reconfiguration of the workplace, to better support collaboration and meet the individual needs of all personality preferences.
Employees all have very different psychological needs and responses. The most obvious psychological difference is between people with a preference for introversion – introverts, and those with a preference for extroversion – extroverts.

Entire departments within organisations often have predominance for a particular preference and due to differences in approach, priorities and perspective, a distinct communication and collaboration challenge exists between the two.

Collaboration between teams or departments with differing personality preferences is frequently managed on a ‘need-to’ basis i.e. if a Sales team approach their Research team for technical information. Yet Apple has illustrated the endless possibilities and opportunity for greater success, if the two personality preferences work together more closely. However, if organisations want to change how teams/departments with synergy collaborate, they must recognise the differing communication preferences in the workplace and provide an environment that meets employees needs and also provides a support platform for collaboration.

**BACKGROUND: WHY ARE EXTROVERTS TYPICALLY PREFERRED IN THE CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT?**

In the book ‘Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can’t Stop Talking’ by Susan Cain, it talks about the way that Harvard Business School historically selected students and adopted challenging teaching methods and class participation, – with the aim of developing fearless, sociable executives in the (then) belief that leaders needed to be strong, fearless and confident decision makers. This led to the US business environment developing a bias towards extroversion. As a result, quieter and seemingly less confident people were less likely to be selected for jobs or to be rewarded when working for corporate, US based, more extroverted organisations.

Susan Cain also talks about how this bias has since influenced recruitment, reward and recognition policies adopted by some of the largest global corporate organisations, where extroverted behaviour is actively sought and preferred over introverted behaviour – to the extent that society has come to share the view that extroversion is ‘right’ and that introversion is somehow ‘wrong’.

Whilst it may be true that more extroverted leaders tend to command a higher salary, it isn’t true that they perform to a higher standard. Introverted leaders are just as capable and in some cases perform considerably better, with a wider range of skills needed in order to be a strong and respected leader, such as the ability to listen, better engage with and support team members with their ideas and plans.

**HOW TO IDENTIFY THE PREDOMINANT PERSONALITY PREFERENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

Introverts and extroverts display attributes that everyone can feel some degree of affinity with. From a cultural point of view, the more introverted amongst us are described as a ‘man of contemplation’ and the more extroverted, a ‘man of action’. Most of us recognise and feel comfortable with the attributes within either or both bubbles below, but will feel broadly connected with one more than the other.

At least 40% of the population are predominantly introverted and many of these self-select into particular types of work such as: Research, science, Analysis, engineering, IT, accounting, finance, HR, law, medicine, graphic design etc. The 60% of the population with an extroverted preference, are more likely to be found in roles such as: sales, marketing, public relations, teaching, journalism and management consultancy, where constant interaction with clients, partners and employees is essential.

Although it would be inaccurate to suggest every employee working within one of these departments or fields can be labelled with the personality preferences specified, for the majority this is usually the case. By firstly identifying the predominant personality preference in the workplace, a corporate organisation can then start to understand how the office needs to support the individuals who work there. For instance, a predominantly introverted organisation like a research or software development company, might provide more quiet zones, library facilities, telephone and study booths for employees to undertake daily activities.
IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS AND PREFERENCES OF INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS SURROUNDING THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

The story of Viagra began when two employees from different parts of the Pfizer scientific community bumped into each other in a lift and spoke about a problem they each had and the need for a combined solution. Discussions then centred on products that had been recently developed to address high blood pressure and angina and their side effects. Each product solved the other’s problem and led to a deployment in a very different market. The rest is history.

Without the serendipity of a chance meeting in a lift, Pfizer may never have been in a position to develop and release Viagra as a product and achieve such a rich revenue stream. But how does this story relate to the workplace?

The workplace, (including the workplace culture), is one of the main catalysts for the generation of energy amongst employees and facilitation of the right kind of interaction – including that between introverts and extroverts. It is not about the office furniture, but about understanding the activities that are being undertaken within the office and creating a workplace environment that stimulates collaboration amongst different departments/personality preferences. The workplace environment must also support the activities that can enable this i.e. team meetings, social situations – even chance meetings in common areas of office buildings.

By identifying the range of activities undertaken by each department and how these activities are being undertaken, the needs and preferences of introverts and extroverts can be simultaneously identified. Organisations must identify employee needs and preferences, as these ultimately translate into activities focused on getting the job ‘done’ and to a high standard, which of course translates into increased corporate performance.

Questions that corporate real estate executives will need to ask themselves at this point include:

• What is the balance of introversion and extroversion within my organisation?
• Which interdepartmental relationships and interactions, especially those departments with differing personality preferences, present the most synergy and by working together more closely, could translate into greater corporate success?
• Picture these departments and how they interact at present. For example, how often do the Research team talk to the Sales team? If it is once a month, perhaps during a scheduled catch up meeting, what would be the impact if it was every day? What activities do they individually undertake that could be turned into a joint activity? How could the office environment support these interactions?
• How do we identify and analyse the activities being undertaken individually and collectively, so we can plan and potentially change the office layout and design to better support employees?

ANSWER: Activity measurement analysis

The results of this type of study enables organisations to evolve towards what is known as an activity based workplace. In the following sections, both activity measurement analysis and ABW are defined and explored in detail.

However, firstly an overview is provided of the evolution from the more traditional workplace to the activity based workplace. This will enable organisations to identify where they are currently positioned and thus how far they need to get to, to move towards an ABW workplace.
Activity based working enables organisations to meet the needs and preferences of both introverts and extroverts and not force a ‘one size fits all’ approach onto both. It also provides employees with choice, flexibility and independence.
ACTIVITY BASED WORKING: THE EVOLUTION

TRADITIONAL
In the past, every office had a clear and strong foundation: the organisation chart. This was translated into the physical form, with every level of the hierarchy designated a number of square meters for desk space, a particular office setting and a ‘standard issue’ range of furniture.

OPEN PLAN
The evolution of the open plan office flattened the traditional hierarchical approach to workplace design. Instead, it gave preference to Senior Managers with the introduction of individual glass offices located on the main office floor, with the remainder of employees sat on banks of desks on the same floor. Often this set-up was decided upon under the mantra of enhancing communication, but primarily it was driven by cost. The only other thinking that went into the open plan office design and layout was:

• Team members had to sit together
• Certain teams had to be close to one another
• Meeting rooms were provided but only for formal meetings
• Extra space was reserved for potential business growth.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING (ABW)
In an attempt to further reduce cost and improve space utilisation, organisations are now breaking the ‘one workstation/desk per employee’ rule and adopting ABW. In doing so, organisations are radically redefining the role of the workplace in supporting business performance and achievement of strategic goals such as:

• Attracting high quality talent
• Increasing employee retention, satisfaction and productivity
• Increasing collaboration, innovation, agility and speed to market
• Improving brand awareness and the organisation’s reputation as responsible and forward-thinking
• Lowering costs across a range of areas – including real estate, technology and operating expenses.

Fuelled by the demands of the different generations of people operating in the same workplace, particularly younger workers, and enabled by technological advancements that un tether employees from their desks and allow them to work anytime and anywhere in groups or alone, organisations are realising that the workplace must adapt to their employees’ needs, rather than force employees to adapt to the constraints of the workplace. ABW enables organisations to do exactly this.

Figures point to the extent of the problem – the average office today dedicates 85% of the workplace to individual workstations and 15% to team workspaces, when in reality, only 35% of work is isolated to an individual. This means that employees are being forced to work in environments that do not match with what they need to complete their job activities. The concept of more isolated working could perhaps be favoured by a more introverted team, however the fact that many organisations are still adopting the open plan workplace design and layout, means that introverts’ needs still aren’t being met as they lack privacy or quiet space.

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF AN ACTIVITY BASED WORKPLACE?
The activity based workplace takes on a whole new approach to workplace design, where individuals are given access to the work settings they need to effectively perform their daily tasks. Features of an ABW workplace include:

• On-demand desks
• Touchdown desks (workstations available for use by anyone)
• Collaborative spaces
• Meeting rooms of varied sizes and formality
• Telephone booths
• Conference rooms (telephone or video)
• Quiet rooms
• Project rooms
• Social and relaxation spaces
• Resource spaces

• Third Space environments: one step beyond the corporate office environment and enabled through virtualisation and mobility, third space provides employees with the option to work in: client sites, satellite offices, work from home/home offices, transit spaces (taxis, airport lounges, hotels) and community spaces (cafes and libraries).

Within these settings, different teams or departments may have a designated ‘hub’ area but the individuals working within each department/team, are free to choose the appropriate place to work depending on the activity at hand. The type of activities that employees undertake, typically drive their needs and preferences within the office environment.

ABW enables organisations to meet the needs and preferences of both introverts and extroverts and not force a ‘one size fits all’ approach onto both. It also provides employees with choice, flexibility and independence.

For many employees, ABW also means that a dedicated desk is no longer required. Many of our clients report that following the change to an activity based workplace, that only 67% of desks are in use at any one time, which has subsequently presented cost saving opportunities through a reduction in fixed desks.

Organisations that have adopted the ABW approach to workplace design are also reporting significant enhancements in productivity, collaboration and employee satisfaction and are utilising office space more effectively – space usually taken up by vacant desks or large meeting rooms.

Workplace design is now starting to be centred on the requirements of the individuals working within the workplace, as opposed to merely what looks good and falls within the allocated fit-out budget.
HOW DOES ABW ENABLE ORGANISATIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF DEPARTMENTS COMPRISING BOTH INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS?

Organisations that have adopted ABW, recognise the shortcomings of the 'one solution fits all' principle that is inherent in the open plan approach to workplace design. The activity based workplace understands that employees all have different needs; whether this is based on the type of work they do, their level of mobility or their personality preference. Open plan workplace environments may work well for more extroverted individuals, activities and those tasks that do not require high levels of concentration to complete, but introverts undertaking more introverted activities i.e. research/statistics collation, are often frustrated and compromised in these settings. This leads to a lack of depth and consideration, which limits the application of learning and improvement.

Activity based workplaces offer a range of solutions to enable organisations to meet the needs of all personality preferences including:

- **Quiet rooms/Libraries** for more introverted employees who need to undertake work that requires full concentration without any disruptions. Also used by extroverted individuals who have multidimensional roles i.e. sales employees spend time speaking to customers on the telephone and typically will do this in an open plan environment amongst other sales employees, however, they also need to undertake administrative tasks that require full concentration and a quiet environment in which to work.

- **Social areas or spaces** for more extroverted employees who thrive on noisy and busy environments – also with the option to interact with multiple colleagues at the same time.

- **Collaborative spaces/hub areas** for team members to collaborate and also, to facilitate joint working initiatives between different teams/departments/personality preferences i.e. hot desking together for 1 day per week in this area.

Introverts need space where they can be quiet – serene, thinking space. This does not mean that they are not collaborative, but it does mean that sometimes they need to be on their own. Even extroverts also find the open plan office layout distracting, since they are conscious of everything going on around them, ready to respond at any time. Sometimes, extroverts need to be on their own, or at least in an open, quiet space where they can focus without distraction.

The activity based workplace provides a range of settings that each enable and encourage different kinds of activity.
Activity measurement analysis is the analytical framework that ensures a workplace is designed around the different needs of employees. It is not about measuring the utilisation of desks or meeting rooms; a tool which has been applied historically to squeeze more people into the office. Rather, it measures employee’s activities – for example, how often people are on the phone, conference calls or webinars, how often they are locked into more focussed work, or how often they are participating in formal or informal meetings.

The overall aim of activity measurement is to:

- Objectively assess the activities taking place and the tools that are being used – e.g. tablets, telephones, presentation resources or telepresence facilities
- Identify how these activities can be supported more effectively through more appropriate workplace settings and improved tools
- Gain insight into the different needs of departments, teams and personality preferences and how they differ in the way they undertake activities
- Investigate how the workplace can be easily adapted to meet these needs now, but also future-proofed to meet future needs
- Benchmark department/team profiles against other similar groups, to identify activities that could be combined in order to increase collaboration i.e. joint team meetings to understand how each department/team works
- Raise awareness of the inadequacies within the current workplace and the impact it is having on employee morale, organisational effectiveness and cost, to support any ensuing organisational change efforts.

The following points detail findings taken from a comprehensive activity measurement analysis undertaken by Cushman & Wakefield and on behalf of one of our clients. In this example we can see that:

- On average, employees were in the office for only 45% of the time and only engaged in regular desk based working activities for 28% of the time – a figure that varied significantly with job role and function
- Meeting rooms, when in use, were occupied by a maximum of one or two employees. These one or two employees were opting to use the larger meeting rooms 37% of the time and smaller meeting rooms 67% of the time – largely due to the high demand for quiet space or conference call room space.

Activity measurement analysis provides real insight into the demand for different types of workspaces or settings within an office environment and helps to shape workplace change. The workings behind this particular activity measurement analysis study have been illustrated below in Figure 1.
THE CORPORATE REAL ESTATE DILEMMA AND THE SOLUTION:
ACTIVITY BASED WORKING

A well designed workplace simply isn’t enough. Not only must it be well designed, it must also work for the people who will be using it.

Corporate Real Estate Executives (CREs) have the unenviable task of providing the exact amount of office space required to complete a changing variety of activities AND for a range of individuals who have different personality preferences and needs in relation to how and where they want to work. One size never has fitted all.

More than ever, it has become critical to know what type of work needs to be undertaken and how that is predicted to change over the coming years. Also, to understand what kind of interaction amongst departments/teams/employees needs to be facilitated before the space planning process can commence.

CREs therefore have the daunting task of meeting workforce needs now and to also second-guess future needs and against a backdrop of fluctuating budgets. A common problem faced by many CREs is the ability to engage with the employees themselves – to understand what activities they are undertaking and ascertain exactly what their needs are. It can also be difficult to dispel the view in employees minds, that cost cutting is the reason for your interest in them!

However, through activity measurement analysis, CREs can obtain this information in order to then present a case, usually, for reconfiguration of the workplace. This doesn’t necessarily have to mean huge amounts spent on redesigning or fitting out the space with expensive forms of technology. It can be as simple as moving around existing furniture and using what is already there. However, beyond aesthetic changes to the workplace, it is about the people within it and the way the changes are conceived and communicated to the workforce, that determines the success of ABW, along with the process used for monitoring feedback after the changes are completed. The case study overleaf illustrates an example of how the UK based media company EMAP, successfully implemented ABW in their London office.
CASE STUDY: EMAP

EMAP London office, reception area

WHO ARE THEY?
• EMAP is a content, subscriptions and networking business who own industry leading brands such as Retail Week, Drapers, Architects’ Journal, Nursing Times, Health Service Journal and Construction News, serving major industries and communities.
• They have recently demerged from a single 1,200 strong organisation which reformed into four separate companies with central support services.
• EMAP today employs around 400 people, 100 dedicated sales people and 300 journalists, and digital support teams, production support, HR and Finance teams.
• EMAP provides professional products and services to help progress individuals and organisations by providing data, information, analysis and opportunities through desk-top, tablet, mobile and print subscriptions, conferences, awards, and roundtables.

THE PROBLEM
• The historic EMAP culture and habits
• Highly paper focussed
• Every employee had a personal back catalogue of publications dating back 3-5 years
• A large number of additional freelancers worked in the office during busy peak times
• The need to:
  – change culture
  – embrace digital media
  – grow revenues
  – save £1 million in costs per annum.

THE SOLUTION
Cushman & Wakefield worked closely with EMAP and held workshops for the teams, comprising both introverted and extroverted individuals, to provide a solution that enabled needs to be met, activities to be better supported and various areas provided for collaboration.
• Installation of round hub tables for the fixed sales team of >100 on a separate (noisier) floor
• Implemented hub-based flexible working for publishing and support teams (ratio 3:2)
• Provided multiple work settings in EMAP’s new, smaller office, including a library for quiet work, a media room for informal collaboration, relaxed offline breakout space, meeting rooms of various sizes, conference facilities, and ‘follow me’ VOIP telephony, so that calls could be taken in any location
• Development of a culture that generates a shared understanding of flexible working ‘EMAP style’ and what this means to each team
• Involvement of the entire management team so that everyone was aware of the importance of flexible working to the business
• Clear expectations for business change were communicated and adhered to from the outset.

RESULTS
• The teams love and enjoy using the new space and workplace settings
• The library is very popular and used for quiet work
• Private raised desks placed at windows and overlooking the street are very popular
• Breakout spaces are used regularly for informal collaboration between different teams
• Employees now have ‘permission’ to choose the most suitable work setting
• 1:1 meetings are now held in informal collaboration spaces
• The need for quiet is respected.

What is apparent is that organisations who are successfully changing their workplaces to adopt ABW, are engaging with the employees themselves throughout the whole process of change – from inception through to implementation.
CONCLUSION

The workplace is at the core of every business – as are the employees.

It is in the interest of every business to ensure that all employees have the most effective and supportive environment in which to work, from the moment they are recruited.

This means providing working environments that reflect the activities being undertaken AND the psychological preferences of the individuals employed.

At present, for many organisations adopting the open plan layout and design, cost is the main driver behind all workplace decisions. Consequently, a large portion of the UK workforce has had limited exposure to an activity based workplace and continue to suffer frustrations such as, too few meeting rooms configured with the wrong type of facilities. Collaboration and quiet space is often non-existent.

Certain more flexible working practices such as homeworking, are being adopted by some organisations, often driven by the desire to find ‘quiet space to work’. In many cases however, employees within these organisations are managed with a ‘Taylorist’ style of management, with managers believing that unless they can see what their employees are doing, they are not actually working. This forces employees to work in a way that does not reflect their personal preferences or enable and support their best efforts.

However, organisations beware! Employees are waking up to the idea that they want and deserve more from their workplace. The layout and design of the workplace, as well as the flexible working practices on offer, all form part of the new recruits’ decision making process. If organisations want to attract and retain the best talent, they need to offer a workplace that supports them throughout their working lives.

But what about the argument to support reconfiguration of a workplace to accommodate both introverts and extroverts?

Clearly, the story of Apple, founded by Steve Jobs (extrovert) and Steve Wozniak (introvert), presents a strong argument for organisations to view their workforce as comprising a range of personality preferences across the introversion-extroversion continuum. It is very clear that organisations must embrace and value the qualities displayed by each personality preference and do everything they can to meet individual needs. The opportunity to achieve greater corporate success, by supporting collaboration between introverted and extroverted departments, is difficult to ignore.

Activity measurement analysis can identify the different personality preference of each department and their needs and behaviour in the workplace environment. The results will then help to shape workplace change.

Reaching employees on both a professional and psychological level ensures that levels of happiness, positivity and willingness are at a high, and also that levels of independence, responsibility and duty to undertake tasks to an optimum standard, are felt and exhibited by every employee.

Therefore by identifying where a workforce sits on the introversion-extroversion continuum, organisations can truly understand their employees and meet their needs and preferences at a much deeper psychological level – ultimately leading to greater corporate success.
Every organisation is different and will require a bespoke solution for their workplace. C&W’s Global Business Consulting team can help to devise the right workplace strategy for your organisation.

If you would like to undertake an activity measurement analysis study in your office/s, we can plan, implement and analyse the results to ensure the appropriate workplace change occurs, enabling you to better support your employees in their daily activities.

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