

# The Effects of Physical Environment on Communication in the Workplace

by Mary Ylisela,



Furniture arrangement plays a role in encouraging or discouraging communication.

Whether it's apparent in obvious or subtle ways, the physical environment in your business workplace has an effect on the flow of communication. In addition to the setup and structure of the space, other factors invite or inhibit communication between you and your employees, from employee to employee and department to department.

## Obstacles to Communication

Workplace privacy encourages focus and concentration, but too much of it can create an obstacle when it comes to office communication. If the door and blinds in your office are always closed, it sends the message that you are unable or uninterested in communicating. Reserve closing off your office for important, private meetings or those times when you absolutely cannot be interrupted. When communication isn't possible, select a manager or someone else to be the gatekeeper so employees feel they can go to someone should problems arise.

## Furniture Placement for Group Work

During team meetings or company-wide presentations where you want to encourage employee participation, the furniture arrangement can help you do this or make it difficult. A round table allows employees to see and communicate with each other, whereas sitting in rows limits communication to the people in the immediate area. If you want to encourage employees to focus on your presentation, engage them in an open discussion afterward, use a V-shape, theater-style seating arrangement. To find the most effective furniture arrangement, determine what type of communication you want to encourage and discourage.

**Related Reading:** [What Are the Benefits of Effective Communication in the Workplace?](#)

### Noise in the Workplace

A breakdown in workplace communication can be related to noise levels. If your office space is above or next door to a business that runs heavy machinery, the noise can inhibit communication and productivity. Consider soundproofing wall, ceiling or floor materials for extremely loud levels of noise. Quieter noise levels that prove to be distracting can be blocked out with the use of white noise, such as your office heating and air conditioning or fan. Include employees in the discussion on how to solve the problem to find a solution that works for everyone.

### Using Color

The color of the walls and decor in your workplace can affect communication in your office. Dismal and dreary work spaces painted in institutional colors such as white or gray can have a negative effect on employee morale. If your business focuses heavily on creative tasks, incorporate bold colors with paint, wall decor or other accents to raise the positive feeling of the room. Business office spaces can be improved with the use of muted colors. A workplace atmosphere that feels positive encourages productivity and communication, while contributing toward morale, too.

### About the Author

Mary Ylisela is a former teacher with a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and mathematics. She has been a writer since 1996, specializing in business, fitness and education. Prior to teaching, Ylisela worked as a certified fitness instructor and a small-business owner.

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