

Beyond the Cookie Cutter – Cluster Workstation Design

An Interior Concepts White Paper

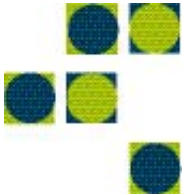


Beyond the Cookie Cutter – Cluster Workstation Design

In the call center, workstations play an integral role in the productivity of both agents and supervisors. Call center furniture must not only be designed for comfort but also in a way that fosters communications and collaboration.

One of the most recent trends in call center furniture design has been the return of cluster workstations, also known as circular core stations or pods. The cluster workstation has a unique circular setup that allows agents to work in a team environment and more easily achieve the goals of the call center. While the design has returned mostly because call centers are looking for something other than cookie cutter workstations, this furniture layout does offer some interesting benefits.

Please read the Q&A's below for more information about cluster workstation designs:



What is a cluster workstation and how it is set up?

A cluster workstation, also known as a circular core station or pod, is configured so the agents all face into the center of the workstations. Unlike a typical straight run of stations, an agent will not sit directly across from another agent. With this workstation setup, some agents may feel that their workstation allows them their own sense of space since they look into the center core of the workstation, and not the face of another agent.

What benefits can this furniture design set up provide for a call center?

This type of workstation is for a person that is looking for a unique design, not a typical cookie cutter straight run of workstations. While a straight run of stations does offer the benefit of maximized floor space, a cluster or pod type workstation can allow more privacy for each agent and more worksurface space.

Can the way a call center designs its furniture improve operations?

Absolutely. One aspect of operations that is often overlooked is the traffic flow of the call center floor. When considering floor plan options take into account the entrance of the building and the location of training rooms and common areas.

Have an idea of supervisor to agent ratio and general workstation design before beginning to plan the space.

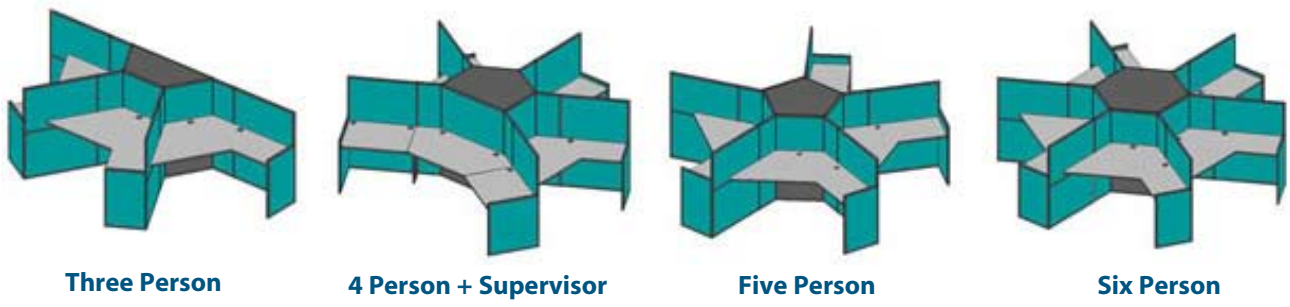
A good floor plan will have ample aisle space for supervisors to easily reach agents when they need assistance, clear paths to training rooms, and easy access to break areas and restrooms.

Also, when planning for furniture, the tasks being performed on the call center floor should be taken into consideration and the furniture designed accordingly. The furniture should be designed to facilitate the environment and the work being performed. Individual company needs can range from privacy concerns – to a very open call center floor – to the creation of team environments where agents openly communicate and share information. This then drives the station design in terms of panel heights, size and design of the station and the groupings of agents. If the furniture is specifically designed for the individual call center/environment then the furniture will enhance the productivity of the center – and thus the profitability.

Have you seen an increased interest in a cluster type of workstation? Why do you think this is so?

We have seen an increased interest in this type of workstation. This is probably mostly due to an increased interest in design. Some call centers are literally looking for an outside of the box solution for

Example Cluster Configurations



their call center furniture, a station that looks different from the typical cookie cutter designs.

What is the benefit of this type of setup for employees who use them?

A main benefit is an agent having his or her own sense of space. The cluster type design allows an agent to not look into the face of another agent while working. The cluster/pod type design incorporates more workspace area as well so an agent will have more desk space.

Cluster workstations also offer many options in terms of accessories and design. A markerboard panel can be incorporated into the workstation allowing agents a place to jot notes. A popular option is also incorporating paper management. This moves commonly used items off of the work surface and within easy reach.

In terms of ergonomic accessories, the flat screen monitor arm works great with this station design. Remember that proper ergonomic positioning is sitting with the back fully supported by the chair while reclining slightly, and arms and wrists in the correct position to use the keyboard tray.

In this type of workstation, users tend to place the monitor further away because the work surfaces can be deeper. Using a flat screen monitor arm

will allow the monitor to be custom placed. If you have to lean forward to view the monitor it is not properly placed!

For more information on ergonomics visit: interiorconcepts.com/uploads/pdf/ICC_Whitepaper_Ergonomics.pdf

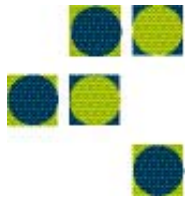
How is the cluster workstation beneficial for supervisors?

The cluster workstation can help to promote a team environment since agents can be placed in one team/work cluster. A supervisor can be incorporated into a cluster as well. One option is a raised height station that gives each supervisor a better view of the agents.

What are some design options for cluster/pod workstation offerings?

There are four typical cluster workstation designs, although many variations are available within these designs – standing height, panel height variations, panel material options, accessory and storage options.

Popular cluster designs include a 6 person cluster, 5 person cluster, 4 person clusters + 1 supervisor, and a 3 person cluster.



Interior Concepts specializes in designing, manufacturing and installing high quality furniture for contact center environments. We have been manufacturing furniture for contact centers for over 20 years, so we know how to solve the specific design challenges of the contact center environment.

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