OPTIMIZE CALL CENTER FURNITURE DESIGN

The task of designing or updating a call center is a comprehensive but rewarding task. While this task requires due diligence, the result will be a center that is more functional, productive and thus profitable. The capital investment in the facilities and furniture is insignificant compared to the most important asset; the agents working in the center. By doing it right you will benefit from higher productivity, improved employee morale, reduced employee turnover and a safer, healthier work environment. This article includes a number of questions that can help to ensure the very best furniture solutions for your center.

In considering the traffic flow, the agent and floor supervisor stations should be placed in a manner that supports company objectives as well as company culture. Additionally, the location of restrooms and common areas should be considered. Other critical elements are the often-forgotten design obstacles such as corners, columns, and utility access panels. Knowledge of these design obstacles during the space planning process can help to maximize all available floor space.

Agent Stations

The furniture design for a center will vary on the tasks for the agents and the items required at each workstation. For inbound sites, agents providing customer service/technical support may have storage requirements. Station design also depends on the amount of supervision needed. The questions below will help to determine the workstation and call center design.

- What services are being performed at each station?
- Is the center a single shift or multi-shift operation?
- How important is noise reduction and what is being designed in terms of the overall acoustics?
- What is the desired panel height, consider the balance between noise reduction and visibility?
- Do your agents have filing or storage requirements?
- How will the stations be powered?
- Will your stations require convenience outlets in addition to dedicated computer circuits?
- How can we best address ergonomics?
- Is a sit-to-stand capability important in the workstation?
- Are there windows with natural light access in the space?
- What seating options are required?
**Supervisor Stations**
The design of the supervisor stations depends on how much supervision is needed. Some call centers prefer the supervisor to be in clear view of the agents at all times, while others prefer privacy by selecting taller workstation panels. Accessories such as marker boards, tack boards, acrylic header panels, additional storage components, and guest seating can be incorporated into supervisor stations for added functionality.

- What is the desired supervisor to agent ratio?
- In larger centers with runs of stations do you wish the supervisor to be placed at the ends of groupings or integrated into the runs? [More privacy vs. less privacy]
- What are the storage requirements?
- Does the supervisor space require guest seating?
- What are the visual requirements?
- What are the electrical requirements for each supervisor station?
- Would a standing height or stool height supervisor station be beneficial?
- How can we best address ergonomics?
- What is required in the way of additional accessories, like marker boards or paper management?

**Training Rooms**
Training rooms can have very different meanings depending on the company. Sometimes the rooms need to be used for more than just training, so a multi-purpose mobile solution might be best. However, some companies prefer actual workstations in the space to give the agents a feeling of actual work experience and the training rooms are also used for work overflow. The questions below will help determine the training room needs.

- Will the room always be used for training or will it be a multi-purpose room?
- Does the room need be used for an overflow area for agents during peak seasons?
- What is the desired orientation of the furniture in the room?
- Will the room need an instructor’s desk or podium at the front?

**Cafeteria/Break Rooms**
The cafeteria and break rooms in a call center are a space where employees relax during lunch and break times. Many call center jobs are stressful and these spaces should be areas that are functional, aesthetically pleasing, and comfortable.

- Are regular height tables or café style tables preferred?
- What is the required number of seats?
- Are round, square or rectangular tables preferred?
- Will the space be a multi-purpose space, meaning will the tables need to be moved and stored or can they remain in place?
Reception/Waiting Area
It is important to take aesthetics and functionality into consideration when designing the reception and waiting area in a facility. The reception area is a first impression to any visitors and the waiting area should be comfortable and functional. The receptionist often multi-tasks so a workstation to both greet visitors and perform work duties is important.

- Will this be a shared or a single workstation?
- Are guest chairs enough or is the preference for soft seating and tables?
- Does the reception area need a transaction counter?
- Is there value in incorporating a company logo or graphic into the station design?

Administrative Offices
Furniture for these offices can be provided with the same panel system and in the same finishes as the call floor, or could be provided as an executive case goods solution. The executive case goods would be higher end wood veneers consisting of desks, credenzas, conference tables, bookcases, etc. These offices consist typically of larger workstations with a full array of accessories, guest seating and in many cases smaller round meeting tables.

- What is required in needed, i.e., credenzas, bookcases, etc?
- What is the desired orientation of the furniture in the room?
- Does existing wall power/data support the desired orientation?
- Does the office size support a small conference/meeting table?
- Is guest seating required?
- How can we best address ergonomics?