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Sujet n°17

Art works: how art in the office boosts staff productivity

Contrary to what your boss might say, being distracted at work is not always a bad thing. If the object of your distraction is a work of art, it can actually boost productivity.

5 This is according to Dr Craig Knight, who has studied the psychology of working environments for 12 years at the University of Exeter, where he heads a research group called Identity Realisation (IDR).

“There is a real tendency to opt for sanitised, lean workspaces, designed to encourage staff to just get on with their work and avoid distraction,” he explains. But there isn’t a branch of science in the world which believes this approach boosts
10 productivity or makes for happier workers, according to Knight. “If you enrich a space people feel much happier and work better; a very good way of doing this is by using art.”

Knight and his team have conducted studies into the most effective work environments by asking participants to do an hour’s work in four different types of
15 office space:

- Lean: containing only the things necessary to do the tasks.
- Enriched: featuring art and plants which were already arranged.
- Empowered: the same art and plants but participants could choose where to put them.
- 20 • Disempowered: participants could arrange the art and plants themselves – but the experimenter then undid these personal touches and reverted to the enriched layout.

The team found that people who worked in the enriched office worked about 15% quicker than those in the lean office and had fewer health complaints – this figure
25 then doubled for people who worked in the empowered space.

“A momentary distraction is definitely not a bad thing in the workplace. Art has historically always been about escape, and we all need an escape sometimes.”

Adapted from *The Guardian*, January 2018