

Straight Talking

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Sounds Perfect – Part II

The effects of distraction and lack of concentration in the workplace can prove costly for businesses. This month we look at what can be done to address common noise issues in the workplace.

The ABC of noise control

The best way to manage acoustics is through a combination of absorption, blocking and cover solutions. Control measures can be classified into three different types:

Absorption

Sound reflected back or reverberated from surface finishes and materials is a major cause of acoustic problems. One of the simplest solutions, the addition of specialist materials designed to absorb sound energy, e.g. wall panelling and ceiling tiles, can significantly reduce reflected noise. Available in different colours and patterns and as wall-art, the effects can also be aesthetically striking.

Blocking

The introduction of vertical barriers between the noise source and listener effectively limits the distance sound energy travels. By using products like partitions, screens and storage cabinets, blocking noise transmission is greatly minimised or eliminated. A highly visible solution, this approach may have aesthetic implications.

Cover

Another approach which is particularly designed to address the problems of intermittent noise is to neutralise the effects by introducing a level of background sound, which also ensures greater privacy. Cover is the term given to a computer generated random sound that makes conversation and noise more difficult to hear and comprehend. The sound has no information within it, which ensures the human ear and brain cannot recognise it and therefore we are not distracted by it.

Investing in noise control measures makes sense not just in terms of employee well-being but also financially - studies have shown that creating the right acoustic environment can lead to increases in productivity of anywhere from 5% to 15%.

Win a noise-absorbing wall-art panel (worth £650) for your offices*

For your chance to win a decorative wall-art panel, just email your answer to the following question with your name and company details to marketing@cbs-plc.co.uk, quoting 'Reading Chronicle' in the subject line.



Who created the decibel (dB) notation?

1. Alexander Graham Bell
2. Alexander Fleming
3. Isaac Newton

* Closing date for entries 15 March 2010

