

PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

May 2023

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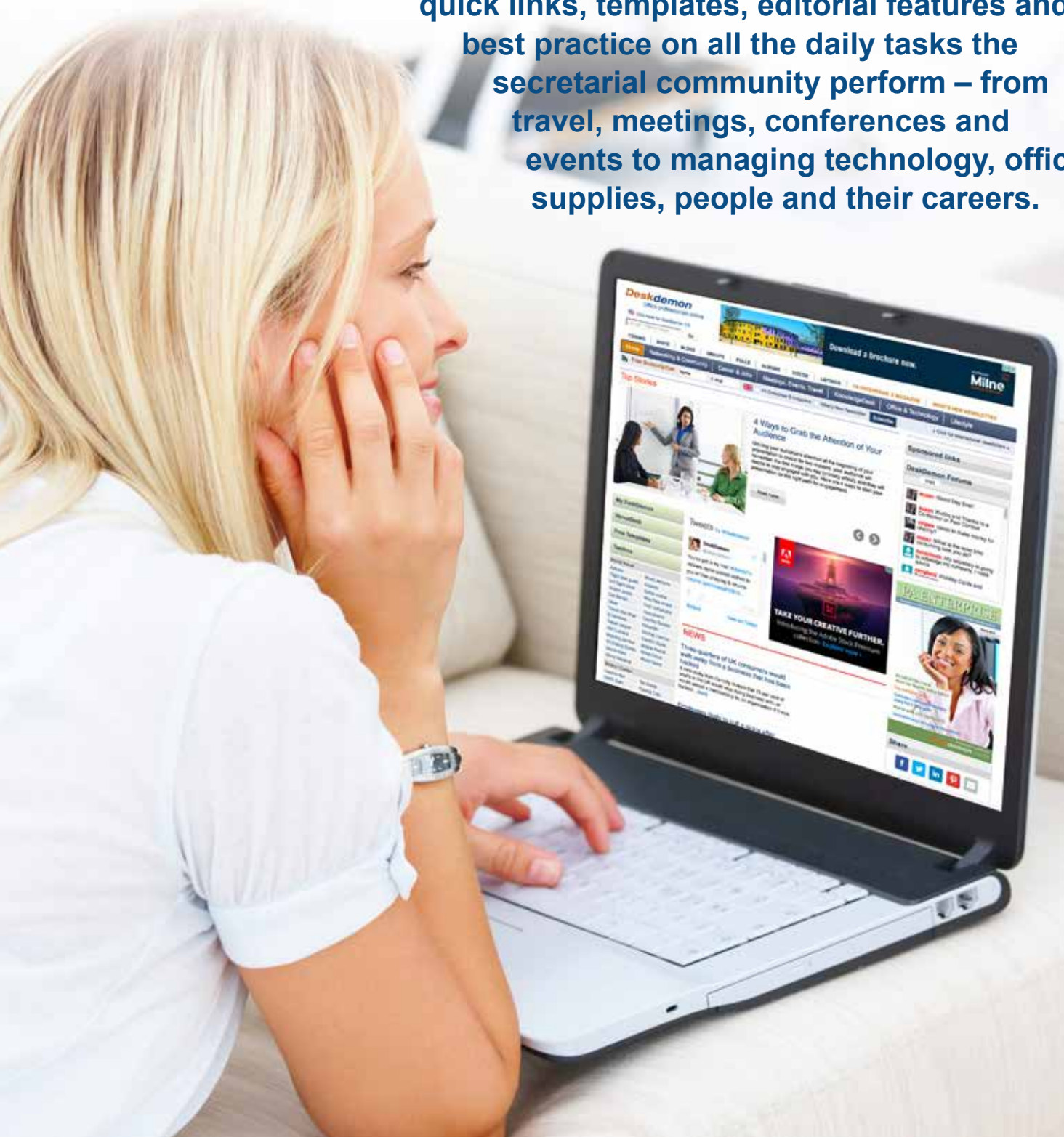
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PA Enterprise is published by

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As an office worker, where do you go for information, advice, tutorials, vital tools, training and relaxation?

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PA ENTERPRISE MAGAZINE

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What counts as workplace bullying?



Employers must try to protect staff from bullying in the workplace, but sometimes it is hard to know what to do about the problem. How do you know you're being bullied at work, and what can you do about it?

What is bullying in the workplace?

The UK government defines it as “behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended”.

Dispute resolution service Acas says that bullying behaviour can be “malicious or insulting”, or an abuse of power that “undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone”.

It can be regular or a one-off, happen in person or online, it can be at work or at a work-related event such as a party, and it may not be obvious.

Bullying can range from being very direct, such as verbal or physical abuse, to being subtle, such as excluding people and isolating them.

Bullying could include:

- a colleague spreading rumours, or putting you down in meetings
- your boss giving you more work than everyone else
- someone putting humiliating comments on social media
- a manager offering career development opportunities or training to others that you are denied
- a boss not giving you chances to show your skills or ignoring you

What does the law say?

There is no legal definition of bullying, and human resources professional body the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) says there is no single piece of legislation that covers it.

But there are legal protections. Employers have a duty of care to keep you safe at work, and you may be able to claim for breach of employment contract if this doesn’t happen.

Employment lawyer Jessica Rowson at Oakwood Solicitors, who specialises in stress at work, says courts look at intention and the effect of behaviour on an individual.

The lack of a legal definition of bullying can cause confusion for both employees and employers, Ms Rowson adds.

Who can be bullied?

While the majority of bullying is abuse of power by bosses, bullying can also cut both ways.

People lower down in the pecking order can bully upwards by showing continued disrespect, refusing to complete tasks, spreading rumours, or doing things to try to make it look as though you are bad at your job.

Even business owners can be bullied, although so-called “upward bullying” is relatively rare.

Bullying can extend to contractors working on site or even job applicants. Workers can also bully their peers.

However, in practice, most bullying disputes involve someone being bullied by their line manager, according to Michelle Last, employment partner at Keystone Law.

How widespread is bullying?

Unfortunately workplace bullying is fairly common, with more than one in 10 people suffering, according to the CIPD's latest figures.

It found that 15% of employees said they were bullied at some point between 2016 and 2019.

Women are significantly more likely than men to say they've been bullied.

What can employees do if they are bullied?

The CIPD says: "Speak up! It's only by challenging unfair treatment that it can be properly dealt with."

One of the first steps is to discuss the problem with a senior manager or HR.

Employment lawyer Anne Pritam at Stephenson Harwood says "sometimes just getting the issue into the open can make a bully back off".

"Often people who are perceived as bullies have no idea that they are seen that way, and an informal word from HR or a more senior manager might show an employee that their actions are having unintended consequences," she says.

It's also a good idea to keep a log of bullying incidents with dates and times, noting how

they make you feel, Acas says.

If dealing with the problem informally doesn't work, the next step is to raise a grievance, which is a way of making a formal complaint.

It's also important to look after your mental health. Jessica Rowson says: "If your mental health is suffering because of the bullying, do try and recognise that this is an important issue to address, and seek out medical support from your GP, who is there to help."

How should an employer handle a bullying complaint?

People may not report bullying because they think it could harm their careers.

So organisations must have clear procedures for dealing with bullying, and act fairly and quickly to resolve complaints, the CIPD says.

Large employers may have organised systems with employee helplines and teams that handle bullying complaints, says Anne Pritam.

For smaller companies, complaints must be taken seriously and investigated, she says.

If the complaint turns out to be well-founded, the problem needs to be addressed - usually through training, coaching or disciplinary sanctions.

Ms Pritam says bullying is "a high-risk issue" and can lead employees who have been consistently poorly treated to resign and sue for unfair constructive dismissal or harassment.

New Home Office fraud legislation exposes employers to risks

Under proposals, businesses will need to demonstrate reasonable measures have been implemented to prevent fraud

The latest action from the Home Office to prevent fraud in the workplace will place even greater emphasis on compliance for employers, and is another example of the growing clampdown on business-related criminal offences that firms need to be prepared for.

That's according to specialist background screening and identity services firm, Sterling.

In an announcement last week, the Home Office unveiled new proposed legislation for "failure to prevent fraud" offences, which would make it easier to prosecute larger firms if members of staff commit fraud to benefit their business

Under the proposals, the employer would need to demonstrate that reasonable measures were in place to deter the offence.

According to Steve Smith, President of International at Sterling, this latest development is another example of the increasingly complex compliance landscape that employers need to be prepared to navigate:

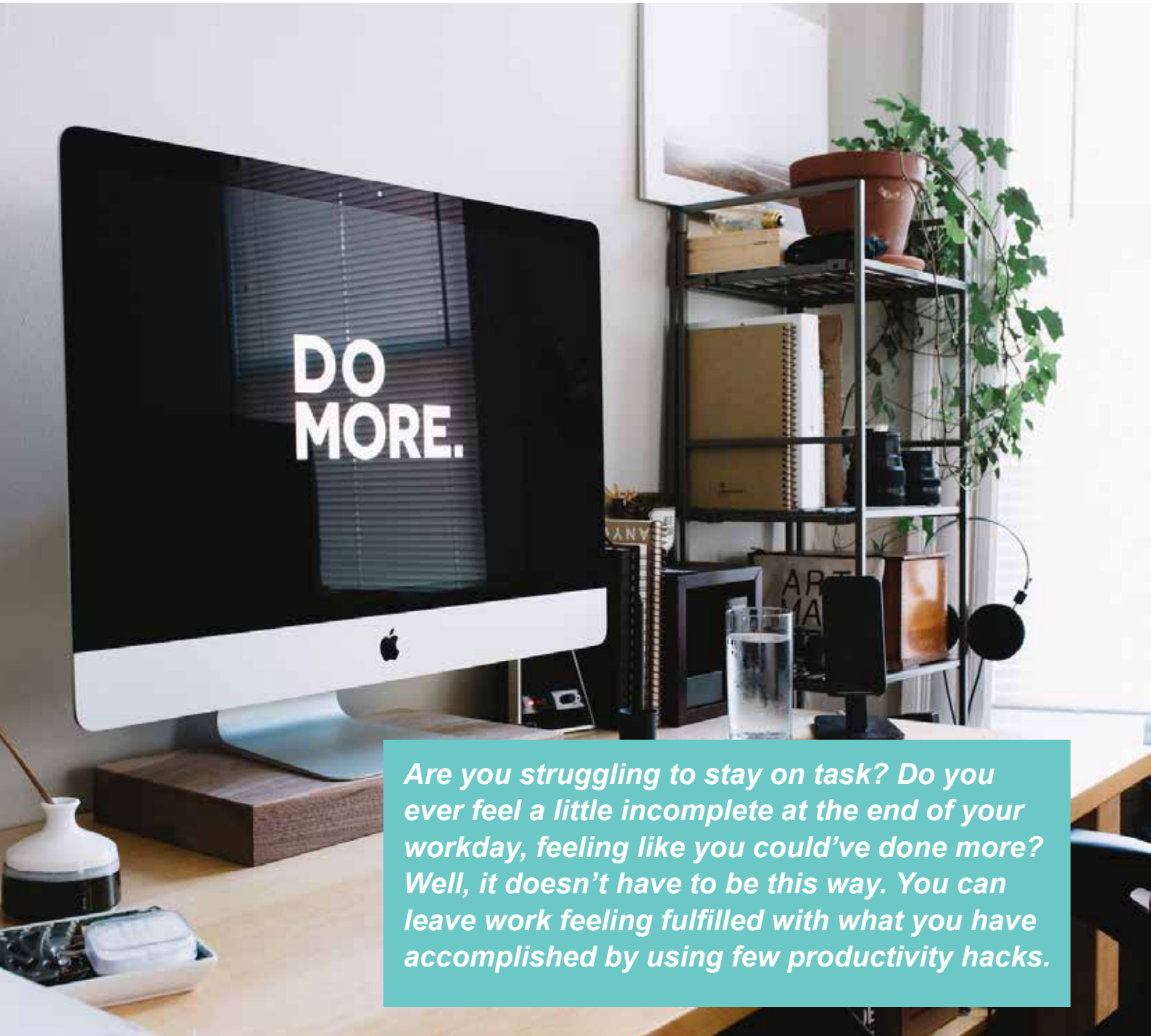
"The growth of technology has inadvertently led to an increasingly sophisticated fraud. With remote working also presenting further challenges to employers when it comes to

preventing fraud and other unscrupulous behaviour from staff, businesses are facing a wealth of hurdles that could pose a real risk to their company. However, with the Home Office demonstrating a clear focus on clamping down on unlawful activity and putting the onus on organisations to ensure they are taking steps to reduce fraudulent behaviour, employers really do need to take action now.

"While we may be in a highly flexible world of work that many wouldn't have even dreamt of pre-Covid, this way of operating does create more opportunities for fraud and is arguably more difficult to control and monitor. We've seen an increase in workers managing multiple full-time jobs through fraudulent work activity, including outsourcing day-to-day tasks to friends or relatives. And that's just one example of the behaviours that are being targeted by the Home Office and other global authorities.

"Business leaders need to ensure they are set up to both effectively screen for any potential behavioural red flags before employment contracts are signed, and have a process in place to monitor this on an on-going basis if they are to avoid possible claims of failing to prevent fraud under these new proposals."

Productivity Hacks to get more done in 2023



Are you struggling to stay on task? Do you ever feel a little incomplete at the end of your workday, feeling like you could've done more? Well, it doesn't have to be this way. You can leave work feeling fulfilled with what you have accomplished by using few productivity hacks.

What Is Productivity?

Productivity is more than doing more things or ticking tasks off your to-do list. Productivity means only focusing on accomplishing important things. The road to being more productive can be long, so do not panic – take one positive step at a time.

The Importance of Being Productive

Your ability to be productive can be one of the critical determinants of your professional success and personal happiness. Those who can consistently produce good quality output at a sustainable rate can advance in work and life.

Growth in productivity is an opportunity to increase output without increasing inputs and incurring allied costs.

Being productive can help you prioritize tasks, manage time and resources efficiently, and frees up time for more rewarding activities.

Plan Your Day Ahead of Time

The first step to being productive is planning a day's schedule in advance. You should know what you're doing, when you're doing it, and how long on any given day. Without a schedule, you're likely to miss out on important tasks.

Write down a detailed plan of the day early morning or the night before. Write everything you need to do so that you have a sense of direction and know what to focus on next. This eliminates all guesswork, and there's less chance of you drifting away and wasting time because you do not know what you'll do next.

Write Down the Three Most Important Daily Tasks

Jot down the three most important tasks for the day. Describe the tasks in detail to avoid

any ambiguity. Focus on important tasks rather than urgent ones.

Use Any Productivity Technique

Supercharge your productivity by using a productivity method. An incredibly powerful productivity tool can you stay focused during work time. A productivity system will help you manage your day by setting accomplishable goals. Select a productivity method that is right for you that helps you increase your daily output.

Set a Single Goal for Each Day

Set a single goal for each working day so you can focus on individual tasks. A good idea can be breaking down daily goals into multiple tasks, where you'll only tend to that particular task in the allotted time.

Set Specific Times to Check Email

Email checking accounts for one of the main distractions that wastes valuable time during the workday. Choose two times a day for checking emails, preferably before lunch and before finishing the day's work.

Learn to Say "No"

Saying no can be hard for some, but if you want to boost your productivity, you can't allow others to order you around every now and then.

Use Website Blockers

Use website blockers to stop distracting websites from popping up in the middle of your work.

Use red and blue colors more often

Remove clutter from your desk. Studies suggest that red and blue colors improve

brain performance, with red known to increase attention to details while blue sparks creativity. Surround your workplace with these colors to enhance productivity.

Two-Minute Rule for Small Tasks

Do not waste time deciding whether you should do small tasks that keep cropping up throughout your day. Instead, ask yourself if you can complete the task in 2 minutes or less – if yes, go ahead with the task. If not, add the task to your to-do list for later.

Listen to Productive Music

Music is an excellent therapy to help maintain focus and stay productive. Choose music that enables you to focus on the task at hand.

Use Templates for Regular Tasks

Create templates for routine tasks that are created the same way every time. This will save you a lot of time and increase your overall productivity.

Group Similar Tasks

Batch similar tasks so you can complete them with the same frame of mind. This will make your work process flow smoothly and help you do more in less time.

Avoid Multitasking

It might be tempting to do two things simultaneously, but multitasking does more harm than good. Research shows that about 98% of people are less productive when they multitask as they are not focusing on a single task.

Use an Important/Urgent Matrix for Decision Making

An effective time management tool called Important/Urgent Matrix or Eisenhower Matrix helps prioritize tasks on the basis of

how important or urgent they are. The matrix divides tasks into four different quadrants - Important & Urgent, Important & not urgent, Not important & urgent, Not important & not urgent. This method ensures you spend your time effectively as well as efficiently.

Start Your Day With a Tough or Easy Task

The way you start your day dictates the flow of the rest of the day. You can either start by doing the most demanding task first, so everything else feels more effortless, or do the easiest thing first to gain valuable momentum.

Use the “One and Done” Rule

Most of us tend to keep some tasks aside, thinking of taking care of those tasks later. But rarely do we actually do those later because we won't add them to our to-do- lists. To avoid this, add each new task to a to-do list, so there's no risk of forgetting later.

Take Regular Breaks

Breaks give your mind a much-needed chance to recover from intense focus, but you must maximize the benefit of breaks. Zone out completely or meditate during breaks to relax your mind and body.

Create a Break Agenda

List everything you want to do on your break and squeeze these between work time. This will help accomplish tasks efficiently during work time. Thus, you'll wisely use your break time to do things you enjoy.

Work in Short Bursts

The human mind can concentrate on the same thing for a short span. So, it makes sense to work in short bursts like the Pomodoro technique, where you work in 25-minute sessions with 5-minute breaks in

between. This helps motivate you to complete tasks in a short time.

Create a Dedicated Workspace

If you are working from home or remotely, create a dedicated workspace where you'll go to work and leave once you're finished.

Work Near Natural Light

A simple productivity hack is to create your workspace near natural light. Exposure to sunlight is believed to improve sleep, thereby contributing to your well-being and productivity levels.

Eliminate Possible Distractions

It's easy to give in to distractions, but you must find ways to avoid distractions while working. Distractions cause a lot of wasted time trying to regain focus on the task. Getting rid of distractions can result in more productive work being done in lesser time.

Break Down Your Goals

Instead of procrastinating on your far-fetched ultimate goals, break down the goals into smaller, more attainable goals that seem more realistic. These goals should be easy to accomplish and fit into your schedule.

Take Time to Reattach Yourself to Work Every Morning

Once you're finished with the day's work, you probably try to detach from work. Take a few minutes in the morning to reattach yourself to work by thinking about what you achieved the day before or what you hope to accomplish during the given day.

Wake Up Early

This can give you a great head start on any working day because you feel entirely re-

energized at the beginning of a day. You can get a lot of work done early in the morning when there are fewer distractions than at midday.

Make Sure Every Task Is Related to a Goal

Before taking up a task, make sure it is related to a long-term goal like one of your SMART goals. If the task is unrelated to your advancement, either eliminate it or assign it to someone else.

Follow Deadlines

Regardless of how long you have to complete a task, make sure you do it in the given amount of time. Your productivity will improve if you know a deadline is approaching.

Schedule Time for Self-Care

Schedule self-care activities to recharge yourself to prevent burnout from work pressure. It could be anything that helps you relax and unwind — leisurely reading on your favorite couch, a relaxing bedtime ritual, a 10-minute walk, meditating, painting, or anything else.

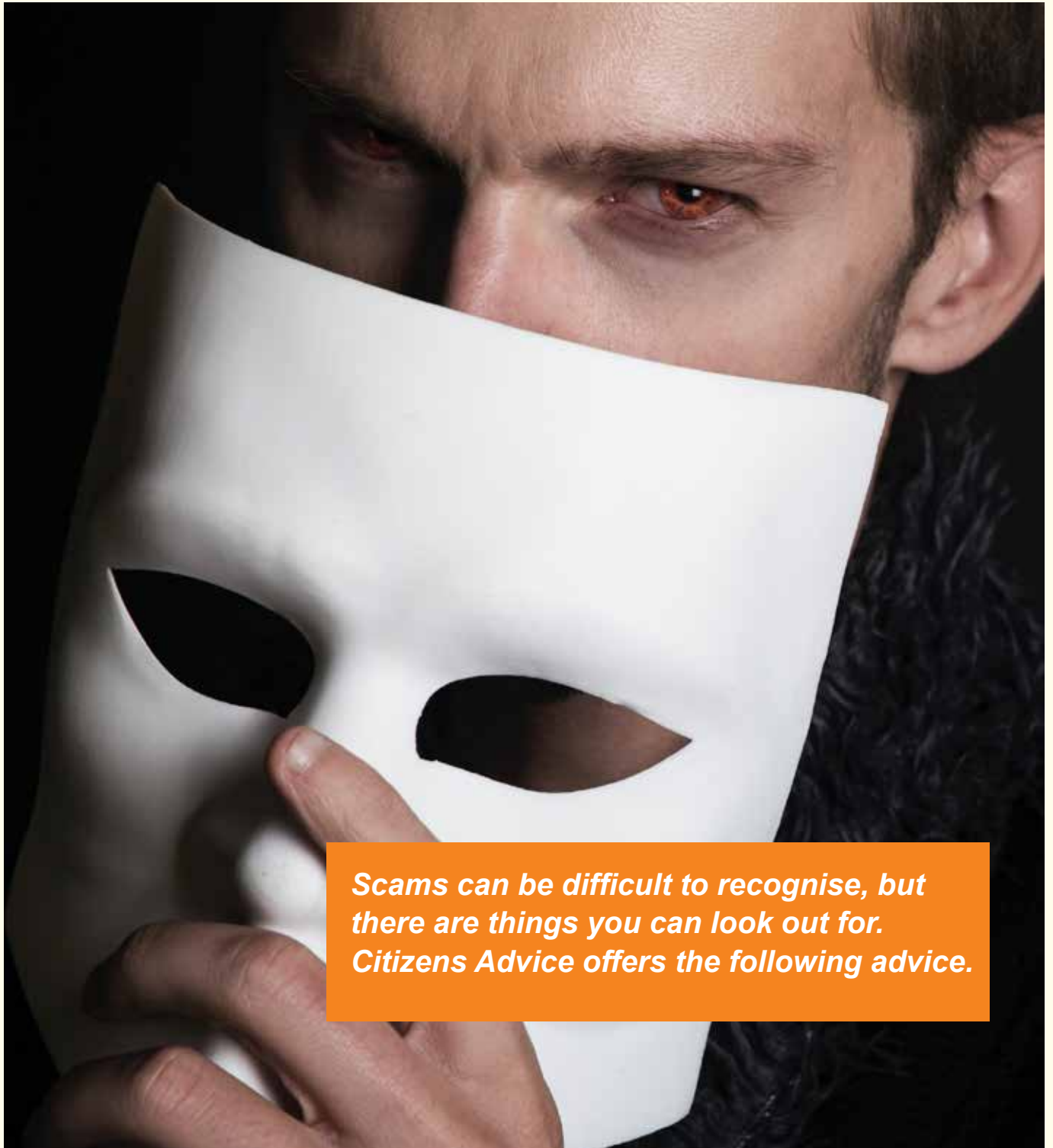
Let Go of Perfectionism

Nothing is perfect, so don't waste time trying to make every task perfect. If the work is good enough, move on to the next thing.

Identify the 'Why' Behind Your Job

Ask yourself why you chose to go into the field that you did. Make sure to keep those reasons in your mind while working so you stay motivated to be productive and successful in your job.

How to check if something might be a scam



Scams can be difficult to recognise, but there are things you can look out for. Citizens Advice offers the following advice.

Recognising a scam

It might be a scam if:

- it seems too good to be true – for example, a holiday that's much cheaper than you'd expect
- someone you don't know contacts you unexpectedly
- you suspect you're not dealing with a real company – for example, if there's no postal address
- you've been asked to transfer money quickly
- you've been asked to pay in an unusual way – for example, by iTunes vouchers or through a transfer service like MoneyGram or Western Union
- you've been asked to give away personal information like passwords or PINs
- you haven't had written confirmation of what's been agreed

If you think you've paid too much for something

Paying more for something than you think it's worth isn't the same as being scammed. Usually, a scam will involve theft or fraud. You have other rights if you think you've overpaid.

If you think you've spotted a scam

If you've given away money or information because of a scam, there are things you

should do. If you haven't been scammed but you've seen something you think is a scam, you should report it.

If you think someone is calling to trick you into giving them money or your personal details, hang up and call 159. This is a secure service that connects you directly with your bank. See page 18 for more details of 159.

Calls to 159 are usually charged at the national rate - it depends on your provider.

Protecting yourself online

There are things you can do to protect yourself from being scammed online.

Check the signs of fake online shops

You can search for a company's details on GOV.UK. This will tell you if they're a registered company or not.

If you're buying something on a site you haven't used before, spend a few minutes checking it – start by finding its terms and conditions. The company's address should have a street name, not just a post office box.

Check to see what people have said about the company. It's worth looking for reviews on different websites – don't rely on reviews the company has put on its own website.

Also, don't rely on seeing a padlock in the address bar of your browser - this doesn't





guarantee you're buying from a real company.

Don't click on or download anything you don't trust

Don't click on or download anything you don't trust - for example, if you get an email from a company with a strange email address. Doing this could infect your computer with a virus.

Make sure your antivirus software is up to date to give you more protection.

Be careful about giving personal information away

Some scammers try to get your personal information – for example, the name of your primary school or your National Insurance number. They can use this information to hack your accounts. If you come across sites that ask for this type of information without an obvious reason, check they're legitimate.

Check if your details have been shared online

Sometimes your log-in details can be made publicly available when a website is hacked. This means that someone could use your details in a scam. Check whether your accounts have been put at risk on Have I

Been Pwned.

Make your online accounts secure

Make sure you have a strong password for your email accounts that you don't use anywhere else. If you're worried about remembering lots of different passwords, you can use a password manager.

Some websites let you add a second step when you log in to your account – this is known as 'two-factor authentication'. This makes it harder for scammers to access your accounts.

Find out how to set up two-factor authentication across services like Gmail, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Outlook and iTunes on the on the National Cyber Security Centre website.

Know how your bank operates

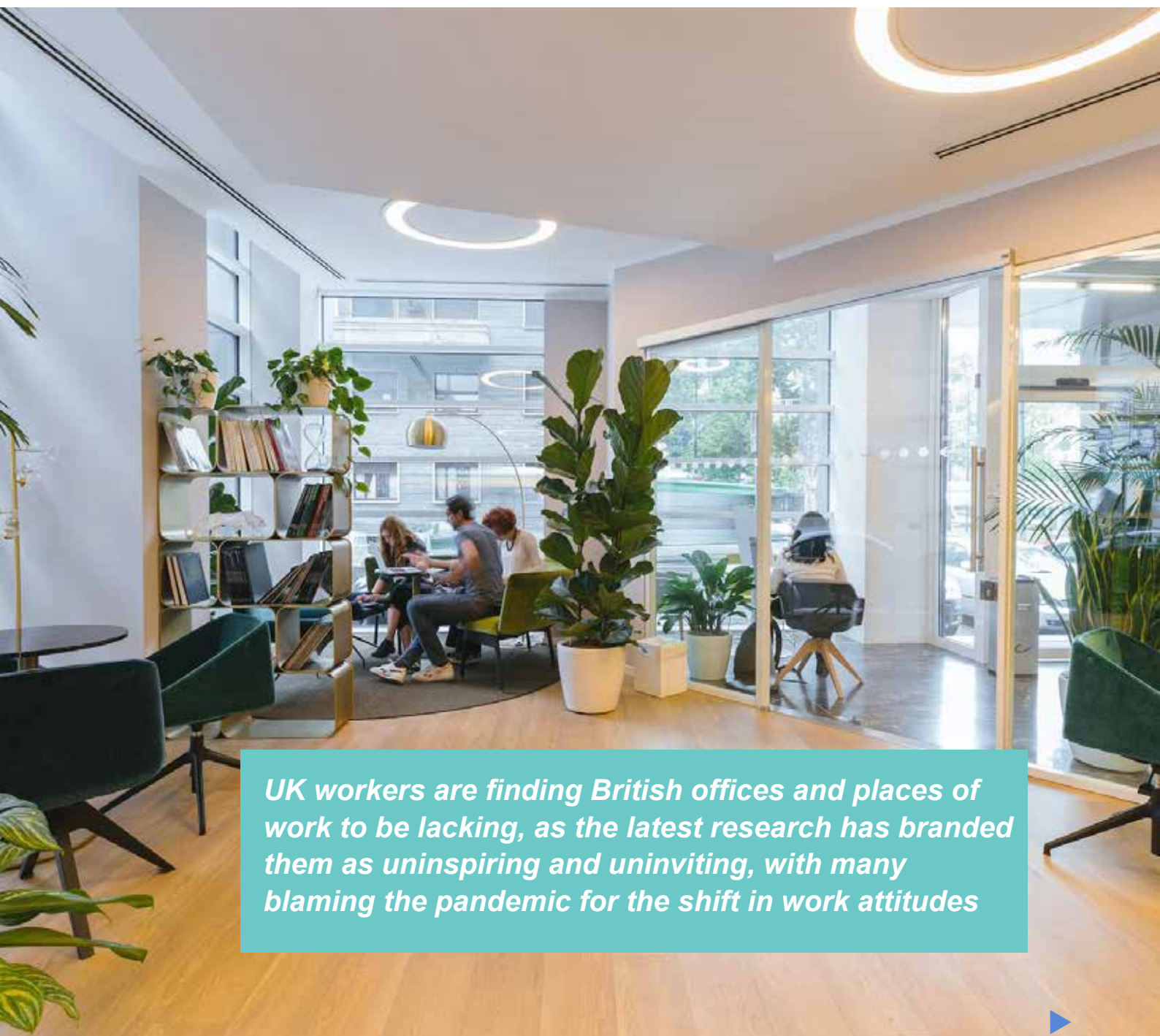
Check your bank's website to see how your bank will and won't communicate with you. For example, find out what type of security questions they'll ask if they phone you.

Find out about recent scams

To find out about scams across the country, you can sign up to the Trading Standards email alert on their website. Trading Standards can investigate and take court action against scammers.

If you want to know about scams in your local area, sign up for email alerts on Action Fraud's website. You can also find out about common financial scams on the Financial Conduct Authority's website.

Half of UK workers uninspired by the office



UK workers are finding British offices and places of work to be lacking, as the latest research has branded them as uninspiring and uninviting, with many blaming the pandemic for the shift in work attitudes



UK workers are finding British offices and places of work to be lacking, as the latest research has branded them as uninspiring and uninviting, with many blaming the pandemic for the shift in work attitudes.

A new report by interior design and fit-out business Claremont has revealed how businesses can make workplaces relevant and compelling by tuning into how employees feel about an office.

Claremont surveyed more than 1,000 office workers across a range of sectors to identify the impact of an office on a workforce's behaviour and how staff need to feel in order to be happy, healthy and productive.

Dubbed 'The Workplace Oooh', the research revealed that almost half of employees – 52% of hybrid workers and 48% of full-time office-based workers – feel uninspired by their workplace, while 42% say their office doesn't

make them feel valued.

It also revealed that the vast majority of today's employees (84%) expect the office to deliver an experience, rather than it just being a place to complete tasks.

Sarah Syson, Head of Design at Claremont said: "In recent years, the very essence of how, when and where we work has changed and the office has taken on a new role. It's no longer the everyday place for work and so it must work much harder to make itself relevant and inviting. Now, the office needs to give employees the feelings and experiences that lone working leaves us wanting – those rich in face-to-face contact, collaboration and socialisation."

The research also revealed the six key emotions that today's employees seek from their workplace – they want to feel inspired, valued, connected, supported, included and proud.

Camaraderie and a feeling of connection with colleagues is key – over a third (35%) of all employees and 42% of hybrid employees said they want to visit the office to feel human connection and teamwork is what makes people feel the most productive and positive about being in the office.

Cost of living has also had an impact on attitudes to places of work, with 28% of people sharing that a major reason they would visit the office is to be in a heated space. For the youngest workers, this rose to 31% of Generation Z.

Equally, workers revealed red flags that can put them off attending the office including poor kitchen facilities, poor & outdated office etiquette, lack of quiet spaces, no wellbeing spaces, concerns about cleanliness, no access to the outdoors and even bad coffee.

The data also revealed that:

- **Nearly a third of employees want a fun creative environment (30%), closely followed by using brilliant technology (29%)**
- **Seeing friends and working as part of a team is also essential for modern workers, with almost a third saying it makes them feel positive about work (32%) and the same saying it makes them feel productive (31%)**
- **Collaboration is also highly valued but mostly by the Baby Boomer generation with 40% saying they want face-to-face collaboration opportunities.**
- **Almost a quarter (24%) of this audience also wanted better technology in the**

workplace to help them collaborate with colleagues

Generational differences are highlighted too, with stark attitude shifts from Baby Boomers through to Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z. The youngest group of workers,

Generation Z, are the proudest of their workspaces at 84%, but they do have high expectations of it with a fifth (20%) expecting it to be environmentally conscious

Inclusion mattered to all workers, covering a range of needs including flexible working. Flexible working was highlighted as an important factor for female employees (45% compared with 37% of men) and was prevalent most for Millennials and Generation X.

Sarah continued: “The research really highlights that a workplace needs to suit employees’ evolving demands – which means catering for their emotional needs and helping them to feel happy, healthy and more productive – as well as meeting their more practical task-based needs with systems and technology.

“With factors including flexible working, cost of living and eco-conscious workspaces being highlighted as important to workers, it’s more important now than ever before for a workplace to meet workers’ needs at every level.

“The research also highlighted that far too many workplaces aren’t up to the job and they definitely don’t have ‘The Workplace Oooh’, which could well lead to high staff turnover or recruitment struggles down the line.”

STOP, HANG UP, CALL 159

Launched by Stop Scams UK, 159 is a memorable short-code phone service that connects the vast majority of UK banking customers safely and securely with their bank when they receive an unexpected or suspicious call about a financial matter.



This breaks the scam 'journey' at the critical moment when you are at most risk of being manipulated into making a payment. So, even if scammers can make contact with you, that link will be broken by your call to 159, before any information is shared, any payment is made, and any harm is done.

If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details...

...Stop, hang up and call 159 to speak directly to your bank.

159 is the memorable, secure number that connects you directly to your bank if you think you might be being scammed.

159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank.



Since 2014 UK Telecommunications Operators have significantly reduced the 'call clearing delay time' to under two seconds, meaning calling 159 will always be a route back to safety.

159 will never call you. Only a fraudster will object to you calling 159.

Over 180,000 calls have now been made to 159, and Stop Scams UK have ambitious plans to invest in the service further over the coming months.

- They plan to integrate a new Intelligent Voice Response (IVR) system to route calls. This will streamline the calling process, provide a better service to users, and allow Stop Scams UK to support a wider number of banking destinations.
- They intend to work with participating members to identify opportunities to integrate 159 with other aspects of their services. This could mean a customer identifying their bank to the IVR on a 159 call could in turn automatically trigger a push alert from their online banking app.
- Stop Scams UK is also working towards making 159 a universal number offered by all telephone providers, similar to 101, 111 or 999.

Who can use 159?

The cost of calling 159 will vary according to your phone provider. In many cases this will be the same as a national rate call. Please ask your provider for details. The banks that currently use 159 are:

- Barclays
- Co-operative Bank
- First Direct
- HSBC
- Lloyds (including Halifax and Bank of Scotland)
- Metro Bank
- Nationwide Building Society
- NatWest (including Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank)
- Santander
- Starling Bank
- TSB

The telephone companies involved in 159 are:

- BT (including EE and Plusnet)
- Gamma
- O2 (including giffgaff)
- Sky
- TalkTalk
- Three
- Virgin Media
- Vodafone



How do you cut office noise?

With a continued focus on efficiency, productivity, space management and collaborative working it's no surprise that businesses, both big and small, have embraced the concept of the open plan office design. Unfortunately, many of these benefits can be lost at the implementation stage, with poor design, layout and space planning leading to issues with the most common employee complaint... office noise.



Are you aware that you have an office noise issue? It may seem strange, but studies have also revealed that managers/business owners are often unaware that they have a noise problem. After all, what seems like a busy, thriving, office hum to some is a distracting 'din' to others.

What's more, we all have different sensitivity and tolerance to background noise and, of course, this will vary by the task you are trying to undertake.

So do you have an office noise problem?

Noise is best defined as unwanted sound and can take many forms such as:

- **Conversational noise**

Conversations at a water cooler, breakout areas, meeting area and colleagues on the phone..... conversations can be very distracting. Once you multiply this across a large open plan office, it's no longer a quiet buzz!

- **Machinery noise**

Printers, photocopiers, scanners, pc boxes, kettles... offices are filled with time-saving equipment but very few of them are quiet. Whether it's the item in operation or the people and conversations it attracts, machinery becomes an office distraction.

- **External noise**

Many offices are connected to a workshop or production area and as a result are impacted by the working noise. While machine operators are often protected from the repetitive & loud noise by ear protectors, the office based staff rely upon walls to prevent disturbance... sadly they often don't.

From distracting conversations to outside factory noise that prevents you thinking clearly, acoustic disturbance can be stressful, harming both productivity and decision-making. However, if you're not sure whether you have an acoustic issue it's simple to find out... ask those working there!

How to cut office noise

The good news is that, even if you work in an open plan office, there are many ways to tackle this acoustic issue and we have put



together a list of some of our favourite ideas and suggestions.

Bench system screens

Desk bench systems are a hugely popular way to make the most of limited office space. While they are great for encouraging sharing of ideas, they don't always give the quietest environment for those working at them. Acoustic friendly desk fitted screens can help absorb and deflect some of the noise, creating a quieter environment for colleagues.

Removing PC boxes from desk space

It's still popular to keep PC boxes on the desk, often supporting the monitor. Not only does this cut the available working space it also brings the hot fan and pc noise closer to the employee. This issue can be removed by simply 'hanging' a PC under the desk and putting the monitor/screen on an arm – this is also far better ergonomically.

Isolating IT equipment

Printers and photocopiers contribute to the office sound both in terms of when in use but also as they tend to be natural gathering points for employees. Centralising this equipment to a separate area, particularly one screened or partitioned from the main working area will significantly reduce noise levels.

Dedicated quiet spaces

Where high levels of concentration are needed on a task, it's more practical to have a dedicated area to work in than trying to make an office silent!

Dedicated noisy spaces

Whether it's a team meeting, enthusiastic discussion, training session or just somewhere

to chill and eat lunch, providing an area where people can make noise means that they won't disturb others in the space.

Plants

Yes, really. Not only do plants bring some much-needed greenery and colour to the office, they also help break up noise. Or why not go one step further and have a 'living' wall, as shown below, bringing the outdoors in!

Office screens

The clever placing of screens can help deflect and break up noise in your office space. They can be used to create dedicated quiet or noisy areas, or just to break up large office space.

There are a variety of screens available and they do not have to be an unsightly barrier that ruins the look and feel of your office. Ideas such as a coloured screen that matches your branding, a dramatic canvas 'sail' or a 'living plant wall' can all add to your office design and even create a talking point.

In addition it's worth considering free-standing screen as this allows you a lot of flexibility in terms of finding the best locations to place them and being able to move them when you re-organise your office space.

Acoustic wall panels

The introduction of panels to walls that are specifically designed to absorb sound are a particularly good and cost-effective way to reduce disturbance.

The good news is that wall panels are not only effective but can also look good, with many installations looking more like artwork than a sound panel.

Acoustic ceiling panels

Similar to wall panels, ceiling panels can also deflect and absorb sound. There are some clever ways to hang ceiling panels to add interest to the office design too with our favourite being some 'flying' V-flaps that help to dissipate noise while looking cool!

An acoustic wall

Using the latest super acoustic bricks that are made from foam and wool fabric you can introduce a wall that can help break up an area and dramatically reduce unwanted sound.

Office partitions

Office partitioning, including stud partitions and glass walls, offers a very good way to create quiet zones, meeting rooms or separate noisy IT and staff breakout areas from the main working area.

Although you lose a little in flexibility compared to screens, partitions offer better sound reduction and create much more private work spaces.

Meeting booths and pods

Meeting booths and pods (see above) give a flexible way to create meeting spaces within an open plan office while reducing the impact of noise. Perfect for collaborative working the pods use acoustic material to help reduce noise while also creating a comfortable working environment.

Quiet pods

Standalone quiet pods (see above) are an increasingly popular way create separate working space within an office. Heavily sound proofed they keep the noise or out and create a 'statement of style' in the office.

Noise friendly flooring

Many flooring surfaces reflect noise back towards employees and therefore exacerbating the situation. Choosing the right flooring materials, ones that can absorb office noise or reduce vibration under machinery for example, can help to reduce loud & repetitive sounds.

Masking sounds

The use of low level ambient sound can have the effect of cancelling out distracting noise or simply making it less distinctive and therefore easier to ignore. There are a number of products that are available on the market to help you achieve this in your office.

Humorous signs

Some office noise issues are more office etiquette related. An effective way to deal with this is the use of clear, humorous signage to show acceptable volume levels and how to respect others in the work space.

Layout....your starting point

There are a range of products and ideas that can help you reduce unwanted office noise but the starting point should always be to look at your office layout. Have you made the best use of your available space, can you cut the likelihood of noise travelling, is there a better way to lay it out to make it a better working environment for your team?

Working with an office interiors specialist means that you benefit from the latest thinking and best practice. They will be experienced in the issues you have and have great knowledge on how to overcome them.

Tips for a Greener Office

Going green is easier than you think, and doesn't have to mean higher costs for the office. Follow these simple tips on how to be more eco-friendly at work, and never look back.

Being kinder to the environment is an important responsibility that we all must be held accountable for. A good place to start is by adhering to the “Five Rs”: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, and Rethink. From turning off the lights when leaving a room to turning down the temperature when everyone goes home for the day – you’ll be surprised how small changes can make such a big difference.

RECYCLE PRINTER CARTRIDGES AND TONER BOTTLES

After you refill the printer, make sure you put the empty cartridges to one side to recycle. By doing this you’re helping to keep millions of used printer supplies out of harmful landfills. Many manufacturers offer pre-paid shipping labels as part of their recycling schemes – so be sure to check with your supplier, or alternatively, find out where your nearest recycling bins are.

USE RECYCLED PAPER (AND RECYCLE USED PAPER)

Recycling paper saves trees, water, energy, and chemicals. So, make sure you have recycling boxes around printers, desks, and meeting rooms and try to print double-sided whenever possible. You should also make sure the company who provides your paper is an environmentally friendly supplier, they will usually be certified by forest management standards (the FSC or SFI).

INSTALL MOTION SENSORS

How many times a day do you walk around your office and notice lights on in rooms that aren’t in use? This problem can be easily solved with motion-activated light sensors,

where a certain period of inactivity will automatically switch off the lights. Not only are you saving energy, but also cutting down costs on the electricity bill.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

More often than not, artificial lighting is unnecessarily used in offices on a daily basis, when really natural light from outside isn’t being fully utilised. Artificial lighting, on average, represents 40% of overall electricity usage. To combat this, make sure blinds and curtains are always open during daylight hours and that all lights are switched off when people go home for the day.

CONSERVE POWER

Surprisingly, one of the biggest uses of energy in offices are machines that are switched off but still plugged into a live outlet. Putting computers into standby mode is not only a huge drain on energy consumption but also largely unnecessary. Make sure to turn your computer off completely, especially before weekends and holidays, and make sure screensavers are on a short time limit or are disabled.

BE TEMPERATURE SMART

Make sure to set the thermostat to heat the office no warmer than 21 degrees in colder months and a minimum of 16 degrees when it’s unoccupied. This will not only help to conserve energy but will keep the overall temperature at a happy medium for everyone. It’s also a great idea to install caulking and weather-strips to windows and doors in order to minimise heat loss.