

altro



# Build a better **workspace**

Linking interior design and  
employee morale

WHITEPAPER | APRIL 2020

discover [altro.com](https://www.altro.com)

There's no denying the fact that our surroundings directly influence our mood, and coincidentally, our productivity. Whether that influence is positive or negative depends on a variety of factors that can deter focus from projects and contribute to cognitive overload. Aggressive lighting, poor indoor air quality and excessive noise can all hinder productivity while causing unnecessary stress in employees. As a result, modern trends in office design are leaning towards promoting collaboration and creativity to improve health and workflow.

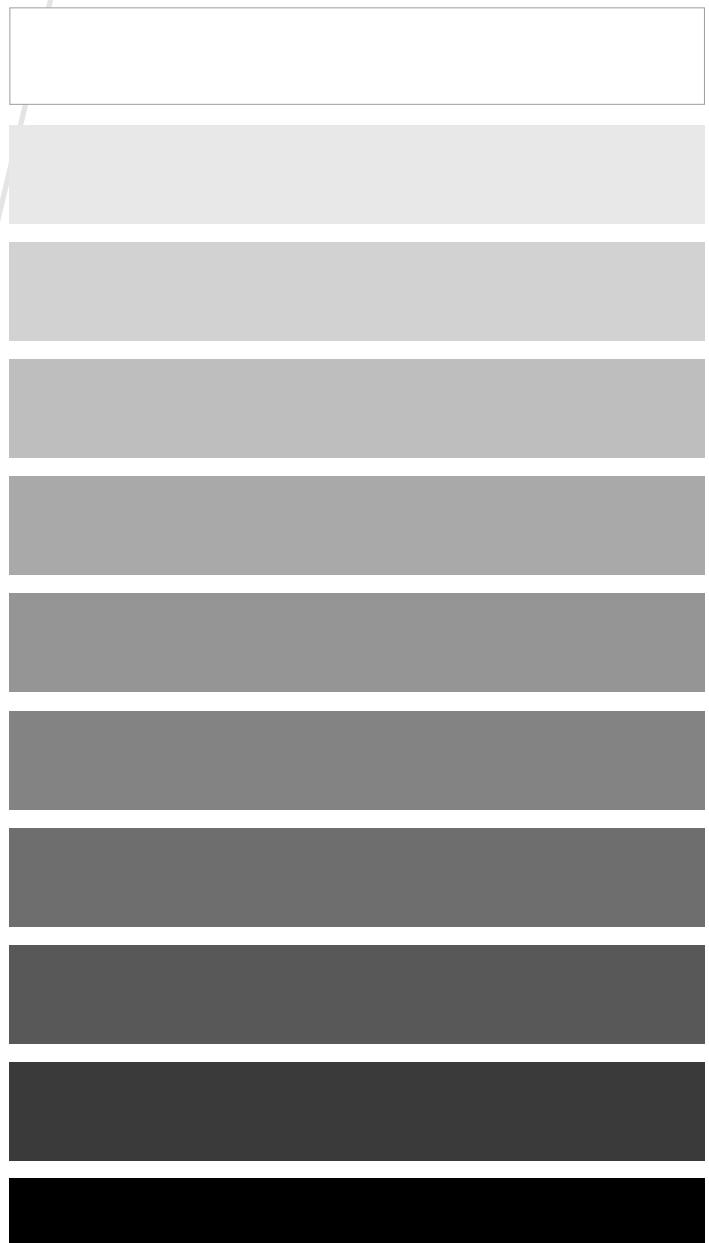
Providing your employees with the ideal workspace involves understanding how certain design elements can affect morale. This piece will explore the connection between aesthetics and productivity as well as appropriate solutions for office interiors.

## Making light of the situation

Excessive artificial lighting can be detrimental to your employees' vision and result in headaches, stress and anxiety. On the other hand, inadequate or dim lighting can cause drowsiness and a lack of focus, which can negatively affect morale. The best alternative for office environments is finding a blend of natural and artificial lighting that stabilizes physical and mental wellbeing. In fact, renovations that optimize a space's natural lighting have been shown to improve mood, attendance and satisfaction among workers, which correlate with an overall increase in productivity.

When it comes to choosing surfaces for office interiors, light reflectance values (LRVs) are important in balancing artificial and natural lighting. Surfaces with lower LRVs absorb light and lower its overall intensity, while higher LRVs reflect light to promote alertness and activity. Materials are ranked on a scale of 1 – 100, with 1 being "dark" (absorbing) and 100 being "light" (reflecting).

Depending on a space's desired aesthetic, darker finishes can help subdue aggressive florescent lighting and create a calmer atmosphere. Meanwhile, bright and vibrant finishes reflect a room's natural light and reduce the amount of artificial light needed to compensate.



# Clearing the air



With a growing number of employees moving beyond the typical 40-hour workweek, office design trends are shifting focus towards eliminating factors that can potentially compromise health and safety. Poor indoor air quality, one of the more prominent threats in corporate environments, can produce harmful complications including respiratory issues, fatigue and allergic reactions.

Indoor air pollutants include a variety of microbial and chemical contaminants that can increase absenteeism while decreasing productivity. Microbial contaminants such as dust, mold and mildew thrive in areas with poor ventilation and can easily circulate, triggering allergy-related symptoms. Meanwhile your office's furniture, surfaces and fixtures all emit chemical contaminants that negatively affect indoor air quality – the most notable being volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found concentrations of VOCs indoors to be as much as five times greater than outdoor air. In fact, new construction contributes to higher levels of VOC emissions in an indoor environment due to the abundance of new materials generating VOC particles simultaneously. To counteract employee exposure in office environments, it is important to specify materials that are independently certified for low VOC emissions. Flooring solutions in particular should meet either FloorScore or CA 01350 standards.

FloorScore tests and certifies flooring products and adhesives for compliance with indoor air quality emission requirements adopted nationwide.



CERTIFIED BY  
SCS Global Services



# Promoting peace and quiet

While often overlooked, noise pollution is a common problem for many workplaces. Whether it's employees chatting about projects, renovations around the office or abnormally loud equipment, excessive noise can lead to decreased productivity and poor communication as well as cardiovascular and stress-related disorders. In fact, research suggests that noise-induced stress could account for about 6% of headaches at work.

With excessive noise having such a profoundly negative effect on employees, many facilities are looking towards materials with integrated sound reduction properties when designing their layout. Given that most offices follow an open floor plan, noise is expected to travel easily throughout the space unobstructed. The key is to incorporate the right acoustics into certain design elements that can manage the distribution of sound and help employees maintain focus. While this typically translates to outfitting your office with acoustic ceiling tiles, not all interiors are capable of installing them. This is where flooring with integrated sound reduction comes into play.

Traditional hard flooring options including wood, concrete and tile are all less than ideal when it comes to absorbing noise in an office. Insufficient backing prevents these materials from effectively insulating sound in an open layout. Meanwhile, carpet tiles with added underlay can negate their noise absorption benefits by harboring dirt, dust and bacteria within fibers, making them counterproductive long-term. Products with a smooth consistent surface and ample backing can provide a clean and quiet solution for office interiors.

Altro is a world-leading manufacturer and innovator in commercial floors and walls. We turn ordinary interiors into thriving environments, transforming spaces to enhance people's emotional and physical well-being.

Let us help you with your next project - 800.377.5597

