

The seat to my right is free... How sitting next to the right person can increase productivity.

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Today's employee is super flexible and will do their work wherever there is space to do so. Who he/she sits next to is completely irrelevant. This is, in short, the philosophy behind desk sharing. However, is this really the case?

This is the question asked by Cornerstone onDemand, the leading provider for talent management software, as they began a study together with Harvard Business School which was dedicated to this topic for over two years. From this they quickly discovered the three types of workers. The study showed that there is a clear link between the conscious arrangement of these types of workers and the productivity of the employees. The three types of workers include:

The Productive.

Works quickly and gets fast results—albeit with limited quality. They try to “somehow” settle

problems and difficulties themselves without feedback from the supervisors.

The Qualitative.

Works carefully but slowly, getting high-quality results. They are quick to consult their supervisors for any discrepancies.

The Generalist.

An all-rounder of productivity and quality.

To maximise potential, they should be placed next to colleagues with opposite qualities, according to the study—productive next to qualitative. This is explained by the “spill-over effect” or “transfer effect”: This states that opposites complement each other and thus can balance out each of their weaknesses. Generalists, however, are most productive next to other generalists. If a company manages to find the ideal seating arrangement, productivity can be increased by 13 percent and efficiency by 17 percent. According to study findings, for a company with 2,000 employees that equates to around one million US dollars. In order for this to come into effect, the seating arrangement must be kept for the long-term.

Problem: Work-resisters.

A fourth “shady type of worker” included unmotivated employees who are difficult to manage and who often avoid work. The transfer effect can also come into play here and this bad attitude can rub off onto other employees. It’s important to identify these work-resisters and eliminate them from the team.

A study overview.

The study was carried out by Cornerstone onDemand* together with the researchers at Harvard Business School. The aim was to answer the question to what extent a strategic seating arrangement influences employee productivity. Over a period of more than two years, 2,000 employees in both European and American companies were observed and analysed.

Source:

www.cornerstoneondemand.com/company/news/press-releases/new-study-shows-who-sits-where-work-can-impact-employee-performance-and-company

**Cornerstone onDemand is a worldwide leading provider of cloud-based software for recruitment, learning, management and employee networking within the company.*