

The brief code of conduct for open plan offices.

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One metre radius. This is how anthropologist Edward T. Hall described the distance between two or more people which is perceived as comfortable for everyone. In the open-plan office, it isn't always easy to preserve this space. Common work in an open-plan office can work well if everyone complies with certain rules. Here, the following applies: your own free space stops at the point where the boundaries of your colleagues begin.

To prevent the open space from becoming an interpersonal and professional vacuum, we will give you an overview of the code of conduct in an open-plan office. But first: there is no ideal solution. What counts are beneficial compromises for the community to be able to perform as well as possible in the open-plan conditions. A collegial willingness to compromise should be paramount when it comes to all potential trouble spots. Taking into account that we spend an average of eight hours in the office each day, we should also consider working time as living time.

An overview of the most frequent conflict triggers:

Noise

To be able to work in a productive and concentrated manner, most people need peace. So, what can you do if you have to sit near one or several “human loudspeaker” colleagues in an open-plan office? Tip 1: Self-protection. From headphones to earplugs, anything goes as long as the boss is fine with it. Tip 2: The protection of others. Talk to your loud colleagues in a targeted, yet friendly manner. Many people don't know that they reach a disturbingly high number of decibels when they talk on the phone. If nothing about their behaviour changes: either follow tip 1 or, in particularly loud periods, complete the points on your own agenda which require less concentration.

Smells

One of the most frequent points of conflict in an open-plan office: exotic or hot foods have no place in an open-plan office. Tip: when their blood sugar level starts to drop, a cooperative colleague should turn to snacks with a neutral smell such as nuts or greens. If you have distracting combinations of herbs and spices and aggressively smelling foods, you would be better going to the break room. There, fans of smelly, hearty foods will find people who share their tendency and share a common joy for all things fragrant.

Room temperature

The trinity of the most frequent open-plan office frictions is completed with the topic of environmental temperature. Theoretically, the ideal room temperature is somewhere between 21 and 22 °C. In the wilderness of the open-plan office, however, this is often in dispute. The limits between a comfortable temperature for one person and a shock freeze threshold for another are fluid. Frequently, and understandably, these limits are very vehemently defined and defended. Tip: stay pragmatic. Agree fixed ventilation times with your colleagues so that sub-Saharan temperatures or arctic atmospheres are avoided. You can also adapt your own style of clothing in a functional manner to be either cooling or warming for the office.