

Let employees have a voice in decorating the office



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Decorations in the office may mean more than just a pretty picture. Giving employees the opportunity to take part in designing their office surroundings could lead to an improvement in work productivity and morale, according to **Ambius**, which provides design services to businesses. Ambius and the University of Exeter researched the effects of worker efficiency when it comes to office environment.

Interior design and plants help in boosting productivity, according to Jeff Mariola, divisional managing director for Ambius.

Groups involved in choosing decorations for their space possess more ownership in their work. Providing the employees with more choices brings an increased level of pride in their working area.

"The study's findings particularly resonate in these tough economical times, when companies are more reliant than ever on productive and energetic work forces," says Mariola.

Companies that prefer a "lean space" strategy may want to rethink their uniform method to design. A "lean space" with sim-

ple decorations and clear desks could lead to employee discomfort and alienation, according to Ambius' study. Instead of white walls and empty space, Mariola suggests greenery and bright colors. Plants improve the air and are nice to look at when working. Common areas, such as water coolers and fax machines, are the perfect places to add color to grab people's attention.

Businesses that create a mandated look to their offices do have a better rate of productivity than "lean space" companies; however, those businesses that allow workers to decorate their own spaces show the highest gains in productivity. Although many employees work in tight quarters and cubicles, Mariola suggests putting design pieces on the cubicle walls — employees can share the decorations.

Employers can send the message that they value their workers by trusting their design decisions.

"The simple approach of involving office workers in the design of their own surroundings proves to deliver the best levels of organizational identification, citizenship, well-being and productivity," says Kenneth Freeman, Ambius' international technical director. "We advise businesses to factor in these findings when organizing work space and recruiting employees to help with design.

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