

Corner desks vs straight desks

[closed]

Asked 16 years, 2 months ago Modified 12 years, 4 months ago

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6



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The company I work for are currently undergoing a site wide renovation and I'm involved in the 'consultation' on what the R&D work spaces are going to be like.

There is no scope for individual private offices - so lets not start on that topic.

One big requirement is that the office layout can be flexible (i.e. team areas can be created and changed as necessary).

In order to allow this one of the most significant changes is that we will be losing our corner facing desks. The

rationale being that since no one has big CRT monitors any more we don't need to waste the space in the corner.

People are reluctant about this change but I'm not sure if that's just because people don't like change or if there is a real reason behind it. I've moved my setup out of the corner onto a straight edge to see how much impact it has on myself.

We've also been told that this is now happening across the industry... that people are being moved out of their corners into more bench-like arrangement.

So my the question is twofold:

1. Is it really important to have a corner?
2. Is there really an industry-wide move 'out of the corners'?

I know there are a lot of questions already on here about conditions for developers but nothing about this specific question I don't think.

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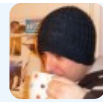
edited Aug 15, 2012 at 15:52



BryanH

6,042 ● 3 ● 36 ● 47

asked Oct 2, 2008 at 12:03



Klelky

404 ● 1 ● 7 ● 15

19 Answers

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Straight desks for pair programming will work great with this type of chair:

7

<http://www.cenqua.com/pairon/>



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 13:00

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dr_pepper

1,587 ● 1 ● 13 ● 28



2 # can be levered to standup-meeting height <-- nice feature :)
– Anders Sandvig Oct 2, 2008 at 13:27



If you're gonna be doing any pair-programming then I would recommend you avoid corner desks as they hamper the ability for 2 people to work side by side.

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What about curved desks? A team of four with curved desks (curving away from you, not around you) would form a circular formation ideal for group discussions and pair programming.



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Sam Wessel

8,848 ● 8 ● 42 ● 44

I really like the idea of a circular table with a team all around it. It looks so Camelot like ... – [castle1971](#) Jan 4, 2009 at 16:00



6



My personal preference is corner desks, they have better support for your arms while typing or moving your mouse.

You can reach a free space for notes taking in the table without moving the chair and also can talk to people over the desk without having to standup or lean to the side of the monitor.

About pair-programming you can always move your monitor a little to your side (as you would do in a straight table) and have the same facility as any other table.

You can also grow your belly and it will fit perfectly in the inner round part of the table without keeping you far away from computer ;)

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[Fernando Barrocal](#)

13.1k ● 9 ● 45 ● 51



4



I think a bigger question is how it will be perceived by your coworkers. If they feel that they're losing prestige or being treated like automatons because they're losing corner desks, that could be more important than any actual difference in productivity. (Which I feel would be tiny if there even is one, having worked at both.)



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:11



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Dan Goldstein

23.7k ● 10 ● 49 ● 52



3

I have a corner desk, and while my overall working area is fairly small it's useful. I can imagine a corner desk with 'wings' would be better as this would give you a greater working area.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:06



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Ross

47k ● 39 ● 123 ● 173



that's what we have at the moment - corner desks with at least one wing (lots of people have two... so there is a real feeling that people are losing something there. I'm not sure how valid that feeling is though. – Klelky Oct 2, 2008 at 12:08



3

I currently work on an L shaped desk, with the corner as my primary work area for my computers. The short part is where my phone and notepads are. The longer part is for my books and things that I must read or review. I find it useful to have the L desk, but we don't use the cubes (or even offices) for intense team meetings - for those, we go to the conference rooms with our laptops (we don't use desktops here).



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:08

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Thomas Owens

116k ● 99 ● 317 ● 436



3



I like my corner. It gives me a familiar sense of security. So far I've evolved from standing in a corner in school to sitting in a corner at work. I'm waiting anxiously for the next phase, laying in a corner at home :)

To be a bit more serious: I like the L-shaped desk whether in corner or not because the both sides of the desk are "closer" and I can easily change focus by turning the chair. Being in the corner has an advantage in an open office with less distracting code monkeys in sight...

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:25

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Gene

1,527 ● 1 ● 14 ● 15



3



I may be a bit strange, but I actually prefer using a straight, rectangular, desk. The simple reason for this is that I like to have as little space as possible between the edge of my keyboard (or laptop) and the edge of the desk. I shift things around a bit from time to time—for variation;—but my keyboard is rarely more than 5-10cm away from the edge of the desk. Because of this, cornered desks or desks without straight edges just annoy me.

My ideal work desk is a 160x80cm wooden "sheet" with four simple, adjustable, legs and no "fancies"—as they

just tend to get in the way (if you have ever crashed your legs into one of those metal bars crossing under your desk for "stabilization", you know what I am talking about).

If you need more space, you can always combine two desks to make a nice large surface you can easily "slide" along without fear of crashing into any corners or edges "sticking out". Also, as others have mentioned, straight desks are much better for pair programming or any other form of group activity involving more than one person sitting in front of the desk/monitor.

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:53

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Anders Sandvig

21k ● 16 ● 61 ● 74



3



I see that lot's of people have already mentioned it, but as [Joel Spolsky says in his blog entry about the new Fog Creek Offices](#) , **L-Shaped desks aren't good for Pair Programming:**

Pair Programming. When you make typical L-shaped desks many developers set themselves up in the corner. When they need to collaborate temporarily, or pair program, or even just show something to someone on their screen, the second person has to either lean all the way across the desk or look over the first person's shoulder. To avoid this we designed all the desks

to be long and straight so that wherever a software developer sits, there's always room for another person to pull up a chair and sit next to them.

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edited Jun 20, 2020 at 9:12

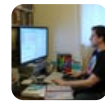
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Community Bot

1 ● 1

answered Oct 8, 2008 at 2:27



Sam Hasler

12.6k ● 10 ● 73 ● 106



2

An island of four desks grouped together is my preference - perfect for four people teams. They are corner desks, but not used in a corner. They are also oblong, making it possible to pair-program.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:11



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Torbjørn

6,493 ● 5 ● 31 ● 43



1

I have an L-shaped corner desk. As mentioned by others, it makes things slightly tricky if pair programming, but even when I'm by myself I find it a little subconsciously taxing.



With screens oriented around one of the straight bits, sitting with one elbow on the "L" section, with the other floating in free space, feels "unbalanced"; with screens in



the corner, there's no hope of pairing whatsoever and I feel wedged into my hideyhole.

All things considered, I'd much rather have a straight desk.

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:35

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[moobaa](#)

4,502 ● 1 ● 30 ● 31



1



I am currently working at a straight desk. However i much prefer the corner desks. With the straight desk it seems like I have much less desk real estate to put papers that are easily reachable. With a L desk I have much more reachable area to put things.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 13:50



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[StubbornMule](#)

2,730 ● 5 ● 20 ● 19



0



All of our cube/offices have desk lining 2 adjacent walls, so there is always a corner that can be used if a person so desires. That said however, I can't say I've ever seen someone here with their setup in the corner. I personally think it's way more comfortable not in a corner.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:08



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[Wes P](#)

9,830 ● 14 ● 43 ● 48



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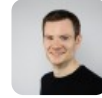
I have a corner desk, but the actual front of it is curved, so it's like a hybrid of straight and corner.

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:12



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[Philip Morton](#)

132k ● 38 ● 90 ● 97



0

Our shop doesn't use desks per se. We have these industrial work tables with heavy duty racks overhead where the boxes can sit, providing lots of desk space - the only thing on my desk are four flat screen monitors, a couple of keyboards and mice. I like a straight desk if I have my own office (which I do) but when I've worked in a large room with multiple folks, I actually prefer the corner style or cube so there are a few less distractions.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:12

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[itsmatt](#)

31.4k ● 11 ● 102 ● 165



0

I would take a corner desk over straight any day. I deal with a lot of tangible items on my desk (folders, time log, calculator, coffee, etc) and I don't know where I would put it all, within reach, without a corner desk.



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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:21





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Joe Phillips

51k ● 33 ● 108 ● 165



0



The overall floorplan determines what works best for people.

My previous employer used cubes with wraparound desks that can be used either corner facing or straight. Most used as corner facing for extra legroom.



I agree with Sam Wessel, the pair programming concept would work best with straight desks to quickly share workspace and view each other's monitors.

I've also spent some time working in the German branch of my previous employer and their model is to separate the floor into rooms with high partition walls and stick 4 desks in the middle so that everyone faces each other, instead of away. The high partition walls blocked idle conversations but you can still shout to neighbors if needed. This allows you to develop a close work group relationship you wouldn't have otherwise. I liked this layout.

My current employer uses nothing but desks lined up against the walls or half-height partitions. They believe in the clean desk policy and minimal storage. Forget your coding book collection or office decorations, privacy, etc. I end up whispering to my wife on the phone because everyone hears you. I'm not a fan. They can squeeze us together like sardines to reduce office space footprint.

Because of growth, they're now pushing people's desks into conference and storage rooms. Pretty soon I expect to be relocated to the basement with no stapler.

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 12:21

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spoulson

21.6k ● 16 ● 78 ● 102



0



I used to have a corner desk, but recently, I moved to a straight desk (it was my decision). Wrong decision. I have 2 24in. wide-screen monitors hooked to my desktop, plus my laptop, which is a 19in wide-screen. I use a single mouse and keyboard through [Synergy](#). There is no good way to place the monitors and the laptop in a way that you can face all the screens straight. Facing a corner and a **keyboar tray**, you can place your-self around so you can look at each of the screens straight, or with minimal turning of your head.

I'm really considering swithching.

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answered Oct 2, 2008 at 13:49

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Curro

852 ● 2 ● 10 ● 14



0

The corner desk with it's ability to support your arms while typing and using a mouse are incredibly beneficial for your health (I guess)

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answered Oct 8, 2008 at 2:32



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Robert Gould

69.7k ● 61 ● 191 ● 275

