

title: **Is an open office format too distracting?**

num_comments: 21

num_up_votes: 34

upvote_ratio: 1.0

Post Text

In my new role, there is going to be an open office. Currently, I sit in a cubicle. Environmental noises distract me. I wear noise canceling headphones, and music without lyrics keeps me going. But, I do tap and bang my head at times as I work. So far, nobody has said anything. People walking around will also grab my attention. The shuffling of feet. The stomping down the aisle. Random hovering people talking to others. What happens is I turn around and look at them for a second and then look back. It distracts me. My brain does this on its own. I solved this by having a mirror to see behind me. I give side glances and that is it. But the noise of somebody passing my desk still causes me to be disrupted. I'll do some motion like click fast or stare off. Like something in my brain is broken and believes I am guilty of not working and makes me paranoid. Imposter syndrome? But, I don't think so. I have moments where I am brilliant at my job. Anyway, an open office floorplan is my next role. Any tips or techniques for the easily distracted?

Comments

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 26

It is well established that open office plans are the worst for productivity. Remote work is where a lot of places are heading. Office space is expensive, so remote work is usually a win win.

Commenter_3

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

If I work from home I have 0 self control and get nothing done. Before I had a job I went to a coworking space with open office plan and it helped focus me so much. I hate working alone. I also work about 5 times better if there's young females in the room with me

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

So you should work from a starbucks... lol. But yeah that is true for some people.

Commenter_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 15

DEATH TO OPEN OFFICE LAYOUTS!

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

I know exactly how you feel. My office isn't yet open concept but it's moving toward that. I have a cubicle but I can still see lots of movement out of the corner of my eye. Where I work my own team isn't on the same floor as me but every time someone passes by I'm thinking about what was on my screen, asking myself if they think I'm slacking despite them not even knowing who I am or what I do.

I have a laptop at work and two monitors, I've tried to set things up in such a way that the monitors act as much like side blinders as possible without making it too difficult to crank my neck around. I've lowered my chair as low as I can go without putting my legs in too weird of angles that would cut off my circulation. I've got noise cancelling headphones as well and I play white noise or binaural beats which are super good for filtering out background sound and helping get into a focused flow state so my brain isn't reacting as much to stimulus.

After work is done I have a journal at home and I walk through my day noting specific emotions I experienced. Then I try to reframe the negative emotions and resulting thoughts with positive ones. This helps dampen those feelings gradually making it easier to accept the way you're feeling and trigger alternate responses than your default. Being able to challenge how you're feeling goes a long way to changing your reactions. I use this [Emotion wheel](https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/50994637e4b0c4855be1d4b1/1561562210450-3AKBKIK9R4K786H9242D/ke17ZwdGBToddI8pDm48kOZ9HLhI92a8hZSwHo9Ebxp7gQa3H78H3Y0txjaiv_0fDoOvxcdMmMHk725yiiHCCLfrh8O1z5QPOohDIaIeljMHgDF5CVIOqpeNLcj80NK65_fv7S1UaXcjg0p1VjP1aNeBjQpfHgqwP0CIBiB7LGkGo0B-dUGsSquCnVTFQcaRg/Junto+Emotion+Wheel.png) to be as specific as possible and broaden my ability to identify feelings and understand them better.

You're probably wondering well how the hell do you manage to remember to do the journal or even have the motivation to by days end? I use habitica to gamify Things like exercise, journal writing, flossing daily, wiping down the counters, doing dishes Ect.

Hope this helps give you some ideas!

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Why are your people moving to an open office? I get why people hate it...but why would people who are in a more closed office think it'd be better than what they've got now?

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

I work in a government IT department and unfortunately despite most people disliking the change we didn't have much say in it. Our offices are overpopulated and there's difficulty finding offices for new hires.

This is an initiative that will make every cube open concept and will genericize the desks. Every employee will be given a laptop and seats will become free reign (you choose where you sit on a first come first serve basis bringing your own keyboard, mouse, and laptop every day). This is accompanied by mandatory telework days on a rotating schedule.

For a lot of teams that meet every day for scrums, and collaborate with each other face to face on problems it's going to severely disrupt the workflow. But government going to government... It is going to mean less productivity for me, there's a lot more distractions (games, twitch, TV, lazing on the couch, house chores etc) at home and less accountability for not focusing at least in the short term but that's exactly the problem with time blindness. I worry about my job security as a result of these mandatory changes. I need to be in the office where I'm accountable for my work.

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

oh wow, that sounds serious. Have you brought up the fact that you may not be productive at home with your manager?

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Well unfortunately I'm not yet fully assessed and diagnosed with ADHD. My doctor had a strong suspicion based on dsm-v criteria and some basic preliminary assessment so he stated me on Vyvanse. It's completely changed my life in a lot of ways but until I get confirmation my employer isn't going to compensate my situation.

Commenter_7

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7

I felt open offices are better than cubicles.

I have had a shared office with a very often moving partner, I hate it .., and an open office. With a nice floor plan, a separate kitchen and sitting area I could not see from my desk, desks having a few divider walls and storage space behind them.

Albeit I have the same problems, that worked surprisingly well. On the one side because the office was not too busy, most people stayed at their desks or just went to the designated area for chatting.

On the other side I somehow felt alright with completely cancelling people out. It was more constant and I could handle that better than someone just passing by once in a while in a space where I didn't expect it.

I admit that I went to the small secluded spaces for higher intensity work, though.

So... Give it a try. I just actively brushed people moving as "definitely not interested in me" and somehow that worked out. And try to see if you can get a desk out of sight of common areas (printer, coffee/kitchen) and something behind you. That helped me tremendously - I had having people behind me.

Commenter_8

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

I rather have cubes then open honestly. I still may hear you fart but at least I can't see you eat your boogers.

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

What are you talking about? You don't enjoy holding eye-contact with people while picking your nose and farting?

Commenter_9

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

Practice your rights if you're in the US & ask for workplace accommodations - how to ADHD ok YouTube has a great video about the rules around this.

Commenter_10

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

It usually isn't a big deal with me but I wear headphones, listen to music, and every desk in the room is standalone and not crammed next to each other. I feel like open offices can range a lot. Having enough space around me not to feel cramped and having my desk facing a wall helps.

Commenter_11

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

They suck! ADHD'R here in a healthcare ops / logistics role. Our office used to be quiet with limited interruptions and an overall comfortable work environment. Like most trends in healthcare there about 5 years behind in tech trends and decided to build us a interdisciplinary open office with real time data analytics to promote communication while neglecting the fact that every tech company in the world has basically decided they suck and are reverting back to personal offices with collaboration areas. Take your meds, wear headphones and set boundaries until you find a company that understands that noise level and interruptions are the root of lack of productivity. Good luck wishing you the best!

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Too distracting is if your work output drops.

Just measure it and say "this is then, this is now, this is the cause you can make more money by doing it this way".

Commenter_12

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I work in a sort of open office plan. I mostly got used to it.

I know most of the people walking by and seeing them doesn't distract me anymore. Seeing a group walking by, or an unknown person, does distract me, but that happens about two or three times per day.

My team is relatively quiet, and when they discuss work stuff, I want to be distracted to listen in. If they discuss nonsense, I either ask them to move to the kitchen, remind them we're at work to work, or put in ear plugs with music. The neighbouring team can be pretty loud, so I often put music in my ears.

I have a sign with "Sorry, I'm busy" that I put on my desk when necessary. When I'm focused and people want to talk to me, I try to explain they should only drag me from my hyperfocus when it's urgent. I once scolded a co-worker when he dragged me from my hyper focus three times in two days, just to socialise.

My team and most of the department know I have ADD, and I try to explain how my brain works, usually with good results. I waited two months before telling anyone I have ADD, but I could have told everyone at day one. I haven't gotten any negative feedback or prejudice, but I guess not everyone is as lucky as I am.

Try to figure out what works for you, and try to communicate clearly, and you'll probably be fine.

Commenter_13

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Open office is terrible. For NT folk it can be harsh, for ADHD its killer. Ive used headphones. I took my laptop to other places, sometimes outside to try focus on work.

Commenter_14

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I used to find weird quiet corners to "set up shop" in. I got away with it because I worked with scientists who were often not at *their* desks, though. And it was a research facility not an office so those existed. But it was the ONLY way I could concentrate long enough to do longer tasks. I'd sit at my desk to do emails or before/between meetings when I'm not going to concentrate anyway, so I wasn't *always* away from my desk to compensate.

I did ask to be moved away from the break/printer area though so fewer people would walk by my desk. That helped, too!

Commenter_15

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

When I worked in an open office, I wished to be in a cubicle. Now that I'm in a cubicle, I realized the grass isn't greener. First, it's just as noisy and I still need my headphones. Second, the cubicles block off the natural light from the windows which really affect my mood.

Neither one is ideal. I'd like my own office with a window to the outside but I'm probably asking for too much.

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I work a remote job, but my first two weeks I was in and out of the central office (about a 2hr drive...blech!). They have an open office layout and I hated it. The programmers and QA were all together in one big office and unfortunately at the time the QA department was full of college interns who hadn't learned how to work quietly yet. Headphones helped, but shy of risking ear damage, I couldn't make them loud enough. It was kind of funny how quickly a sane-volume conversation between two people snowballed into a shouting match between 5+ people.

Thankfully I work from home full-time now and even with having spent the last 8months with twin infants in the next room, it's more quiet than it was in the office. That being said, I think I'd be more productive if I had a few (mostly quiet) people to work with.