

The site office – an exploration into how temporary workspaces can be designed to maximise productivity and wellbeing

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Previous research has shown that well-designed workplaces enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. However, in the construction industry, temporary office facilities provided during construction often follow a one-size-fits-all, cost-driven approach that neglects user's evolving needs. Users, typically knowledge workers such as engineers and managers, must balance collaboration with focused work as their roles increasingly shift towards a technology-driven environment.

This study investigates the relationship between leadership priorities in providing temporary office facilities on active construction projects and the experiences of the users operating in these facilities. Six key leaders from three similar projects, each featuring comparable temporary office facilities, were interviewed. Additionally, 128 office users across the three projects were surveyed using the Building Use Studies methodology.

Thematic analysis of the interviews and survey responses revealed three major themes: (1) the working environment matters – the results highlight the importance of internet data supply, meeting rooms, and environmental conditions; (2) background noise and the effect of distractions, the ability to focus, and the importance of collaboration; (3) lack of control – analysis reveals how the leadership defines the facility, how typical standards constrain it, and users’ resignation to their environment.

The findings advance knowledge in the under-explored field of temporary office supply. The study reveals that although the project leadership team recognise the importance of creating efficient, diverse spaces that offer users various work environments, they are often limited by traditional practices and budget constraints. Improving the process by which the facilities are specified could significantly enhance user satisfaction and productivity.