Managing Noise: Hear, be heard and focus
Survey Results - Global

Influencer/Press presentation
October 2017
Executive Summary

Managing Noise: Hear, be heard and focus is about the challenges of working in an open office environment.

Plantronics surveyed 2,184 professionals from a variety of industries and seven different countries* about the effects of noise in the workplace. Each employee works in an open-space office of more than 500 employees, and works from there at least once a week. The results were consistent around the world. Noise creates distraction. And distraction undermines employee productivity, customer satisfaction and business performance.

*Australia, China, France, Germany, Sweden, UK and the US
Key Takeaways

- The primary cause of noise in the workplace is the increasing number of employees per square footage of office space
- 55% of respondents are disrupted by noise multiple times a day
- 36% of employees have been complained to about the noise they create that disturbs those around them
- Biggest challenge of noise in the workplace is an inability to focus
- 94% believe they would be more productive in a less noisy environment
- Loud talking on the phone is by far the largest noise complaint at 29%
- 29% of respondents go to a quieter area in their company when it gets too noisy at their desk
- 34% of companies provide guidelines to help address noise issues
- Over a third of people surveyed said customers complain about the noise they hear from the other end of the call
- 70% work for a company that has taken no action to remedy the noise problem
- 77% of employees surveyed would prefer to work in a more traditional workspace with high walled cubicles or offices
More employees in the office and on calls are the main causes of noise

Q: What is the primary cause of noise in your workplace? (Overall)

- Increasing number of employees per square footage of office space: 33%
- More employees on calls in the office space: 31%
- Fewer private offices and more open spaces for collaboration: 24%
- Building modifications using materials that do not absorb sound well (glass, concrete, etc.): 11%
Inability to focus; top challenge of noise for open office workers

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge of noise in your workplace? (Overall)

- Unable to focus: 48%
- Trouble listening or being heard on calls: 27%
- Privacy (employees overhearing conversations): 19%
- Appearing unprofessional to customers/clients: 3%
- Loss of time: 2%
55% of respondents report having to take steps to mitigate noise multiple times per day

Q: How often do you have to take steps to mitigate noise? (Overall)

- Multiple times a day: 55%
- Once a day: 28%
- Once a week: 12%
- Once a month (almost never): 6%
The majority of respondents manage noise by finding quieter places to work or using headphones

Q: What do you do to manage noise in your workplace? Which of the following, if anything, do you do in order to shut off/reduce ambient noise while working? (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I avoid core hours and work (e.g. early in the morning or late in the day)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I leave my area and go to a quieter place outside of my company/organization</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use hearing protection earplugs (e.g., foam earplugs)</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use active noise-canceling headphones</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use headphones to listen to music or use other multimedia (e.g., YouTube)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I leave my area and go to a quieter place within my company/organization</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unwanted noise is a disruptive force
On a scale of 1-5, how distracting do you find the noise in your environment, with 5 being extremely distracting? (Median)

1 – Not distracting

3.67

5 – Extremely distracting
94% of respondents believe they would be more productive in a less noisy environment

Q: Do you believe you would be more productive in a less noisy environment? (Overall)
The majority of respondents say the companies they work for have not taken any action to help with noise.

Q: Has your company taken any action to remedy the noisy environment? (Overall)

- Yes: 30%
- No: 70%
Companies have varying tactics in remedying noise

Q: What has your company done to remedy noise? (Overall)

- Installed soundprooﬁng materials (acoustic ceiling tiles, absorptive fabrics, etc.): 19%
- Provided headsets to block noise: 18%
- Offered up smaller conference/huddle rooms for privacy: 18%
- Implemented recommendations or policies: 15%
- Allowed employees to work from home or remotely: 14%
- Spaced employees farther apart: 11%
- Installed a soundmasking system: 4%
Loud talking ranks as most annoying noise heard in the open office

Q: What are the most annoying noises you hear? (Overall)

- Loud talking while employees are on calls: 29%
- Coworkers conversing in front of your desk or workspace: 23%
- Mobile phone alerts: 13%
- Personal calls: 11%
- Sniffling/coughing: 9%
- Loud keyboards/loud typing: 8%
- Sound of employees eating: 5%
Over a third of respondents report customers being able to hear office noise on their end of the line

Q: Have your customers ever complained to you about noise they could hear from your end of the call? (Overall)

- Yes: 39%
- No: 61%
People talking makes up for over half of what customers hear on their end

Q: What could they hear in your background? (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Noise Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other employees talking but unable to understand what is being said</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other employees talking clearly</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General noise</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background noise from a public space (e.g., café or airport lounge)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typing</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
34% of respondents report their company providing best practices in addressing noise issues

Q: Does your company provide guidelines or best practices to address noise issues in the office? (Overall)

- Yes: 34%
- No: 66%
36% of respondents report having created distracting noise themselves

Q: Have employees ever complained that you create distracting noise during the workday?
(Overall)

- Yes: 36%
- No: 64%
The majority of respondents report preferring to work in a more traditional workspace

Q: Would you prefer to work in a more traditional workspace with high walled cubicles or offices?

(Overall)

- Yes: 77%
- No: 23%
Thank You