Alternative Office Arrangements

Sometimes building a new headquarters is especially difficult. When a company, for instance a global 1,000-person professional learning platform, is in the middle of a pivot, the management oftentimes feels the new office could help define the the firm's future, but more often than not the options are unexciting. Usually the choice is narrowed down to traditional private offices and cubicles, which are unimaginative and restrictive. The other tends to be an open office plan, which used to be the shiny new toy in office design 15 years ago, but a growing body of evidence suggests it decreases productivity and weakens job performance. Instead, what might be done is designing a new corporate headquarters around a new paradigm, neither open nor full of private offices. An idea introduced by architect Clive Wilkinson, called activity-based working (ABW), is based on the assumption that people should work in the type of space that supports the work they're actually doing, and that might change many times throughout a day.

Here's why ABW suits modern companies particularly well.

1. DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORK DEMAND DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS
No one has an assigned desk or office, the CEO included. The idea, again, is that one kind of workspace, more specifically one desk in one location, does not suit all types of work equally. Rather, the design offers an array of options that people can use for different projects throughout the day, such as a large open space surrounded by private meeting rooms of different sizes or so called "neighbourhoods" where people can work with their teams. Each contains team tables with individual workstations, enclosed glass meeting pods, chairs of different shapes and sizes, and adjustable standing desks.

2. PEOPLE KNOW WHAT STYLE IS BEST FOR THEM
Some people excel in energetic environments filled with interactions. Some work best alone. Others only need a computer, and some spread out with papers. Everyone at an ABW has the freedom to decide how and where to work. Each morning private items are picked up from private lockers and working spots are chosen. Staff move around depending on the work that arises. There's plenty of private space for confidential calls or reflection. At the end of the day, stuff goes back into the lockers. Yes, personal desks are given up, but the whole office is gained. Trust and empowerment were the corner stone of the design process. Early on a design committee is usually formed with representatives from each business unit and different areas of expertise. They work closely with the designers. Their input makes for a better office and their buy-in makes for a smoother transition. Surveys validate the benefits of this approach: two-thirds of employees questioned report using multiple workspaces, and 91% say they're excited about the flexibility ABW affords.

3. TECHNOLOGY IS KEY AND MUST BE AT THE CORE OF THE PLAN
Landlines or desktop computers have been rendered obsolete in the ABW model. Everyone uses laptops that dock at screens wherever a person is currently working. The physical telephone has been replaced with software phones that run on laptops with headsets. Thus, technology allows staff to be flexible and mobile throughout the office. There might be adjustment issues, for instance meeting room technology needs to be seamless and isn't.

Adapted from www.fastcompany.com

Ex. 1 Find the words or expressions in the text which mean the following:

1) the main building of a company: _____

2) a turning point: _____

3) a square area separated by walls where office staff work: _____

4) a pattern or a model: _____

5) an opinion which is the basis of other opinions: _____

6) to be appropriate for some purpose: _____

7) a place where you can safely store your stuff: _____

8) the most important aspect of sth: _____

9) contribution: _____

10) to confirm that sth is correct: _____

11) right now: _____

12) without any problems: _____

Ex. 2 **Match the expressions from the two columns into logical collocations:**

1) to narrow	spot
2) an open	down a choice
3) to weaken	in an energetic environment
4) an array	obsolete
5) to excel	issues
6) a working	expertise
7) at the end	office plan
8) an area of	of the day
9) sth is rendered	of options
10) adjustment	job performance

Ex. 3 **Provide English equivalents of these expressions:**

1) nierzadko	7) łagodne przejście
2) ciekawostka	8) podejście do czegoś
3) przypisać coś	9) elastyczność
4) regulowany	10) kluczowy
5) pracownicy	11) telefon stacjonarny
6) poufny	12) stanowisko pracy

Grammar corner…

You may already know that in English it's enough to use a word as a verb for it to become one. For instance, *a petition* can be used as a verb in a phrase like *to petition the court for sth*, which means to officially ask the court for sth. In other cases, though, we need to make certain changes to turn a word into a verb, like for example in the phrase from the text *to weaken job performance*. Typical verb endings, apart from -en, include: -ify, -ize or -ate.

Ex. 4 Fill in the blanks with an appropriate VERB form of the words in brackets. Use the typical verb endings discussed in the grammar corner.

1) We need to … (INTENSE) our efforts, otherwise the competition will be ahead of us.

2) This report … (SUMMARY) the strategies taken last year to increase competitiveness.

3) In order to … (MINIMAL) the risk of failure, we must consider all possible scenarios.

4) Next year we will be … (CELEBRATION) the 10th anniversary of our company being listed on the stock exchange.

5) Many pharmaceutical companies … (CREATION) demand for their products by telling people they are sick.

6) Many analysts believed that the iPhone 5C would … (CANNIBAL) the sales of the newly released iPhone 5S.

7) Social media and the Internet made it necessary to … (SUPERVISION) workers' online activity to make sure they spend time at work productively and not, for example, on Facebook.

8) At some point of any company's growth, the founders must accept the need to … (DELEGATION) responsibilities, as it is impossible for them to be on top of every aspect of the operations.

GLOSSARY	
the headquarters	siedziba
a pivot	punkt zwrotny
a cubicle	„boks" to pracy w biurze
a paradigm	paradygmat
an assumption	założenie
the corner stone of sth	główny element czegoś
to suit sth	pasować do czegoś
a locker	szafka (np. na rzeczy)
input	wkład
to validate sth	potwierdzić coś
currently	obecnie
seamless	bezproblemowy
to narrow down a choice	zawęzić wybór
to weaken job performance	osłabić osiągane wyniki
an array of options	szereg możliwości
to excel in sth	celować w czymś
at the end of the day	w ostatecznym rozrachunku
an area of expertise	obszar, w którym ktoś się specjalizuje
sth is rendered obsolete	coś odchodzi to lamusa
adjustment issues	problemy z przystosowaniem się
oftentimes	nierzadko
a shiny new toy	ciekawostka
to assign sth to sb	przypisać coś komuś
adjustable	regulowany
staff	pracownicy
confidential	poufny
smooth transition	łagodne przejście
an approach to sth	podejście do czegoś

flexibility	elastyczność
a landline	telefon stacjonarny
a workstation	stanowisko pracy
enclosed	zamknięty
a pod	siedlisko, stanowisko
a petition	wniosek, petycja
efforts	starania
an anniversary	rocznica
to be listed on the stock exchange	być notowanym na giełdzie
to be on top of things	kontrolować wszystko

ANSWER KEY:

Ex. 1

1) a headquarters

2) a pivot

3) a cubicle

4) a paradigm

5) an assumption

6) to suit sth

7) a locker

8) the corner stone of sth

9) input

10) to validate sth

11) currently

12) seamless

Ex. 2

1) to narrow down a choice

2) an open office plan

3) to weaken job performance

4) an array of options

5) to excel in an energetic environment

6) a working spot

7) at the end of the day

8) an area of expertise

9) sth is rendered obsolete

10) adjustment issues

Ex. 3

1) oftentimes

2) a shiny new toy

3) to assign sth

4) adjustable

5) staff

6) confidential

7) smooth transition

8) an approach to sth

9) flexibility

10) key

11) a landline

12) a workstation

Ex. 4

1) intensify

2) summarizes

3) minimize

4) celebrating

5) create

6) cannibalize

7) supervise

8) delegate