

Knoll Workplace Research

Magnet Space

Space that Attracts Users

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Introduction

Collaboration between individuals is commonly viewed as the critical link to innovation, and encouraging collaboration fosters innovation. Today, companies are faced with a challenge: what is the right kind of collaborative space for their team? What is the key to channeling the collective wisdom of a group into productive output for company growth? Knoll has conducted extensive research in an effort to determine what types of collaborative space – “magnet space” – are appropriate. Though many factors will influence the effectiveness of collaboration—such as corporate culture, technology and the facility itself—the physical appeal of the environment is of utmost importance. This report presents key findings on four collaborative zones and identifies their common features.

The Settings

In the 1990s, collaborative environments were often comprised of little more than a remote circle of upholstered tablet arm chairs. This type of setting was typically located far from potential users and was not sensitive to the culture of the workforce. In practice, it was disconnected from the real needs of the collaborative group, and often sat vacant.

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The ability of individuals to work together is greatly enhanced when collaborative zones are well defined and responsive to the culture of an organization. Knoll has defined four distinct settings that support the varied nature of group work today: **Impromptu Open Plan Team Space**, **Think Space**, **Strategy Room**, and **Communication Space**.

Knoll has found that defining a range of collaborative zones provides the foundation for organizations looking to support the full spectrum of group interaction. Providing a healthy mix of these spaces is key, as is ease of access and proximity to its users. However, knowing when and where to locate these magnet spaces can be a challenge, and finding the right balance will depend on many factors, including project location and layout, density and the nature of the work taking place. Variety of space yields a variety of interactions, which can make collaboration more productive.

When talking about collaborative space, it is important to identify three common “work modes.” Most people tend to work while sitting down erect, sitting down relaxed or standing. The formal seated position with erect seat back and conventional table height provides the most formal exchange. The standing-height table with adjacent stools provides the right setting for the quick exchange, but tools must be available to capture the ideas shared. The low table, or a table at continental height (approximately 22-24") supports work in a more casual lounge setting. In this environment, seating has a more relaxed rake to the back and is set lower to create a more casual collaborative space.

Impromptu Open Plan Team Space

This collaborative area supports the type of activity that occurs daily and spontaneously. Activities typically occur away from the dedicated work area and usually involve 2-4 people. The nature of these meetings involves project updates or the quick sharing of ideas, and the space provides the opportunity to take a conversation further.

This environment provides space for a variety of encounters, including inter-generational teamwork, a key component of a co-generational workforce. This model is also ideal for reinforcing “team spirit.” The group takes a sense of pride in the expression that occurs in this area.

- ▶ **Activities:** Team meetings, casual collision space, respite from the desk
- ▶ **Key Attributes:**
 - ▶ Accessibility (the space is woven into the planning model)
 - ▶ Modularity (furniture can be reconfigured)
 - ▶ Performance surfaces (for supporting food, beverages, laptops, binders, work materials, etc.)
 - ▶ Formal or casual appearance (depending on the group)

Think Space

A think space is a slightly more focused setting that accommodates 2-4 people. Typically, think spaces are rooms that require no reservation and are seamlessly woven into the planning model of the workplace. Furnishings may be more lounge-like and the materials more comforting. Visual connectivity to workers outside the think space is less important, but proximity to them is essential. These rooms should be seamlessly integrated and accessible to the workplace.

- ▶ **Activities:** Impromptu or scheduled intimate meetings, intense problem solving, mentoring and information sharing, confidential calls, quiet thinking activities, human resources meetings
- ▶ **Key Attributes:**
 - ▶ Enclosed space (this space is removed from the open plan)
 - ▶ Intimate (the room is not excessively large)
 - ▶ Controlled lighting (lights can be turn on/off or dimmed to create a “mood”)
 - ▶ Comfortable (furnishings can be lounge-like)

Strategy Room

This setting usually accommodates 4-8 people and is an enclosed room. Because the room size usually does not support reconfiguration, the furniture is stationary.

Transparency is usually in the form of a glass partition that connects the group activity to the rest of the workplace. Seating should be comfortable and not too formal. Space should contain a “nourishment center”: a surface or area with space for food, beverages, laptops, binders and work materials in various heights (20" / 30" / 42").

- ▶ **Activities:** Scheduled and non-scheduled work sessions, conference calls, interviews, staff reviews, one-on-one confidential discussions, small staff meetings
- ▶ **Key Attributes:**
 - ▶ Access to power (power outlets are readily accessible)
 - ▶ Presentation wall space (an empty wall or drop-down screen is present)
 - ▶ Audio or video conferencing (the room is configured for conferencing)
 - ▶ Wi-fi enabled (wireless Internet/network access is available)

Viewing / Communication Space

This team space accommodates 10-24 individuals, supporting activities such as interactive work sessions, critiques or discussions of works in progress. It supports the group consumption of various media and has the ability to expand or contract: it can scale to support 10-24 people with a mix of furniture—from ottomans to bench seating and/or mobile chairs.

This environment should be visible from within the open office for ease of access. It must be cleared and made immediately available after each use. Furniture components should be configurable with the media wall, which can include a large whiteboard, projection area, tackable surface or flat screen display. Mobile components allow for individual group configuration, with 20" high worksurfaces for laptop and work materials. Seating is casual and comfortable and can include upholstered benches, large ottomans or upholstered platforms.

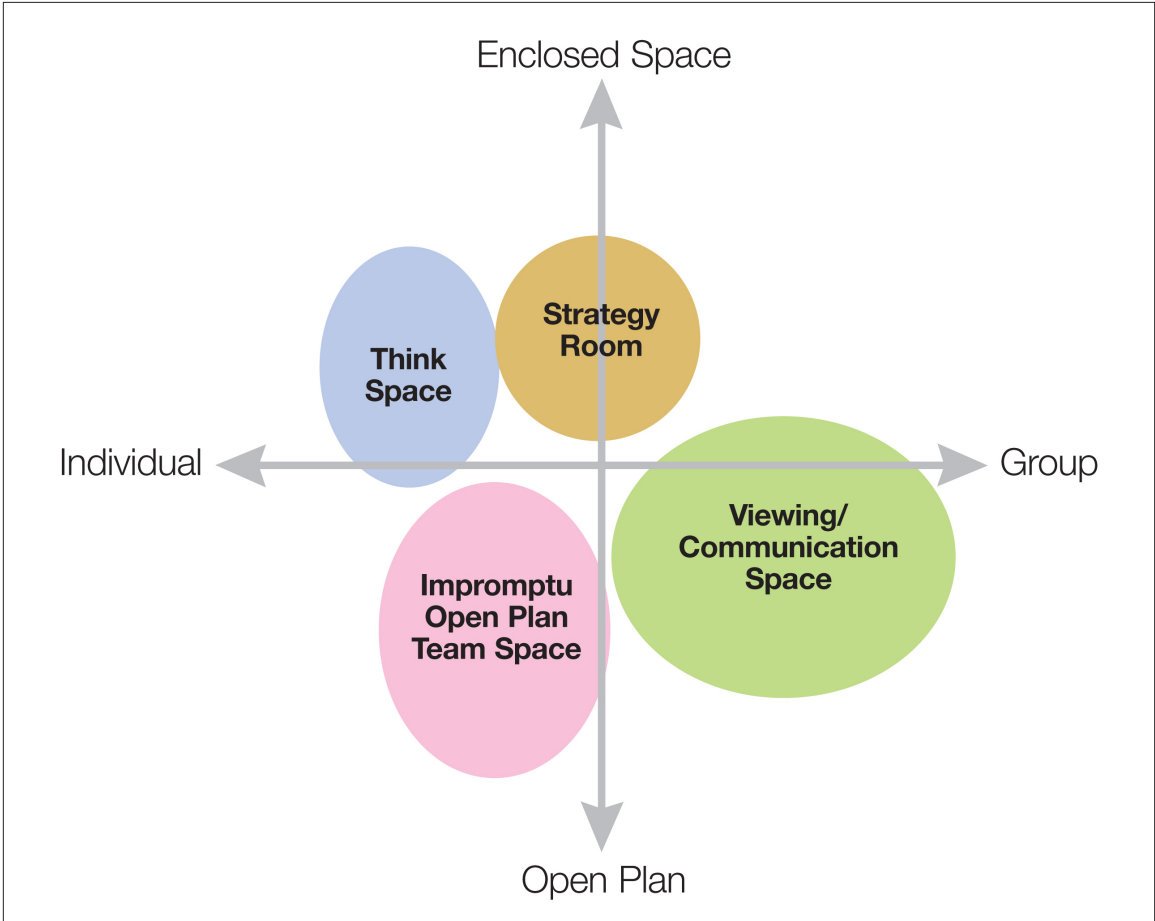
- ▶ **Activities:** Information/media presentation for group consumption and discussion
- ▶ **Key Attributes:**
 - ▶ Easy access (this space is close to all work areas)
 - ▶ Plasma screen, projection wall or large whiteboard surface (a media wall enables the presentation of ideas to a large group)
 - ▶ Re-configurable furniture (furnishings can be re-arranged to provide space for more users or for different uses)
 - ▶ Wi-fi enabled (wireless Internet/network access is available)

Considerations

Magnet space should be layered into the planning process, providing the alternative settings that dynamic workers seek in today's workplace. and supporting the collaboration that organizations are increasingly equating with innovation.

Magnet space comes in different shapes and sizes, depending on its purpose. Whether in need of a place for one-on-one mentoring, focused concentration, rough-and-tumble problem solving or large group interactions, organizations can create magnet spaces to suit their needs.

Magnet space attracts users; collaboration fosters innovation.



Magnet Space. Defining a range of collaborative zones provides the foundation for organizations looking to support the full spectrum of group interaction. Knoll has indentified four distinct settings that support the varied nature of group work today.