

Upfront

NEWS

Workrite 'Family' Devastated by California Fires

SEVERAL WORKRITE EMPLOYEES LOST THEIR HOMES. LUCKILY, NONE OF THOSE EMPLOYEES HAD LOST THEIR LIVES. PAGE 12

vitra.com

VITRA Opens Pop-up Shops to Celebrate Versatility of Eames Plastic Shell Chairs

This fall Vitra will open two “pop-up” stores in Zurich, Switzerland and Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The stores will celebrate the versatility of the iconic Eames Plastic Chair designed by Charles and Ray Eames.



Signs your office is hurting your productivity and mental well-being

Sometimes the work day drags, even in a job you love. Figuring out why can be a vexing problem. Did you take the wrong turn with that grad school decision? Maybe you have unrealistic expectations about the minute-to-minute excitement level of a job? Or maybe it's literally something in the air, like too much carbon dioxide.

The personal insights you alone can probe, but we can help you think through that last possibility, and several other environmental culprits that may be to blame when you're feeling “meh” and distracted at the office. Maybe the problem is...

The building you work in is wobbling or swaying, even if you don't notice it
work.qz.com

BIG NUMBER

64 PERCENT

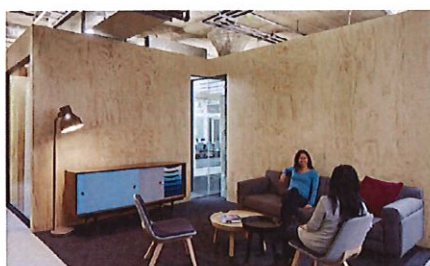
Nearly two thirds (64 percent) of senior executives say their offices are still structured on a traditional departmental basis, despite the fact that the majority of those polled in a recent survey (94 percent) believe project efficiency could increase significantly if they simply re-arranged their office seating plans to promote cross-departmental collaboration between team members.



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As a leader in commercial real estate services and investment management, JLL Pittsburgh knew that an innovative, high-performance workplace could contribute to their continued success. “Our rapid growth – increasing from 50 to more than 450 employees in just eight years – forced a ‘make do for now’ approach,” says JC Pelusi, regional managing director.
steelcase.com



Attract more clients with a beautifully designed office space

Variety is indeed the spice of life, and nowhere is that more evident than in the modern office environment. Whereas workers were once tethered to spaces that held their computers, today's technology seamlessly bridges distances and other physical limitations to make seemingly far-fetched designs a reality. And who knows? A tantalizingly impressive design may earn you a few extra clients as well.

Do your visiting clients see a fully engaged staff occupying beautifully designed work and conference spaces, or tired old offices and inefficient cubicles with distracted workers? A rigid approach to office design is moving aside to make room for more creative activities and the human connections that lead to greater personal and organizational success in all types of businesses. Architects are leading the movement to embrace more flexible workspace designs.

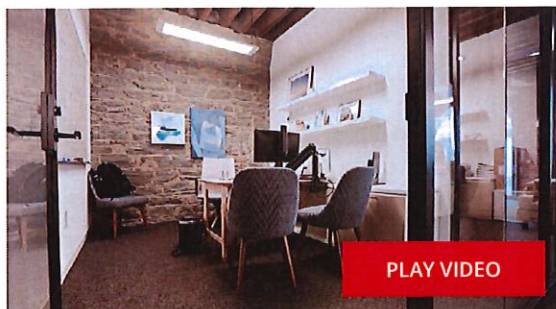
Studies point to declining enthusiasm among workers for their jobs, across all industries. In response, architects are creating workspace designs that foster innovation, provide readily available places for collaboration, and offer distraction-free hubs for independent activities. Even more impressive, all of that is taking place in less space than ever before. In today's human-focused workspaces, space planning has changed radically; there is no one solution. Instead, architects are pushing aside the outdated concept of corner offices with windows for management and a mass of centrally located stations for everyone else.
topicarchitecture.com

Open Office Designs Can Be Stressful And Disruptive

Efforts to increase workplace productivity have changed office design dramatically in the last twenty years. In up to 70% of offices, open plan office designs have replaced the cubicles of yesteryear. Desk areas are often shared. Co-working lounges with off-beat furniture are supposed to foster collaboration and productivity. While open-plan office designs may reduce clutter and make conversation easier, they don't necessarily increase workplace productivity.

Studies have shown that such office design “improvements” have actually reduced productivity. A leading furniture manufacturer reported 85% of employees are dissatisfied with the level of privacy in the workplace. Instead of collaborating, employees wear headphones all day and take work home to get things done.
benharoffice.com

WATCH: WEST ELM IS WHERE EMPLOYEES FEEL AT HOME



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Workrite Ergo Family Relief Fund



Workrite 'Family' Devastated by California Fires

WORKRITE WAS CLOSED LAST MONDAY, THE SMOKE SO CHOKINGLY THICK THAT IT MADE WORK AT THE FACTORY IMPOSSIBLE. ON TUESDAY, ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF THE COMPANY'S WORKFORCE — MANY OF WHOM LIVE NORTH OF PETALUMA AND WERE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE FIRE — MADE IT IN. BY LAST WEDNESDAY, THE SITUATION WAS DIRE. ONE OF THE FIRES WAS WITHIN FIVE MILES OF PETALUMA AND WORKRITE'S PLANT AND HEADQUARTERS.

STORY BY ROB KIRKBRIDE

It was a warm and windy Sunday in Sonoma County and Napa Valley, California, on Oct. 8., though no one there thought much of it. But sometime during that night, a power line was downed by the wind and set the forest ablaze. Driven by the high winds and fire, at about 2 a.m. the next morning hot embers blew over the mountains there and landed in the highly populated area of Santa Rosa, California, destroying an entire neighborhood before firefighters could even react.

Charlie Lawrence heard about a fire in Santa Rosa, about a half hour drive north of the home of Workrite Ergonomics in Peta-

luma. It's not unusual to experience wildfires in California, but it is somewhat rare that they find their way into the North Bay wine country and definitely odd to hit populated areas. The fires tend to burn in the mountains and sparsely populated areas of the state.

By Monday, the fires were burning out of control. Several Workrite employees lost their homes. Luckily, none of those employees lost their lives. The speed and ferocity of the fires shocked the president of Workrite Ergonomics and everyone else in California, and by the end of last week, he didn't know if the company's factory would be

standing at the end of the weekend. This was more than just a jolt to Workrite's operations. It directly affected the team.

Workrite was closed Oct. 9, the smoke so chokingly thick that Monday it made work at the factory impossible. On Tuesday, about 40 percent of the company's workforce — many of whom live north of Petaluma and were directly affected by the fire — made it in.

By Wednesday, the situation was dire. One of the fires was within five miles of Petaluma and Workrite's plant and headquarters. Five miles might not seem that close — until you consider wildfires can move 6 miles per

WHAT DOES INNOVATION MEAN TO YOU?

FOR 9 MONTHS, LOGICDATA HAS SPONSORED A MONTHLY SERIES OF ARTICLES EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE IN PRODUCT DESIGN. **FOR THE NOVEMBER ARTICLE, WE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE STATE OF INNOVATION IN OUR INDUSTRY.**

We want to crowdsource a perspective, **but we need your help.**

By clicking on the hotlink below, you can answer a couple of questions to help us develop a community view about how well we are innovating in product design and development. We prefer your personal thoughts to corporate-speak, although the community of businesses deserves a voice as well.

If you choose not to take the survey but have thoughts to share, or if you have other thoughts you would like to share, you can do so either in confidence or openly (please let me know which) by emailing me at: dgregorymi@gmail.com

Please take a moment, take the survey or drop me a note, but please make your voice heard. We want those of you who carry the bag, crunch numbers, design and engineer, lead teams, buy what we sell, and who are trying to respond to end customers to be a part of this. **We need to hear your voice. Thank you.**

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hour in forests and 14 miles per hour in grasslands.

Lawrence planned for the unthinkable — what would the company do if the fires moved toward Petaluma? “I sat down with the leadership team and started making plans for an evacuation,” he says. “We planned to get all our servers out of the building, and we contacted all our suppliers. We started looking for containers and trucks to start moving inventory and looked at third-party warehousing. It was a flurry of activity.”

The leadership team believed they could get the computers and servers off site quickly, but moving \$15 million in inventory on short notice would be nearly impossible, especially given the

speed of the fire and already short supply of trucks and drivers in the area. “That was our biggest fear,” Lawrence says.

At least two Workrite employees lost their homes to the fire. Another 10 employees remain evacuated and have no idea if their homes are standing or not.

There were 14 different fires raging within a 100-mile radius of Petaluma. Several blended together and became massive fires. The first two or three days of the fire, there was no actual firefighting happening, Lawrence

says. The entire effort of the fire department was on evacuation and rescue for those first three days, which is one of the reasons the fire continued to burn out of control. By midweek firefighters and police had everyone evacuated and were ready to fight the fire. Lawrence and the Workrite team watched as the Petaluma Municipal Airport was used as a staging area for helicopters with huge buckets that were dipped into lakes and used to carry water to the fire. Massive 747 jets equipped with tanks filled with fire retardant swooped over the mountains trying to contain the blaze.

Lawrence compared living through a wildfire to living through a hurricane. You know it

is coming, but you don't know exactly when and where it will hit.

The company closely watched the fire on Thursday and though Friday the 13th is supposed to be unlucky, Petaluma caught a break. The fire was being contained and moving in a different direction. The emergency evacuation plan would not have to be put in place. "I'm not a native Californian so this has been a surreal experience for me," Lawrence says. "When you grow up on the East Coast like I did, these wildfires are just something you see on TV. Wildfires are largely a way of life out here, but a lot of times, they are in remote areas or out in the mountains. What made this different is that it hit heavily

populated areas, wooded areas and vineyards."

The company started a GoFundMe page to help employees affected by the fires and fellow employees, dealers, reps and others in the industry have already donated more than \$20,000.

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Everyone has been affected in some way.

By Friday, about 90 percent of the Workrite workforce was back on the job. To get back on track from the lost time earlier in the week, the company asked for volunteers to work Saturday. Lawrence was surprised to find many volunteered to come in over the weekend. "It's interesting but I think people found comfort in coming to work," he says, "especially when so many in Santa Rosa weren't so lucky."

The company not only came to work, they came together. Senior Director of Marketing and Product Management Ruby Schaefer brought a griddle to the office on Saturday and cooked every-

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one pancake for breakfast. The company started a GoFundMe page to help employees affected by the fires and fellow employees, dealers, reps and others in the industry have already donated more than \$20,000 (not counting what the company plans to add to the fund). It will take years for the community to fully recover, Lawrence predicts.

The fire has already destroyed more than 6,000 buildings and is the most devastating California fire in history. The wine industry in and around Santa Rosa is literally in ruins. For Workrite, most of the danger seems to have passed, though the threat to its employees and their homes is not over yet.

Lawrence says the company family still has difficult days ahead as the damage is calculated, but it also grew closer through the difficult situation.

“As a company, we got lucky. It missed Petaluma when the wind shifted directions, but you feel guilty about being so fortunate when you know another community is not,” Lawrence says, noting Workrite started this week almost back on track after working over the weekend to make up for the fire delays.

Lawrence says the company family still has difficult days ahead as the damage is calculated, but it also grew closer through the difficult situation. One of the company’s product managers who was evacuated moved in with the Workrite’s director of marketing. Other employees moved in with each other. Some remain in shelters. “It feels like a family and that has helped all of us a great deal,” he says. “It really is kind of refreshing and encouraging to me about humanity to see this kind of embracing of each other and supporting one another. **BoF**

Those wishing to help Workrite employees affected by the North Bay wildfires can donate at <https://www.gofundme.com/Workriteergo>.



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