
WHY HEALTHY BUSINESS RELIES ON HEALTHY MINDS

The role of facilities management in workplace wellbeing

By Keith Chanter, CEO, EMCOR UK



Wellness in the workplace is becoming an increasing area of focus for employers. This is no surprise when you consider that according to the UK government's Health and Safety Executive website, 12.5 million working days were lost in 2016/17 due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety¹.

In essence, the pressures of modern life and the workplace has led to many UK workers struggling to 'switch off', which, according to The Guardian, can be seriously harmful to mental health². As highlighted by iNews, this has become a focus for employers as they seek to introduce new incentives, internal policies and initiatives designed to help address the impact of stress in the workplace³.

The design of the building

The design and layout of the office – and even the building itself – has a recognisable impact on employee mental health and wellbeing. According to research compiled by Mindspace in March 2018, 24% of surveyed employees who work at the same desk for five days per week feel tired, and 20% admitted to feeling stressed. Furthermore, the research also emphasised that an office plan that sustains mental health through inspiring employees is viewed with increasing importance to millennials. Indeed, 21% of surveyed millennials have rejected a potential employer due to poor and ‘uninspiring’ office designs.

So what specific aspects of facilities do employees believe will inspire them and support their mental health? According to the Wellness Together research, using feedback from 1000 UK offices conducted by Sapio Research in June 2017, 27% of employees surveyed were keen for breakout and collaborative spaces, and 43% were in favour of having access to a quiet private space when needed.

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Mindspace, March 2018

There are some relatively simple steps that can be taken. FMs can facilitate the creation of open office plans that provide colleagues with the freedom and flexibility to easily speak with each other in person, instead of forcing workers to communicate electronically for even the most basic correspondences. This allows collaboration and breakout sessions to become an integral part of work; EMCOR UK sees designs like this in shared or co-working spaces in particular. For quiet spaces, FMs can design and construct separated rooms that have access to a window for fresh air circulation and light, but also with soundproof panelling to help ensure privacy.

Another important element of office design that impacts mental health is lighting. According to a survey released by Lamp Shop Online in March 2018, 9.3% of employees surveyed said that the position of their workplace lighting created a ‘stressful environment.’ To prevent this unnecessary health concern, EMCOR UK is seeing a demand amongst our clients for effective lighting strategies that prevent poor lighting or excessive glare, and that can be catered specifically for each organisation’s requirements.



