

CS 428  
Peoppleware:  
Part II  
(chs 7-13)

Winter 2019

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# Ch 7: The Furniture Police

- ▶ “[Those making workplace decisions] are not themselves doing the kind of work that is likely to suffer from a poor environment.”
- ▶ Goals are focused on ease and flexibility of setting up the physical workspace, not on productivity of those who work there.
- ▶ Attitude: If everyone can't have a window, then no one can.
- ▶ “Almost without exception, the work space given to intellect workers is noisy, interruptive, un-private, and sterile.”
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

## Ch 8: "You never get anything done around here between 9 and 5"

- ▶ "...overtime is not so much a means to increase the *quantity* of work time as to improve its average *quality*."
  - ▶ Fewer interruptions/disturbances outside of regular work hours or at home
- ▶ Individual differences (best outperform worse by 10:1)
- ▶ Productivity non-factors: language, years of experience, defects, salary
- ▶ There is also a 10:1 difference in productivity among software organizations
  - ▶ Cf. "Dead Sea Effect"
- ▶ Top performers' space is quieter, more private, better protected from interruption, larger
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

# Ch 9: Saving Money on Space

- ▶ Cost-saving trend towards less privacy, less dedicated space, more noise
- ▶ But cost of work space is small fraction of cost of developer – false economy
- ▶ Claims of greater productivity & interaction for open space aren't supported
- ▶ Correlations between perceived noise level and defects in work
  - ▶ Zero-defect workers: 66% reported noise level ok
  - ▶ 1-or-more defects: 8% reported noise level ok
- ▶ Noise is generally proportional to workplace density
- ▶ Worker response is often to “hide out” where it's quieter
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

# Intermezzo: Productivity Measurement

- ▶ So, why isn't this all obvious and followed? Because of how few firms know how to or are willing to measure impact of environment on productivity
- ▶ But: "Given that there are 10:1 differences from one organization to another in productivity, you simply can't afford to remain ignorant of where you stand."
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

# Chapter 10: brain time vs body time

- ▶ During single-minded work time, people are ideally in “flow” state
  - ▶ Deep, nearly meditative involvement
  - ▶ Sense of euphoria
  - ▶ Unaware of passage of time
- ▶ It takes time to enter “flow” state, and interruptions force you to restart
  - ▶ Constant interruptions keep us in a state of “no-flow” and far less productive
- ▶ E-Factor: uninterrupted hours / body-present hours
  - ▶ Boss: “Can’t you do [your thinking] at home?”
- ▶ Observations and feedback?



# Chapter 11: The Telephone

- ▶ Chapter is a touch dated – younger generation has learned to ignore phones
- ▶ But now: various messaging feeds and apps, social media, e-mail, etc., can all interrupt our flow
- ▶ To achieve and preserve flow, we have to be willing to shut off these distractions
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

# Chapter 12: Bring back the door

- ▶ Like windows, doors are frequently a status symbol – and therefore, if everyone can't have no, nobody can have one
- ▶ Workers aren't inspired or made more productive because the (open) workplace has “fashionable” or “daring” or “amusing” design
- ▶ Piping music into an open workplace doesn't help either
- ▶ It's great to have “vital” space for spontaneous interaction w/others, but most IT production is solitary, flow-based intellectual work
- ▶ Observations and feedback?



# Chapter 13: Taking Umbrella Steps

- ▶ Christopher Alexander's *The Timeless Way of Building* and design pattern
  - ▶ Alexander on workspaces (pp. 82-83)
  - ▶ Cubicles are almost the direct opposite of what Alexander points out
- ▶ Tailored workspaces from a pattern
- ▶ Use of windows
- ▶ Indoor and outdoor space
- ▶ Public space
- ▶ "No two people have to have exactly the same work space."
- ▶ Observations and feedback?

# Assignments for next class (02/25)

- ▶ By midnight on Saturday (02/23)
  - ▶ Create your team's architecture & design document
  - ▶ Update prior deliverables (org chart, requirements, PERT/Gantt) as needed
  - ▶ Watch one podcast
  - ▶ Status report
- ▶ By start of next class period:
  - ▶ Peopleware, Part III (chapters 14-20)
  - ▶ Webster #5 (online)