OPEN SPACE. OPEN MIND.

COLLABORATION TRENDS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

HON.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND:

The HON Company (HON), a manufacturer and designer of office furniture, tasked an independent research firm with identifying workplace trends that impact the furniture needs of small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. Specifically, the report focused on how a collective emphasis on employee collaboration is impacting office furniture layout and furniture procurement. Accordingly, research was conducted employing a mixed-method approach, using both secondary and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with office managers, HR directors and workplace designers to inform HON's business objectives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. Collaboration, fueled by advancements in technology, is transforming the modern workplace, which is transitioning away from "cube farms" to a more open layout.
2. There is no uniform paradigm for office furniture and design. Though best practices exist for workplace design, the ideal furniture, layout and décor depend on the organization and employees.
3. Organizations are strategizing office design and furniture procurement to encourage and facilitate collaboration.

TREND 1:

OFFICES ARE ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION BY RECONFIGURING FURNITURE AND LAYOUTS

Open office environments encourage collaboration with adjustable layouts and furniture arrangements that can be reimagined based on function and necessity.

CUSTOMIZE & RECONFIGURE

Open layouts allow for customization. Employees can gather at multi-purpose tables or easily reconfigure furniture to create an efficient meeting space when and where it's needed, rather than relying on conference room scheduling and fixed, traditional conference table layouts.
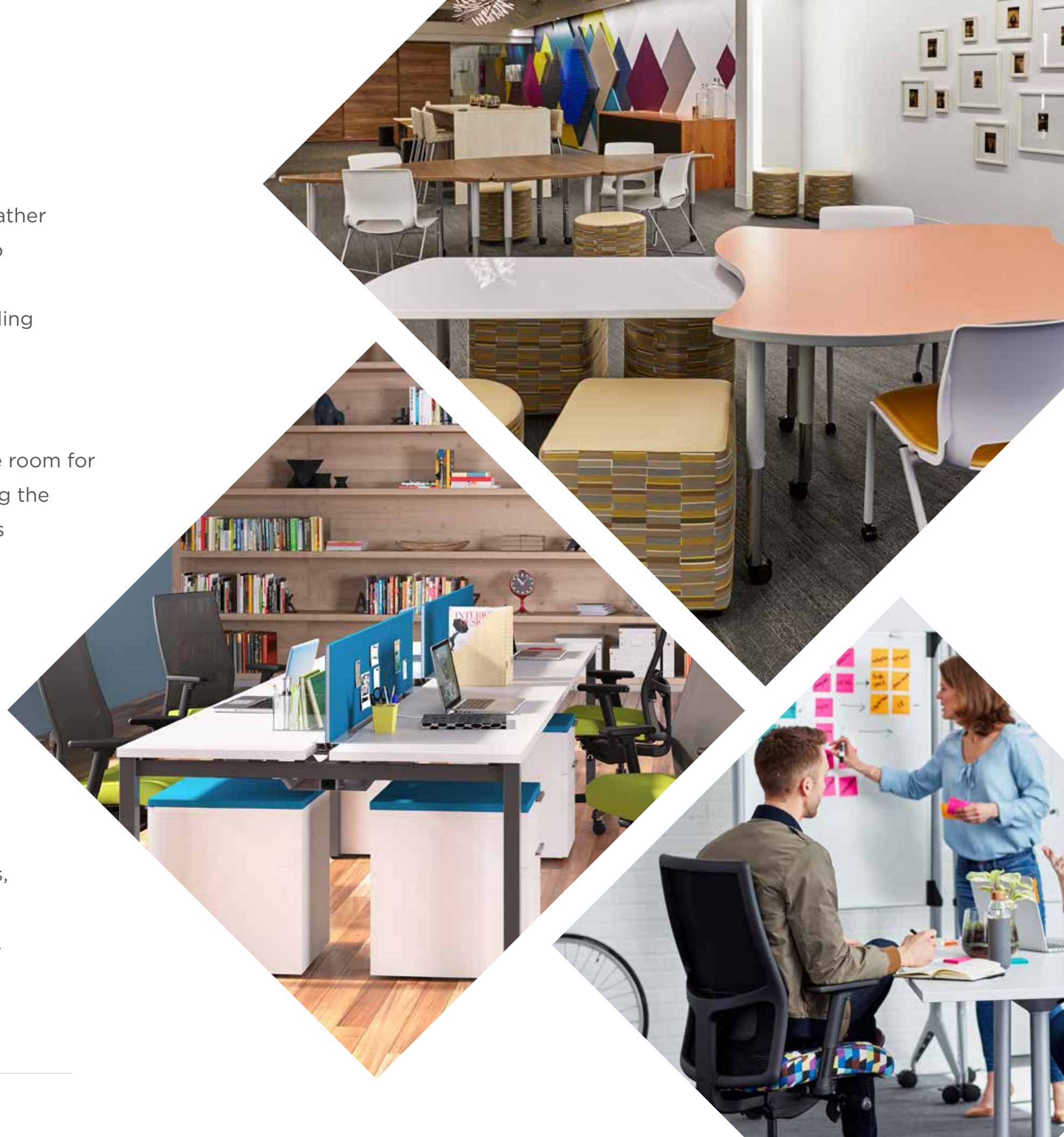
TABLES

"Since swapping the single large table in our conference room for several smaller, reconfigurable ones, employees are using the space much more often to work together, hold meetings and brainstorm." (HON-Sponsored Research, 2017)

SCREENS

A popular way to provide customization options and a sense of privacy is to use screens so employees can move barriers when and where they need them.

WHITEBOARDS

Many start-up companies are incorporating whiteboards, tables, chalk walls and other writing surfaces into their office designs to encourage collaboration and creativity.

TREND 2:

SMALL BUSINESSES ARE INVESTING IN FURNITURE THAT ENCOURAGES CONVERSATION

Research shows that common areas with casual, comfortable lounge seating, integrated work surfaces and moveable tables and chairs are gaining popularity among small businesses, start-up companies and millennials.

MEET THE CASUAL MEETING SPACE

COMFORTABLE SEATING

Couches and lounge chairs help set the tone for a collaborative office culture and create and comfortable, multi-purpose spaces where employees can meet, brainstorm, work and relax away from their assigned desks.
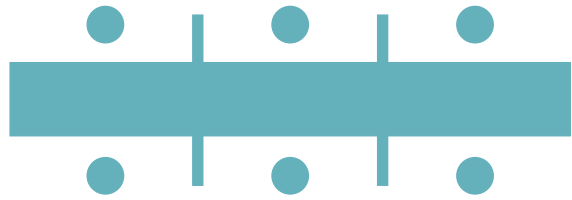
MULTI-PURPOSE TABLES

As an alternative to meeting rooms, small businesses are increasingly demanding touchdown tables that can serve as informal meeting spaces for employees to gather, brainstorm and work in common areas throughout the office.

OUTLETS EVERYWHERE

Today, more and more outlets, USB ports, and WiFi connectors are being integrated into office furniture solutions—such as multi-purpose tables, lounge chairs, stadium seating and conference rooms—to create increasingly convenient workspaces throughout the office.
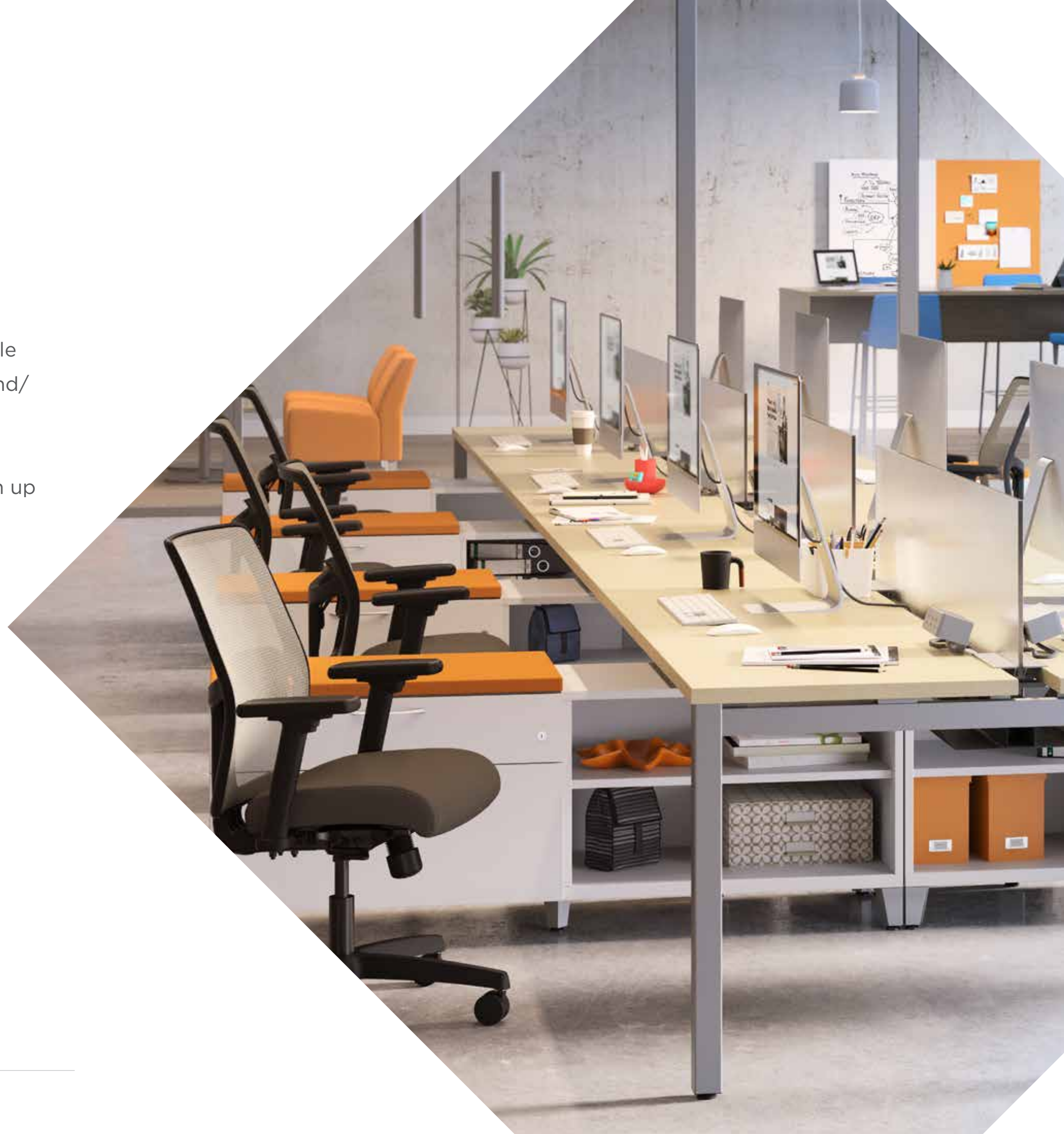
TRENDING NOW: BENCHING

Office **benches** are long tables that are set up as multiple desk stations, usually separated by storage pedestals and/or small barriers to denote separate workspaces.

Instead of dark, outdated cubicles, benching helps open up office spaces. It can be used as assigned or unassigned employee seating (also known as hoteling), as well as a surface for impromptu meetings and work sessions.

TALK THAT TALK

Many organizations believe that eliminating walls between employees encourages collaboration in multiple ways.

- The absence of walls makes communication more convenient, physically

- Benching layouts leave more space for other open collaboration and multi-purpose common areas around the office

REDUCE THE COST OF REAL ESTATE

According to research, most employees in modern office environments often need little more than a laptop or desktop computer to perform their jobs. By assigning employees to a benched workspace at a single table, organizations are able to reduce the cost of real estate per person.
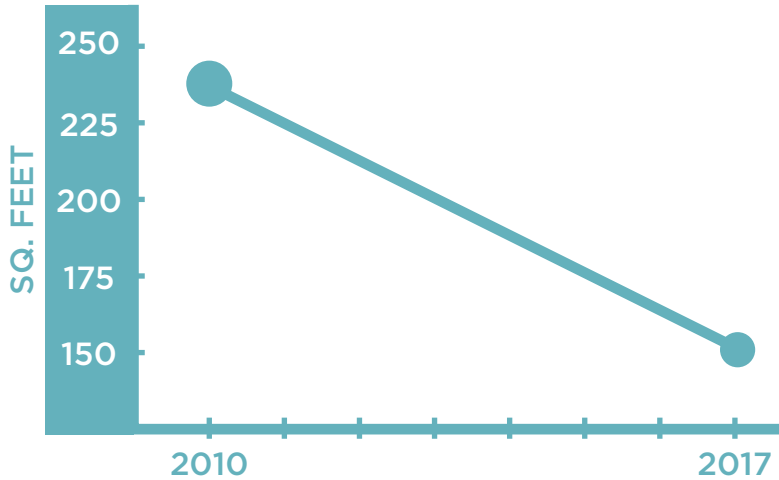
WORKSTATIONS ARE GETTING SMALLER

"I can't even remember the last time I sold an 8'x8' space. Ten years ago, we sold 8'x8's, 8'x6's and 7'x7's all the time. Now a 6'x6' seems big. Everything is smaller these days." HON-Sponsored Research, 2017

INCREASED USAGE OF FLAT-SCREEN MONITORS AND MOUNTING ARMS REDUCE THE NEED FOR A LARGE WORKSPACE.
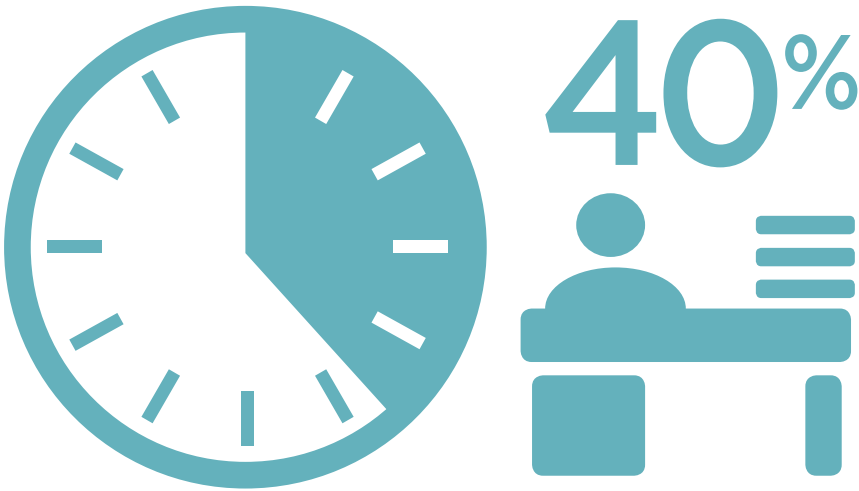
SQUARE FOOTAGE IS SHRINKING

Since 2010, the amount of usable office space per person has decreased from 200-250 square feet to 100-150 square feet in many start-up organizations.

SQ. FEET

250
225
200
175
150

2010   2017

Source: CoreNet Global

PEOPLE ARE SPENDING LESS TIME AT THEIR DESKS

Individual tasks have decreased to about 20% of the workday. In fact, employees today typically spend just 40% of their day sitting at their desks.
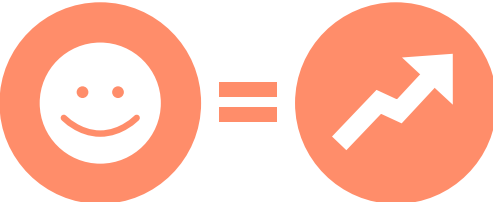
40%

Source: Gartner Group

TREND 3:

SMALL AND LARGE FIRMS ARE CREATING OFFICES WITH AN OPEN FEEL TO FACILITATE COLLABORATION

Research shows that physical openness encourages collaboration. Many companies want an open office feel to inspire collaboration and fuel creative thinking.

OFFICE ECOSYSTEMS

Research proves that employees are more productive when they have a variety of places or "ecosystems" to work in—private spaces for focused work, as well as open areas to relax and socialize between projects or during breaks.

OFFICE LAYOUT

Findings from the study show that many designers for small office spaces strategically plan their layouts to incorporate collaborative spaces such as lounges, meeting rooms and huddle rooms. Many of today's companies are using less space for archival storage which frees up room for more collaborative areas.

LESS WALLS = MORE COLLABORATION

Continued advances in technology allow more and more businesses to take down walls and create open workspaces that improve teamwork. Because **cubicles** remain a fixture in some workplaces, office designers often recommend lowering the heights of separation panels and using shared work surfaces instead of individual desks to encourage collaboration. Glass panels can also give an open feel while providing a sense of privacy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAPPY WORKERS

87%

Only 13% of employees today feel engaged at work—which means a staggering 87% are unhappy and disengaged.*

+12%
-10%

Workers are 12% more productive when they're happy and 10% less productive when they're not.**

$450-500 BILLION

This drop in productivity costs US companies between $450-500 billion annually.**

*Source: Gallup Survey
** Source: University of Warwick

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TOUCHDOWN TABLES

"A lot of start-up companies today have open, collaborative offices where employees share community lockers and are encouraged to sit where they want at touchdown tables instead of assigned workstations—and the next day, they might pick up their laptops and work somewhere completely different."

"In workplaces, it seems like Millennials want to be separate and together at the same time. They want to their own work area, but in an open space that's next to others."

"Senior Management believes that having open floor plans and work areas creates more energy and collaborative spirit...basically all the buzzwords that come to mind when you think about wanting everything to look like the Facebook offices."

DEDICATED SPACE

According to study findings, one big difference between small and large offices is the amount of floor space the organization has to incorporate collaborative spaces. Large offices typically have more room for dedicated meeting areas, whereas small offices are often more constrained.
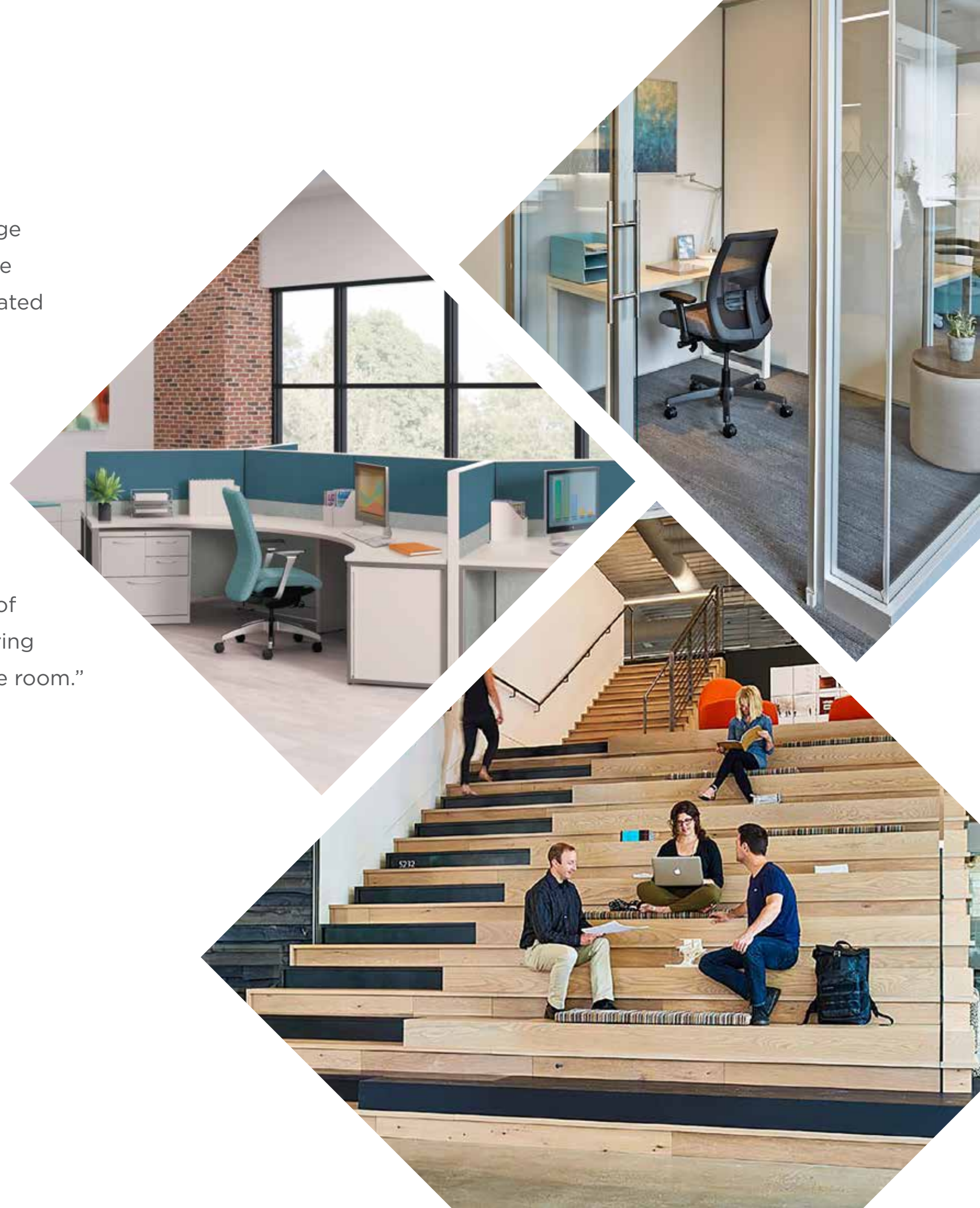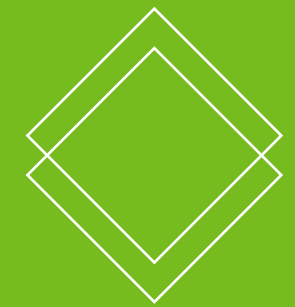
HUDDLE ROOMS & PHONE BOOTHS

These rooms provide a private space for employees to focus quietly or make personal phone calls.

"With larger floor plans, I usually recommend some kind of lounge area with soft seating for a huddle room or break-out space. For smaller firms, though, every square foot counts—it becomes a matter of decreasing the amount of separation between workspaces and clustering groups of workstations together instead of scattering them around the room."

STADIUM SEATING

Employees view **stadium seating** as "a fun, less stressful, less work-seeming area" for people to sit and work alone or in groups. This type of seating is usually constructed in large, tiered, seat-like steps or put together with individually purchased modular components.

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