Open-plan layout: A Workplace Evaluation of Small Offices in Hong Kong

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A dissertation Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of
The Degree Of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
Newcastle Business School
Faculty of Business and Law
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Date of submission: 28th November, 2014
DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this Dissertation Project is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree of any other University or Institution.

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Date: 28\textsuperscript{th} November 2014
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Mak for his personal and professional guidance, invaluable suggestions and support throughout the development and writing of this dissertation. I am very grateful to his detailed and constructive comments, which have been important support throughout this work.

I would also like to thank my parents and friends for their loving support and constant encouragement.

I am also very grateful for all the participants who shared their valuable time and feedback on the interview questions for this study.

The process of writing this dissertation has been both challenging and stimulating. I hope that the findings of this study will also inspire other researchers interested in office layout.
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ABSTRACT

Hong Kong is a very densely populated city but offers an excellent environment for many business owners to run their business in South-East Asia region. However, the lack of space and great demand for office makes rental very expensive in Hong Kong. In order to save space and rents, many small to medium business may opt to find a cost effective solution for their office leading to increasing use of an open-plan office layout. This paper looks specifically at the end users perspective on their office layout such as an open-plan layout versus traditional cellular office. Six key environmental factors of office layout are derived from literature review namely, noise, lighting, thermal quality, privacy, interaction and distraction. These six factors are used to set up parameters to evaluate feedback of the employees from case studies of both open plan and cellular office layout in Hong Kong.

Face-to-face interviews with employees from case studies of open plan and cellular office are evaluated using intra-case and inter-case analysis. The results indicated that the open plan layout offered more advantageous in terms of the working environment as compared to the cellular office, but has concerned issues with noise and privacy. The open plan layout provided greater advantage in terms of allowing more natural light into the office and also better thermal quality as well as greater interaction. The level of distraction was indifferent between the two office layouts. The study suggested that a hybrid open plan office layout with a small private enclosed space will overcome both noise and privacy issues and will create a favorable workplace environment for employees in the small office in Hong Kong.