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BENEFITS OF THE OPEN OFFICE

An open plan office design is helping fit out specialists Morris & Spottiswood to create a special place to work and chief executive Chris Saxton says more big businesses should consider embracing the open plan office environment.

According to Morris & Spottiswood, the current trend for open plan office working has many benefits including improved staff communication, improved team working and greater flexibility. Removing physical barriers between employees also promotes a more open and transparent culture within the business.

“At Morris & Spottiswood we are seeing more and more of our fit out clients wanting to move away from the traditional hierarchical office structure where the senior management team work in isolation in closed offices,” explains Chris. “An open plan design instantly makes senior managers more accessible to junior members of the team. We’ve also adopted it for the refurbishment of our own offices as it helps the entire team feel engaged with all areas of the business.”

He adds: “Besides being more light and airy, the the open office also uses the available space much more effectively than a traditional design. A formal meeting room can be replaced with a more flexible and an informal break out space which can be used for meetings, as well as an area for people to relax in.

Break out areas, which have comfortable furniture, can also improve social interaction between employees. The company which also provides housing and maintenance services with offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh and in North West England, has recently installed a pool table in the middle of their office in Manchester which gives staff the chance to relax during the day. “Staff can use the pool table at any time of the day,” says Chris. “As well as encouraging people to get to know each other better, it’s also a great tool to give everyone, whatever their job title, a chance to chat about work and to share ideas in a relaxed atmosphere.”

The key issues to consider when planning an open design are noise and confidentiality. Increased noise levels in an open plan environment can be easily dealt with by installing a sound masking system, which transmits a subtle background frequency. By providing a mixture of open plan and adaptable meeting rooms staff do have the choice to book quiet, private space if they need it. Creative use of storage unites such as lockers and filing cabinets can also be used to mark certain areas of the room which have different uses.

An open office space helps to reinforce a company's aim to create a flexible and contemporary place to work, which helps to attract and retain the best staff," says Chris. "We are already reaping the awards of an open plan design and I would encourage all businesses to embrace open office working."

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(466 words)

Editor's note: Morris & Spottiswood is a leading provider of fit out and maintenance services to the retail, banking, commercial, education and healthcare sectors across North West England and Scotland. Established in 1925, the company is Britain's third largest retail fit out specialist. Morris & Spottiswood is also a leading regional provider of new build, fit out, refurbishment and maintenance services to the social housing sector. The company has a growing portfolio of social housing projects arising from partnering agreements with local housing organisations throughout Scotland.

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