

'Human spam' in offices creating demand for 'Do Not Disturb' spaces

Such is the extent of 'human spam', also known as endless interruptions from colleagues, that many offices are now creating 'do not disturb' zones so people can get quality work done.

Linda Trim, Director at Giant Leap, workplace specialists who consult across Africa, said it was increasingly common for companies to set up zones or rooms where absolutely no noise is permitted.

"They are essentially filling stations for the mind.

"We hear from companies that many people complain of only being able to get work done after 5pm when everyone else goes home. People try and work but find it hard to do more than a few minutes continuously because they are interrupted by the phone ringing, people watching funny videos on Facebook, other colleagues coming over to ask questions or the general hullabaloo of the office."



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Trim said it was absurd that so many people commute in to an office specifically to work and then are only really be able to get down to it once colleagues had gone home.

“We’ve also seen a trend in people taking work home to they can work in peace.”

To counter this and enable greater office productivity, Trim said they have been installing “quiet zones” which are reminiscent of old fashioned libraries in their rules.

“Typically this would be a room, a booth or an area where no talking, no cellphones or other disturbances are allowed. They are designed for when people really need to knuckle down and get work done free from the human spam of colleagues.”

Trim said they had designed and installed more than a dozen quiet zones this year alone and expect to see the number rise in the years ahead.

She noted that they are not intended to encourage some people to permanently work in them but rather provide a place for short, intense period of work where concentration and thinking is needed.

“Companies have noted that these zones improve productivity because someone can go and knock out a particular job in an hour say. The same work in the general office area often takes three or four times as long because of all the interruptions.

“But it’s more than that. The quality and accuracy of work tends to be higher too.”

Trim also noted that it also seemed to be a boon for keeping colleague relationships sweet: “Instead of sitting at a desk fuming because someone won’t keep quiet, a worker can simply slip away to a quiet space.”

Trim added than quiet spaces are ‘plug and play’ in that they are ready for work.

“Typically have good internet connectivity, clean uncluttered worktops and calming, pared down furniture.”

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