

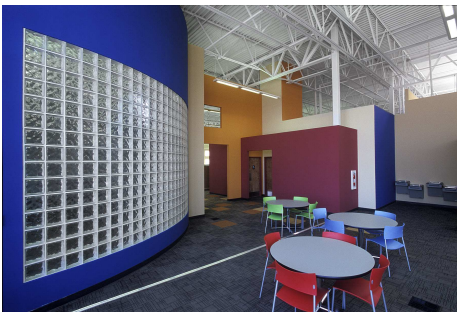
SCOPE

arctecon

High Performance Business Environments

Pittsburgh, PA

CALL CENTER FACILITY DESIGN: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BASICS



Why Are Call Centers Different?

① Although society is rapidly transitioning from the industrial age to the information/technology age, building and workplace environment design attitudes have only started to change in response.

① A large part of the necessary design transition involves successfully interfacing computers and people, an issue critical to successful call center design.

① Because they are high-density, high-stress and technically complex environments, call centers “push the design envelope” in terms of mechanical systems, acoustics, lighting, power, communications and furniture design.

① Although typically treated as adaptations to conventional office space, call centers are unique for two reasons:

☎ There are additional design considerations related to technology and density, which must be considered.

☎ Poor design solutions have a greater negative impact on the bottom line.

An Overview of Facility Design Issues

Call center design is rapidly evolving, thanks to developing technology that permits solutions not possible only months ago. The demand for new call center space often dictates schedules that allow little time to research and analyze emerging technology; therefore, it is important that designers be aware, through experience, of issues specific to call center design.

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Some things the Arctecon design team have learned include:

① Lighting is critical. The most common physical problem in keyboard-intensive environments is eye strain. A computer screen acts as a mirror, primarily reflecting the ceiling surface. Lighting must be designed to provide uniform ambient illumination at levels high enough to prevent extreme contrast, but low enough to reduce glare.

① Typical power issues, such as surge protection and uninterrupted power supplies, apply to call center design in addition to more sophisticated issues, such as power harmonics. Computer transformers tend to shunt a portion of the electronic sine wave, which finds its way back to the main transformer, multiplies and disturbs overall harmonics.

SCOPE, the call center design newsletter, is published by:

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① HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems designed for typical office space (particularly before the 1989 revisions to the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers [ASHRAE] Code 90.1) are often inadequate for call centers because of their higher density of both people and computers.

① Ceiling height should increase as floor size increases. Large spaces with low ceilings often feel claustrophobic (higher ceilings are also beneficial for penetration of natural light into the space and even distribution of artificial light).

① Proper ergonomic design and training provide excellent opportunities to reduce health care costs.

① Many call centers experience high absenteeism and turnover. A well-designed, high-quality environment can go a long way toward improving the bottom line through decreased turnover, absenteeism and increased productivity.

Look for more in-depth information on these and other center design issues in future editions of *Scope*. Meanwhile, we welcome questions about your call or customer service center along with comments about our publication and how we can make it more useful for you.

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What is Arctecon?

Kingsland Scott Bauer Associates recently founded Arctecon, a design-led, design-build joint venture that includes architecture services with KSBA, engineering consulting through LLI, technology expertise through The Sextant Group and construction management with LLI/CMI. Our "Performance Design" design method relates design decisions to increased profitability through reduced capital costs, energy consumption and health care costs as well as increased productivity.

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