

Government of Japan's Innovative Working Environment

 Innovation image

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Organisation: Administrative Management Bureau, Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)

Country: Japan

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Organisational Design, Public Service

Launched in: 2015

Overall development time: 1 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The Administrative Management Bureau (“AMB”) of MIC launched an initiative of office innovation in January 2015. Presumably the first to completely change the conventional office space arrangements among the government Ministries of Japan, the main features include:

- Free address: Flexible cloud-form modern working tables for a group of people replaced traditional personally-designated square desks with side cabinets.
 - Paperless: Wall shelves housing documents were removed and side cabinets attached to individual desks were discarded. A minimum number of shelves and cabinets were installed to house documents and reference materials for shared use only. Personally-held documents went electronic on servers except for a single set of copies.
 - Wireless: LAN cables were removed; PCs connected to a Wi-Fi network. PHS replaced traditional fixed telephones. A huge electronic Board and a few medium-sized displays were installed so that paperless meetings can be held flexibly in accordance with the number of participants.
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Why the innovation was developed

- The initiative was needed to change from traditional and familiar office arrangements that did not suit the styles of working today.
 - Positive feedback about the innovation from staffers working in new office arrangements.
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Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency

- Change the working spaces to increase efficiency and reduce administrative costs through better use of ICTs.
 - Improve productivity by introducing a new, innovative, and worker-friendly environment by changing the office arrangement.
 - To reclaim free space taken up by PCs, LAN cables, photocopiers, document shelves, and paper files.
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Main beneficiaries

Government bodies, Government staff

- Direct beneficiaries are approximately 40 staffers of AMB who actually work in the renovated office.
- Since this innovation has already attracted many visitors, seeds of innovation have flourished in various spots within other government ministries and local governments in Japan. The number of indirect beneficiaries are multiplying.

Results

Efficiency

- The removal of wall shelves, desks and side cabinets as well as personally held documents has freed up office space.
 - Nicer working environments: part of the new free space was changed into an amenity corner for staffers for coffee breaks, reading newspapers, or having lunch.
 - Atmosphere has improved for better communications among staffers. Together with improved communications, office productivity presumably goes up considerably.
 - AMB conducted a follow up survey among the staffers actually working in the new office. The results indicate that 70% of the staffers have good impressions about the renewed working office arrangements and feel that they are now able to communicate with each other in a more open environment.
 - With the introduction of a Wi-Fi network and an electronic board, as well as effects of introducing a free address system in the office, paperless meetings can be held within the new office “Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere.”
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Effectiveness

- According to a survey, documents held by individual staffers were reduced by about 80%, the number of color photocopies/print-outs were reduced by about 50% and the effective use of working space was increased as well as the introduction of teleworking.

Development

Design

Planning staff with experience in private companies contributed to the innovation through office visits, and exchange of views and insights.

Testing

- A trial implementation of the new working space innovation was undertaken as a conceptual effort.

Lessons Learned

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- Changing the working space contributes considerably to the working efficiency within the public sector through the different types of working styles made possible and an improved office environment.
 - Favourable reviews from outside of the division would contribute to sustaining efforts of the innovation.
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Conditions for success

- Leadership and supervision.
 - Human and budget resources.
 - Positive feedback from those involved in the innovation is important.
 - Learning and exchange between different organizations is key.
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Other information

Since the launch of the office/work style innovation in January 2015, it has received favourable reviews from the media and visitors with a number of business magazines and newspapers carrying articles. Visitors to the new work space have included Ministers, Members of Diet, high ranking officials of the Ruling Party, international organisations such as the OECD, and Japanese municipalities.

Members of the team leading the innovation now spend considerable time receiving visitors in addition to preparing to present the case in a symposium on office innovation. With the extensive positive reception and outside interest shown for the innovation, significant staff time is required to support these visits and attention but it is also a source of energy for sustainable innovation within. A goal is that visitors will also bring "seeds of innovation" back to their own organizations.

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