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The Post-Cubicle Office

For a century or more, office design has been our most useful metaphor for workers' frustration. The cubicles were ultimately demoralizing.

Therefore, the office has been continually improved upon, in an attempt to make it work better and be a better place to work. Early offices were designed to extract relentlessⁱ productivity from workers.

5 The influential American management theorist Frederick Winslow Taylor was the first to apply the principles of efficiency to office design.

Then followed the era of the glass-and-steel, air-conditioned box. Now they seem outdated although they were at the time considered architectural and design marvels. On top of that they were said to favor communication like open plan spaces today do.

10 Descriptions of life in some companies sound very attractive like the Googles and Facebooks of today: "Imagine a sea of blond desks with tan chairs, outdoor lighting pouring in everywhere, roomy offices with individually controlled air-conditioning and music out of the walls." Relaxation rooms and entertaining spaces may also contribute to the well-being of staff as well as the development of teamwork in a friendly and casual environment.

15 Samuel Harrington, an "organization man," spends a lot of time wondering whether these initiatives sap, rather than encourage creativity and productivity.

Space office design has greatly improved staff workplace conditions yet too much comfort may detour them from what they are entitled to do: work.

by NIKIL SAVAL, *The New York Times*, April. 25, 2017

ⁱ Never stopping