



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

OPEN PLAN WORKING GUIDELINES

August 2018

In 2016 the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM) co-located a number of agencies and departments to St Patrick's Centre. This was to enable easy interaction and collaboration between departments and to help CAM make the most of its available office space.

Because more people are working in closer proximity to each other, open plan offices require their own rules of behaviour. These guidelines have been developed to assist in the management of those organisational and behaviour protocols that govern work in an open plan office environment, and how to avoid the most common breaches.

This is a common-sense guide, with the aspiration of adhering to a basic set of principles that improve output, and assist in improving relationships, employee engagement and office morale. We expect our employees to be responsible for their own behaviour to ensure alignment to these guidelines.

DESK AND WORKSPACE AREA

1. EATING AT YOUR DESK

There are good arguments for not eating lunch at your desk. Firstly, a meal break is an important opportunity to 're-charge', both physically and mentally, with benefits for enhanced productivity in the afternoon. Secondly, eating becomes a communal experience in an open plan environment. This is particularly important when the food in question is warm or has a strong enough aroma for co-workers to detect. For both reasons, it is better to keep meal consumption to the dedicated lunchroom area on level 5.

2. TEAM CELEBRATIONS & MORNING/AFTERNOON TEA

When people are celebrating together in a team or in an established group for an informal morning or afternoon tea, ensure these occasions are held away from the open plan working environment and relocated in room 8:81 or ideally in the lunchroom on level 5. When a part of the floor is celebrating without inviting everyone, others can feel excluded which does not support a collegiate workforce.

3. HEADPHONE USE

When everyone is working in close proximity, it makes it easy to talk to co-workers. In an open plan office, headphones are not only transmitters of sound; they are like 'Do Not Disturb' signs on a hotel room door. Open plan office etiquette dictates that you need to be mindful when people are concentrating on solving a complex task. Therefore, if someone is using headphones, send an email or ask politely first whether they have a minute to spare.

4. CONVERSATION VOLUMES

Offices are places that often form strong bonds with colleagues. Having a shared laugh is not only good for your health; it's good for team morale. However, if you're doing this loudly and frequently, it will interrupt others and potentially impact on productivity.

The same rules apply for phone conversations: take notice of your volume or consider taking the call to a breakout area, especially when the call is a personal one. When having conversations in an open office environment, please be considerate of your colleague around you who may be taking calls on their desk phone.

5. COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER COLLEAGUES

As a general rule, you shouldn't talk or yell past your immediate neighbour in an open plan office environment. If you have to raise your voice to talk to someone two to three workspaces away, anyone else within earshot will also hear you. Walk over to the person's desk, phone them or communicate electronically.

Additionally, if you have CAM visitors from other sites, you are encouraged to meet with them away from your desk, ideally in the collaborative space or a meeting room. This will ensure others in the immediate area are not disrupted by conversations.

6. DESIGNATED WALKWAYS

It's important to use designated walkways around the office at all times and avoid taking short cuts through other people's workspace. This can be disruptive in an open plan environment.

7. SPEAKER PHONES

The use of speaker phones is not appropriate in an open plan office. Not only will you raise your voice level when using the speaker, but those around you will hear the other side of the conversation causing disruption to their concentration and productivity. If you need to, use a hands-free headset.

8. MOBILE PHONE VOLUME

When at your desk, ensure your mobile phone is set to a low volume. Excessive noise created from text messages, ring tones and social media notification, for example, can be very distracting for people in the immediate workspace area.

9. UNNECESSARY NOISE

Try not to create unnecessary noise such as pen tapping, humming, whistling and movements in your chair that causes noise. Repetitive noises can be very distracting for those around you, so try to break these habits. Also, squeaky drawers and other items in your area should be fixed to minimise disruption to others.

10. MOVE MEETINGS TO A MEETING ROOM OR COMMON AREA

In an open plan office, your desk area is not a convenient place for an impromptu meeting. This is especially relevant if you need more than two people or if others are dialling in over your phone's loudspeaker. Be mindful that your meeting isn't disrupting colleagues and schedule any meetings longer than a few minutes in a designated meeting room, break-out space or use enclosed offices.

11. RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS

When working in an open plan environment, it's important to respect others' privacy. From time to time you may overhear information not intended for you. Act as if you didn't hear it and don't add to the noise level by repeating it.

12. QUIET ZONES

If you have a tight deadline, it might be necessary to withdraw into a quiet zone of solitude and seclusion where work can be completed distraction-free. There are several private, bookable rooms for you to complete quiet work or to work on your own. While this should not be a common occurrence, it may be needed from time to time. If you need a computer to complete your work, use technology available in applicable rooms or a laptop can be 'hired' from reception.

13. FEELING UNWELL

If you have a temperature and/or your throat is sore, use your judgement as to whether you should attend the office. If you're really unwell, stay home, regardless of your workload. Calling in sick keeps your colleagues safe from contagions and will fast-track your own recovery.

14. DESK TIDINESS

Keep workspaces tidy to ensure cleanliness and hygiene. Remove containers, dirty cups and other items not required from your desk. Please ensure you dispose of waste thoughtfully in the appropriate bins.

A clean and clear desk is also beneficial to ensure you don't feel surrounded by paperwork. This is also part of the CAM commitment encouraging electronic storage of information and reduced paper usage, with benefits for cost savings and the environment.

15. PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

Bad odours are one of the most complained about aspects of working in an open environment. Please ensure you are conscious of your hygiene, particularly body hygiene in the warmer months. If necessary, keep an antiperspirant or deodorant in your desk draw and use it as needed.

16. RESPECT OTHERS

If someone approaches you with a complaint, this is because it is genuinely bothering them. Take a moment to respectfully discuss with your work colleague. If you're making a complaint, be direct, but kind, because the person may not have realised they are causing a distraction.

17. BE KIND AND TOLERANT

This rule eclipses all others. Remember that for every behaviour, quirk or mannerism that you find distracting or irritating, you most likely have similar quirks that distract someone else. There will always be people that hum, tap keyboards and chew loudly. But in the kaleidoscope of humanity that is the open plan office, there can never be a limit on the amount of kindness, grace and tolerance you can and should extend, to others. This belief is the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching that every person has an inherent and immeasurable worth and dignity.

OFFICE SPACE USAGE

1. LEVEL 5 RECEPTION AND MEETING ROOMS

All visitors need to sign in at reception on Level 5 and all meetings with visitors are to occur solely on this floor. Please remember that level 5 is a space we share with our colleagues at the Catholic Development Fund (CDF) and Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH).

2. LEVEL 5 BREAKOUT AND LUNCH ROOM

The Level 5 Breakout area and Lunch Room is a place where staff can share news and a meal away from their desk. It was designed to provide staff of CAM together with CDF and VMCH a broader sense of our community and common faith. This space can also be used for non-sensitive and non-confidential discussions away from your workspace.

3. QUIET ROOMS (8.14 AND 8.15)

Two enclosed rooms are located adjacent to the lift on Level 8. These multi-functional spaces are designed for quiet and uninterrupted work or phone calls. These rooms have access to the network and telephones, and in future will be provided with a greater level of visual privacy with frosted glass.

All employees will have equal access to the quiet rooms, which can be used on an occasional or temporary basis. However, these spaces are not to be used as a private office for any employee, even on a temporary basis. This means use of the rooms can be planned or spontaneous when the need arises for a sensitive phone call or a private conversation.

4. MEETING ROOMS (8.79 AND 8.81)

Traditional meeting rooms are located at the northern end of the floor and can be used for formal staff meetings. These can be booked through the centralised electronic booking system, which incorporates a CommBox unit (interactive touch screen). The Service Desk is responsible for all equipment and support and training is available if needed.

Meeting Room 8.81 is also a multi-purpose space. While the room can be booked for private meetings, it can also be used for as a small social gathering area, with the dividing wall to the kitchen able to be opened to create one large room.

5. COLLABORATION WORKSPACE

Immediately adjacent to Meeting Room 8.79 is an informal work space with a height-adjustable bench and stools for eight people. This space is an alternate informal meeting space designed to facilitate collaboration away from your workstations. The space is non-bookable and suitable for ad hoc use, a quick break including coffee/ sandwich. If necessary, the acoustic wall can be used as an information pin board.

6. KITCHENETTE

The kitchenette is not only a place to prepare meals, but is also a break room and social area around morning and afternoon tea. As such, this communal space requires some basic rules of etiquette.

- Please cover any food or beverages in the microwave.
- Please rinse and pack the dishwasher.
- Please remove your food from the fridge on a regular basis to avoid odour.
- At the end of each working day, all staff should clean up their own dishes, mugs and glasses.

7. CAM's COMMITMENT TO SAFE, JUST AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The principles and behaviours characterised in this document provide a further expression of the Church's role in promoting the common good, which is reached when we work together to improve the well-being of people in our society, and for one another. We trust these guidelines are adopted in the spirit of this common good, born in the Gospel message of love of God and neighbour.