

Effective Benching Applications

Workstyles Summary

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Offices are shrinking and work is shifting from individual tasks to more group focused projects. As the demand for collaborative spaces increases, the overall configuration of floor plans will need to be able to accommodate these changes. It is within this need for increased collaboration that benching finds a role. Benching provides shared access to team materials, coordination across tasks, flexibility of team activities, and a shared context for evaluating team progress and group success (Brand, 2011). However, benching is not for everyone.





Studio and Team Application

Benching is more than just a piece of office furniture; it's a method of working. It is most appropriate when designing environments that need to be creative, flexible, adaptable, and energized (Wassenaar, 2011). While benching can be applied in many situations, it is best suited to dynamic, interactive, social work styles and not as effective for a task or a workplace that requires quiet, privacy, confidentiality, or work involving deep concentration.

BENCHING ATTRIBUTES

- Encourages discussion and informal learning
- Increases access to coworkers and collaboration
- Increases energy (from coworker density)
- Increases access to daylight and exterior views (from lack of panels)
- Supports fast paced work and reducing delays

Mobile and Team Application



Sources:
 Brand, Jay, PhD (2011, April 13). Email from.
 Wassenaar, Marta (2011, April 15). (T. L. Tilton, Interviewer)

THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPLICATIONS FOR BENCHING

Cohesive work groups and teams

A suitable environment for benching is within a culture or workgroup that emphasizes teamwork and socialization, especially in dedicated project rooms. If anything that anyone says or does within a team might be critical to share with everyone else, then benching is ideal.

Mobile workers

When mobile or remote workers come into the office, benching can support them in a relatively open, dense environment that allows them to quickly reconnect and coordinate with important office constituencies and internal and external customers.

Classrooms and dry labs

Although flexibility for break-out groups and other dynamic reconfigurations may not be feasible with benching solutions, if support is needed for similar kinds of activities provided repetitively to different audiences (e.g., corporate education and training, college classrooms, some laboratory applications), benching may be appropriate.

Studios

When accompanied by adequate storage and comfortable, flexible seating, benching can provide a design-friendly solution for open studio environments. Benching can be effective in both a university studio (e.g. architecture, interior design, fine arts) and a business studio (e.g. industrial design, graphic design or marketing teams) application.

Highly mobile consultant teams

Teams like solutions/customer-focused sales groups or other high "seat ratio" situations where only a minority of team members are in the office on any given day, but for those who are, other team members are likely to be their most important contacts.