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Confessions of a security guy: Adding protection while keeping work environment open to creativeness - by Doug Haines

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I have a confession to make – I’ve been trying to buck the system for a long time now. I’ve been telling designers, planners and developers that the way they were designing internal inhabited space was wrong. Truth is; they’ve been designing the space right for today’s

creative work environment. The lack of walls, with big open office spaces where everyone shares the space; areas where folks can congregate, talk and relax; spaces that allow for impromptu meetings and areas that allow folks to just hang out are all part of the new normal.

I came to this realization while looking at an artist's rendition of today's office environment. The article talked about "branding" and didn't have a thing to do with security, but because I'm a security guy I immediately started analyzing the rendering from a security perspective. The rendering had a receptionist in a lobby area with the company logo on the floor in front of the receptionist's counter and on the wall behind. Off to the left was an open space that appeared to be designed as a classroom, with a roll-up door (similar to a garage door) that would allow the space to be closed off for privacy. The good news is it had transparent panels thereby incorporating the "eyes on" principle of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). Those outside of the room would be able to see into the room while the door/wall provided an acoustic barrier. Off to the right of the reception was what appeared to be an open space with folks seated at long tables with laptops and meeting room spaces off in the distance?

I looked at that rendering for quite some time, all the while getting madder and madder that the artist had got it all wrong. Besides the CPTED door/wall what else had they designed for today's threat environment. Where was the active shooter protection? What about other types of criminal activity, had they considered that?

Then, I had my epiphany – the rendering wasn't about security it was about logo placement and making the folks using the space feel like they were actually part of the bigger company. So it hit me, why was I trying to get the architects to stop designing these cute little spaces where everything is "Kumbaya?"

I starting thinking, what if they replaced the roll-up garage door panels with laminated glass and ballistic resistant framing? Wouldn't that provide protection from the active shooter threat in today's work environment? Couldn't that be used in schools, too? How about the receptionist counter being made with ballistic resistant materials? Couldn't the furniture also include ballistic protection? Materials are available on the market that can be embedded into furniture. In fact, some seats in the gate areas of some of the principle airports across the

country already incorporate this technology.

What about those long tables, couldn't they be flipped on their side and provide protection? They could if they included this technology. What about the meeting rooms, couldn't they have three walls that were ballistically hardened or made of bullet-resistant glass/wall panels? Add a laminated glass door and the whole space would be aesthetically pleasing while allowing refuge in times of need.

Accordingly with a little thought and some engineering help there is a way to add protection while at the same time keeping the work environment open to creativeness.

Another thing I recognized during my enlightenment is that I like the security of compartmentalization. Everything fitting neatly into a little box – like office cubicles, eight to five – Monday through Friday schedule, one project then onto another; nice and neat – nothing dangling. Well, Sunshine that ship has sailed. The world doesn't work like that anymore. Today's environment is much different, it's a lot faster paced. Not because there are more things coming our way but because the things coming at us are all in their own little boxes and they require short bursts of attention and then it's on to the next thing or back to something that was not finished previously.

So I guess, tomorrow I will start getting modern by upgrading my iPhone four with a five – What? There's already a ten? Damn!

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