

Red Thread, a regional leader in creating innovative workspaces, debunks 10 office myths.

Times have changed, there's no question. Working from home is no longer revolutionary and taking notes with an iPad is no longer indicative of your technical savvy. But the reality is that although the idea of workplace is changing, it actually has become more important than ever. New England based [Red Thread](#), a workplace interiors provider with a broad portfolio that includes; furniture, audiovisual, architectural systems, flooring and technology services, set out to debunk the top 10 myths surrounding office space. From Red Thread's perspective, the workplace has become essential to communicating culture and brand, for fostering productivity and collaboration, and encouraging wellness, dare we say "happiness", among employees. The bottom line... the right space (one that provides a mix of settings for focus and collaboration, offers technology solutions for virtual and face-to-face interaction, and allows for employee choice and control) fosters innovation. As Walt Disney once said, "If you can dream it, you can do it".

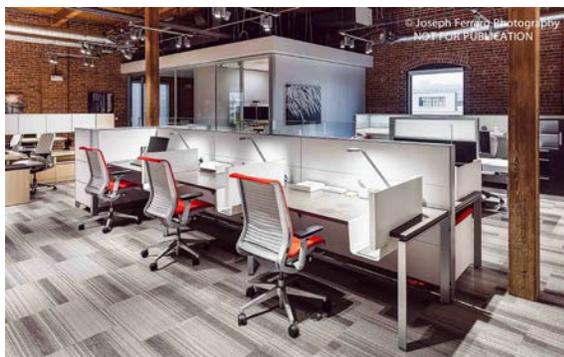
So, here's a look at 10 old school workspace myths debunked by the reality in today's office.

1. You have to spend A LOT of money to have a nice work environment.

Not true! Things have definitely changed. Office footprints are getting smaller. You no longer need a huge space to accommodate massive filing cabinets and computer towers. In the 1970's employers allocated about 500-700 square feet per employee. Today it's down to 150-200 square feet and average individual cubicle sizes range from 48-64 square feet. Less storage, fewer panels and smaller workstations result in lower cost per employee. In addition, furniture options and finish selection at various price points have exploded and there are literally thousands of variables to help dial in your budget. And lastly, an office doesn't have to look like a traditional office space any more. Many companies are implementing shared benching options and flexible shared zones within the office that allow for real estate optimization which translates into real savings. So, with thoughtful planning, creativity and a realistic approach you can create an innovative space within a reasonable budget.

2. Virtual employees don't need a dedicated desk at the office. Their perk is to be able to work from home!

Whoa. Hold on, mobile workers deserve a piece of the action too! There is a lot of value in employees getting together, collaborating and sharing a common culture. The key is to create workplaces designed to be destinations that people want to come to – even your mobile employees. Today, there are many solutions that provide shared and flexible spaces for all employees to feel welcome whether they are mobile or resident workers. Touchdown stations are the perfect example of a shared desking solution that optimizes space and allows for mobile workers to come and go. Technology such as [Tag Wizards](#), a tablet/scheduling system, allows users to quickly find an available space, scan-in and reserve shared individual workspaces. Mobile workers can "tag" a space on demand from their device.



Red Thread Stamford | Shared Benching

3. Open plan offices are noisy and unproductive.

Well yes they can be. And some personality types, introverts for example, find it very hard to feel comfortable and productive in open environments. But when thoughtfully designed, there are strategies and technology that can mitigate these issues. Sound masking is an acoustic technology that quite literally creates a low level of ambient noise to cancel out sound. In addition, designers are now crafting open plan offices with shared private enclaves built into the floor plan. Equally good for focused work or collaboration these spaces provide respite and quiet from a busy open office. Susan Cain has recently collaborated with the Steelcase design team to develop a set of design principles for [Quiet Spaces](#) using the [VIA](#) architectural walls platform.



Steelcase Susan Cain Quiet Spaces

4. Hanging around the water cooler is a waste of time, unless you want to find out the latest gossip.

Nowadays mobile workers are coming into the office to collaborate and even socialize. Why not recreate the vibe of the local Starbucks in your office? Creating a sense of belonging and a connection with the culture of the company is a huge challenge today. Innovative companies are designing spaces where employees are excited to be, whether on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, and they are providing technology that makes it easy to switch back and forth. A workplace that feels familiar, say with a flexible multipurpose café, will help to attract and retain the next generation of employees.



Steelcase Global Headquarters Work Café

5. Productivity is king, who cares about what the office looks like.

What the office looks like matters a great deal. Not only is it imperative for a space to support the productivity and workflow of employees, but it is also a key contributor to their wellbeing. A well designed office includes a palette of choice for employees, empowering them to take control of how and where they work. But beyond the mechanics of space, how an office looks clearly communicates a company's brand and culture both internally and externally. Are you modern, innovative and willing to push the boundaries? Or do you look to the past for clarity and foundational wisdom?

6. A great office chair is all you need for ergonomics.

True, a great chair like [Steelcase's Gesture chair](#), the first office chair designed to support our interactions with today's technologies, is an essential component to employee physical wellbeing. But a chair should not be the end all and be all of ergonomics. The modern office boasts [adjustable height tables](#) that allow people to sit or stand (or perch) throughout the day changing their posture frequently. In addition, a more fluid approach is to provide a choice of different spaces throughout the office allowing for true mobility and the ability to control where and how you work throughout the day.



Airtouch Tables by Details

7. Plants don't do well in an office.

The sad and malnourished ficus tree is the ubiquitous symbol of cold cubicle culture. More and more however, designers are embracing biophilic design, an innovative way of designing the places where we live, work, and learn that aims to reconnect us with the natural world and enhance our overall wellbeing. With new technology and materials that can even support vertical gardens, the options for blurring the boundaries between in and outdoors is truly achievable. Glass walls or ceilings let in swaths of natural light letting both humans and plants flourish.

8. The kitchen belongs at the back of the office.

The days of the dreary back office kitchen, relegated behind closed doors, are over. Much like the kitchen is the heart of any home, a work café or hospitality space is the new hub of the modern office. The perfect place for informal collaboration, a company-wide meeting or just an alternate place to work, designers are now creating technology enabled, flexible spaces designed to be reconfigured and used for a multitude of purposes.



Red Thread East Hartford Work Café



Compuware Multipurpose Café

9. Meetings are a waste of time.

They certainly can be, but definitely don't have to be. There are a full range of technology solutions that can encourage productivity and promote active collaboration. Most collaborative work spaces today support leader-led presentations where information is controlled and shared by one person at a time. However, technology like Steelcase's [media:scape](#) removes these barriers and democratizes how people access and share information by allowing all participants to contribute their ideas – equally, quickly and seamlessly. Another Steelcase product, the [Room Wizard](#) is a scheduling system that solves the dilemma of connecting workers to meeting spaces. Meetings can be managed seamlessly via web, laptop or smart phone. When workers find an open meeting space, they can reserve it instantly and get to work.

10. Having a private office is the pinnacle of success.

That may have been true in previous decades but Gen X and Y workers are seeking different “perks” such as flexible anywhere/anytime workspaces, technology and customization. Even baby boomers are changing their work styles and adapting to this new reality. In addition, knowledge sharing and mentoring has become increasingly important to support a changing global economy which means that leadership needs to be working directly with teams and easily accessible to all. In many innovative companies today, executives are moving out of private offices and those foot prints are being converted into collaborative and shared enclaves.

About Red Thread:

Red Thread is a New England regional enterprise supporting workplace needs through a broad portfolio of products and services. We help corporate and institutional customers to create an exceptional work experience by integrating interior architectural systems, furniture and technology. Red Thread Spaces LLC is a wholly-owned affiliate of Steelcase Inc.

About Steelcase:

For more than 100 years, Steelcase Inc. has helped create great experiences for the world's leading organizations – wherever work happens. Steelcase and our family of brands – including Steelcase®, Coalesse®, Designtex®, Details®, Nurture®, PolyVision® and Turnstone® – offer a comprehensive portfolio of furnishings, products and services designed to unlock human promise and support social, economic and environmental sustainability. We are globally accessible through a network of channels, including approximately 650 dealers. Steelcase is a global, industry-leading and publicly traded company with fiscal 2013 revenue of \$2.9 billion.