Managers and office layouts

Exploring different managers' choices in office landscape and the thoughts behind the decisions.
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Abstract

Background: Over the last recent years the design of office buildings around the world has evolved alongside changing trends in business management. Around four generations must coexist in the workplace today which makes the decisions of the office landscape very important for managers since in today's society. The office work has come to contribute to structure, purpose and a pinch of meaning in the work field in today's society, and therefore, as a manager, you must adapt the office landscape that contributes to increasing the feeling of these factors, which in turn positively indicate the efficiency and productivity of the company.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is therefore to see why managers or other decision makers choose certain types of office layouts and what expectations they have on how this decision will affect productivity and efficiency.

Method: This is a qualitative researcher with in-depth interviews with five different companies. Coding and qualitative content analysis was used to draw conclusions and connections to the selected theories Balanced scorecard, Lean Management Theory, Resources-Based View Theory and Contingency Theory.

Conclusion: The results show that managers' decisions about office layout are primarily influenced by the nature of the business that is being conducted in the office. The open office layout with private workrooms emerges as the preferred option as managers try to provide a comfortable and secure work environment for all employees. Personnel have the freedom to choose a setting that enhances their productivity. Productivity and efficiency are expected to increase, based on the character of the business and what type of office layout is chosen. This can be ascribed to improved collaboration and communication among coworkers in open areas or to private workrooms' increased privacy and decreased distractions.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

There is evidence that suggests the first offices began as places where official business was performed in ancient Rome and that related buildings have existed in some form throughout history. However, the construction of specific office buildings didn’t start until the 18th century. The first office building, The Old Admiralty Office, was built in 1726 in London when the British Empire started to expand and when the level of trade increased. The office created had many meeting spaces, including the Admiralty Board Room, which is still used today, and the office served to handle all the paperwork generated by the Royal Navy. In 1729 the East Indian House was created in London, which acted as the headquarter for the trading company. Since the trade increased the amount of paperwork increased and therefore people started creating offices to make it easier for the workers to handle all the work. (K2 Space, 2023).

Offices and how we utilise them have developed throughout time. Self-service kitchenettes began to take the place of full-service office lunchrooms in the 1960s, and at about the same time, cramped rows of desks started to give way to the adaptable "privacy" of cubicles, a trend that persisted throughout the ensuing decades. Additionally, innovative technology like telephones, personal computers, and email have changed the places, times, and methods of how we work in today's current situation. (Gripenstraw & Saini, 2020.).

In 1900 the Taylorist office was created, by the scientific management Frederick Winslow Taylor. The Taylorist workplace layout included more desks, which meant more workers, in a given space while also making it simpler for managers and supervisors to inspect employees. Senior executives continued to have their own offices. Later in 1910-1930 the pre-war social democratic office was created and used. This new design used the Taylorist principles, but since the importance of natural light sources increased, the Taylorist open plan had to be applied on a smaller scale. Friedrichstrasse by Mies van der Rohe is a physical illustration of this. (Lovell, 2023). During the 1930s a shift in the design of office landscape happened. The emphasis was now on creating visually appealing offices where efficiency was prioritised. Large corporations acknowledge the importance of the office reflection in the company's identity and the importance of increasing productivity. This is when the streamlined office was created. The departure from the Taylorist principle, a rigid hierarchy with separated workers’
floor, was not a major departure. The streamlined office was however developed in tandem with architecturally Modernist buildings. This was structured in European style and was a reflection of the cohesive society. To compensate for the lack of interaction with the outside world the office style was now more modern and comfortable with radiant and streamlined materials. (Lovell, 2023). The newly developed technologies during the 1950s brought changes in the design and functionality of offices. These changes led to the office being independent of the outside world and therefore allowing more open plan floors where workers could be located virtually in various areas. So during the 1950 companies continued very much on open plan offices, precisely in order to accommodate as many workers as possible to increase efficiency. (Lovell, 2023).

Bürolandschaft which translates to ”office landscape” is being seen as the breaking office space design that had been in place since the introduction of Taylorism over half a century before. This innovative method of workplace design was pioneered by the Hamburg-based Quickborner Team, made up of Eberhard and Wolfgang Schnelle. Their goal was to substitute the rigid and inefficient structures of big bureaucracies with an office layout that was specifically designed to accommodate employees' demands. The Bürolandschaft approach and its socio-democratic principle gave rise to ”Action Office” which was developed by Herman Miller in 1960. Action Office's primary objective was to create freedom for the employees to move around and work in the way that the task requires. The developers and promoters of this office advocated the idea that office work was primarily mental work and that it had connections to a suitable working environment. Action office II that came short after was adapted to the employee, without the need of additional expensive furnishing. The new system was created to give employees the opportunity for some degree of privacy, as well customise their workspaces without affecting the coworkers. (Lovell, 2023).

In 1980 the cubicle farm office was born. This type of landscape focused a lot on the profitability and not so much on the employees and their wellbeing (Lovell, 2023). But this form of landscape was not appreciated by the employees, since distractions from nearby employees created negative job satisfaction and productivity. (Stahl, 2016). The merging of computers and telecommunication in the 1990 set the ground for the “The virtual office”. This gave the possibility to emerge work where it is done rather in the corporate office which benefited the employees compared to the cubicle farm which was not appreciated. (Fritz, M. B. W. & Narasimhan, S., (1998).
Over the last recent years the design of office buildings around the world have evolved alongside changing trends in business management. Office landscapes were before shaped and seen as a communication system where you had an open floorplan where information could flow freely. But over time it was realised that this type of landscape contributed to many negative aspects such as issues of privacy, individual office rooms, acoustic control which all affected the individual's health and presentation for the worse (Cabe Comission, 2005). Around four generations must coexist in the workplace today, which means that many office settings must take the needs of the various age groups into consideration. Meeting rooms, specialised lighting and acoustics, and requests for accommodations for vision, hearing, posture, and mental health may all be included in these needs (Shobe K, 2018).

How modifications to the office environment may impact staff productivity should be taken into account in a thorough cost-benefit analysis. The anticipation of this outcome is that the cost of enhancing the office environment would be outweighed by savings from increased productivity (Office productivity). Corporate real estate managers must show top management how workspace may contribute to fostering and sustaining business success while developers must make investment decisions that are more likely to increase profit and reduce risk (Kaplan & Aronoff, 1996).

In today's society, the workplace is the place where people spend a significant portion of their daily time and has become a second home since the given amount of time spent with coworkers is more than with their own family. The office work has come to contribute to structure, purpose and a pinch of meaning in the work field in today's society. (Kellaway, 2013).

1.2 Problem statement

Many organisations use different types of office landscapes where organisations demand employees to be productive and efficient. In today's society, it is difficult to properly motivate employees to be productive without overloading them with work that results in an unhealthy work environment (Shobe K, 2018). Therefore it is important to investigate what motivates managers in the choice of office landscape and how this indicates on the job autonomy, physical workspace, managerial assistance, and job happiness contribute to a productive workplace.
This report will create an insight in many different companies that work in different industries. The variation of companies can help other companies that are in the process of choosing office layout to get an understanding of why they chose the way they did and get an actual example on how it can be done. Hopefully, an insight into their process will make it easier for other companies to make a decision that they think suits them and their organisation the best. Another aspect that this report can include is that the selected companies and managers in question get an insight into their organisation and get the chance to analyse if their decisions really had any kind of impact and if you can see any change in their employees. This leads to creating a certain awareness at the company about the situation you are in and thinking about whether their method has worked or not, and whether you possibly have to make some kind of change.

1.3 Purpose

This study intends to investigate what elements managers or decision-makers consider when selecting particular office layouts and what they anticipate these selections will do to productivity and efficiency. Additionally, this thesis examines how various businesses modify their working environments to meet individual requirements, encourage motivation, and encourage peak performance, all of which add to the effectiveness of the firm as a whole. The report seeks to provide a thorough insight and respond to the relevant research topic through these objectives.

1.4 Research Question

Why do managers, or other decision makers, choose their office layout the way they do and what effect are they expecting to have on the employee's efficiency and productivity?
1.5 Definitions of Keywords

CEO: Chief Executive Officer
CFO: Chief Financial Officer
CMO: Chief Marketing Officer
COO: Chief Operating Officer
CTO: Chief Technology Officer RBV: Resource-Based View

2. Literature study

For many years, open vs closed offices have been a subject of discussion. Although open workplaces are intended to encourage cooperation and communication, the lack of privacy and higher noise levels can also be unpleasant and distracting to workers. Closed offices, on the other hand, give workers solitude and quiet but may prevent collaboration and communication. Based on the results of various research, the literature review that follows discusses the advantages and disadvantages of open vs. closed offices.

In open-plan offices, Kim and De Dear (2013) looked at the trade-off between privacy and communication. Employee satisfaction with their workspace was found to be negatively impacted by the higher likelihood of distractions, interruptions, and less privacy in open offices. Employees in closed offices, on the other hand, reported greater levels of privacy but less communication with peers.

Bernstein and Turban (2018) researched how the "open" workspace affected interpersonal communication. As comparison to closed offices, they discovered that open office environments do encourage greater in-person encounters and teamwork among coworkers. Yet, they also discovered that open workspaces' elevated noise levels and visual distractions may contribute to lower productivity and greater levels of stress.
In their 1991 study, Oldham, Kulik, and Stepina took into account the difficulty of the task and the individual's skill level while examining the influence of physical settings on employee responses. They discovered that workers with sophisticated tasks and good stimulus-screening skills were more adversely affected by open offices than by closed offices. On the other hand, employees with basic occupations and poor stimulus-screening abilities were more benefited by open workplaces.

The advantages of quiet workplaces in open-plan offices have been explored by Haapakangas, Hongisto, Varjo, and Lahtinen (2018). They discovered that staff members who had access to quiet workspaces reported greater productivity, fewer distractions, and higher-quality work. According to the study, establishing dedicated quiet workplaces for employees in open offices may help to reduce some of the harmful effects of noise and distractions.

Lastly, according to Fabris (2019), office noise dramatically lowers worker concentration, productivity, and creativity. The study emphasises the detrimental effects of noise on employee wellbeing and makes the case for the necessity of offering quiet workspaces for workers.

Overall, the research indicates that while open workplaces might foster collaboration and communication, they can also raise noise levels and distractions, which can reduce output and increase stress. Closed offices offer solitude and quiet but may prevent interaction and teamwork. Depending on a person's job intricacy, stimulus-screening abilities, and work preferences, open vs. closed offices may have advantages and disadvantages. One way to counteract some of the negative effects of noise and distractions could be to designate quiet areas in open offices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year released</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim, J., &amp; De Dear, R.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>42 employees</td>
<td>Lower employee satisfaction and more distractions in open offices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernstein, &amp; Turban, S.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>United States, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden</td>
<td>Study 1: 52 employees from 2 different companies. Study 2: 100 employees from 1 company. Study 3: lab experiment with 259 students.</td>
<td>Open offices can encourage teamwork. Distractions may cause lower productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham, Kulik, C. T., &amp; Stepina, L. P.</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>127 employees from various organisations.</td>
<td>How workers are affected by open offices depends on what kind of tasks are performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haapakangas, Hongisto, V., Varjo, J., &amp; Lahtinen, M.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>117 employees</td>
<td>Quiet zones in open offices may reduce distractions caused by noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabris</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The noise in open offices often have negative effects on concentration and productivity.</td>
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3. Theoretical Framework

In the modern workplace, there has been a debate surrounding the effectiveness of open versus closed office settings. Closed offices provide greater privacy and fewer distractions due to their enclosed private offices and cubicles, whereas open offices encourage collaboration and creativity through the lack of walls. This thesis investigates the rationale behind managers' decisions to choose one design over another and analyses the impact of office environments on business performance. As analytical frameworks, the study will employ Lean management theory, Balanced Scorecard theory, and Contingency theory.

3.1 Balanced scorecard

Robert Kaplan and David Norton created the balanced scorecard, a strategic management tool, in the early 1990s to assist organisations in measuring and managing their performance in a fair and comprehensive manner. The framework's four perspectives—financial, customer, internal operations, and learning and growth—all work together to bring an organisation's vision, mission, and strategy into alignment with its performance measurements.

The balanced scorecard has been widely used in various industries, and research has shown that it can positively impact business performance. According to a 2003 study by Ittner and Larcker, businesses that adopted balanced scorecards saw more growth and profitability than those that did not. Similar to this, a study by Wang and Lu (2012) found that companies that implemented balanced scorecards had higher levels of customer satisfaction and operational performance.

When it comes to office design, the balanced scorecard can be utilised to establish the suitable workplace environment based on the organisation's aims and objectives. For instance, an organisation that places a high priority on collaboration and teamwork may opt for an open office layout. On the other hand, an organisation that prioritises privacy and focused work may choose a closed office layout.

The financial perspective of the balanced scorecard can assist firms in determining the cost implications of any workplace arrangement. For example, open office layouts typically require less space and furniture, which can result in cost savings. However, closed office layouts may
provide more privacy and fewer distractions, which can enhance productivity and reduce errors, leading to cost savings in the long run.

The customer perspective of the balanced scorecard can assist firms determine the influence of workplace design on customer satisfaction. For example, open office design can foster a more friendly and collaborative environment, which may improve the customer experience. Closed office layouts, on the other hand, may create a more professional and private environment that is better suited for sensitive or confidential customer interactions.

The balanced scorecard's internal process perspective can aid firms in assessing how workplace architecture influences internal communication and collaboration. For instance, open office design can facilitate faster and more frequent communication amongst coworkers, allowing them to make better decisions and solve problems more rapidly. Closed office layouts, on the other hand, may help employees concentrate better and prevent distractions, leading to higher-quality work and fewer mistakes.

The learning and growth perspective of the balanced scorecard can help organisations determine the impact of office design on employee satisfaction and well-being. For example, open office layouts may increase employee engagement and collaboration, resulting in greater job satisfaction and lower turnover. On the other hand, closed office layouts may provide more privacy and reduce distractions, resulting in a healthier work-life balance and less stress.

In conclusion, the balanced scorecard provides organisations with a comprehensive framework for determining the optimal office layout based on their goals and objectives. Organisations can make well-informed choices that have a favourable effect on business performance by taking the balanced scorecard's financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth perspectives into consideration.
3.2 Lean Management Theory

Lean management theory is a cost-cutting and process improvement approach that has been widely adopted by companies in different industries (Shah & Ward, 2003). Its core principle is to reduce waste and enhance efficiency through continuous improvement processes, cooperation, and focus on client value (Womack & Jones, 1996). Kaizen, a lean management philosophy, advocates for constant development in all aspects of an organisation, including enhancing procedures, goods, services, as well as empowering and training staff members. The effects of lean management on business performance have been extensively studied in the literature, with findings showing that companies that adopt lean principles experience significant improvements in productivity, quality, and cost savings (Shah & Ward, 2003; Womack & Jones, 1996).

Lean management principles can be applied to office design to maximise space utilisation, reduce waste, and enhance communication in open or closed office settings. According to lean management philosophy, the choice between an open or closed office should be based on the particular needs of the firm and its personnel (Kim & de Dear, 2013). Open offices facilitate collaboration and communication, which are key components of lean management techniques. However, they can also lead to privacy invasions and distractions, which have a detrimental effect on output and job satisfaction (Oldham & Brass, 1979). Closed workplaces, on the other hand, offer seclusion and reduce distractions, but limit contact and collaboration (Nanayakkara, et.al, 2021).

Companies can apply lean management principles to examine their processes, communication styles, and employee demands to make well-informed decisions about their office design. This can involve polling employees or holding focus groups to get their opinions on the workplace and examining statistics on output, employee satisfaction, and other performance indicators. Ultimately, companies can decide for themselves whether an open or closed office environment would be most advantageous for their business based on this study.

Lean management theory is included as this theory is used within companies to minimise inefficiency. This can be applied to office landscapes and how decision makers arrive at what their office landscape should look like.
According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) paradigm, a company's performance is primarily influenced by its distinctive resources and skills (Barney, 1991). The ability of a company to utilise its resources to obtain a competitive advantage is referred to as its capabilities. Resources are defined as the material or intangible assets that a company possesses (Barney, 1991). According to this hypothesis, a company's office layout could be considered a resource that affects how well it performs.

Under the perspective of RBV theory, a number of research have examined the connection between office design and corporate performance. For instance, a study by Knight and Haslam (2010) indicated that improving staff productivity and job satisfaction can have a positive effect on a company's financial success. They contend that open-plan workplace designs can improve communication and teamwork, resulting in higher employee satisfaction and improved productivity. Conversely, closed office designs may offer more solitude and fewer distractions, resulting in an improvement in attention and concentration (Knight & Haslam, 2010).

Through affecting employee engagement, recruitment, and retention, office design has been found to have an impact on a company's human resource skills by Kampschroer, Heerwagen, and Powell (2011). They contend that office layout can convey a company's culture and ideals, which can affect staff morale and output. For instance, an open office layout can indicate a culture that is more inclusive and collaborative, whereas a closed office layout can indicate a culture that is more hierarchical and individualistic (Kampschroer et al., 2011). The choice of an open or closed office setting can also be based on contingency theory, which contends that the best office layout depends on the particular requirements of the company. For instance, a research by Sundstrom, Burttram, and Kamp (1980) revealed that closed office designs were better for work requiring focus and solitude while open office designs were better for jobs requiring communication and collaboration.

According to the Resource-Based Perspective hypothesis, a company's office layout can affect its success by supplying special resources and skills. Under the lens of RBV theory, a number of studies have examined the connection between office design and corporate performance, supplying proof of the influence of office design on worker productivity, job satisfaction, and human resource capabilities. The choice of an open or closed office setting can also be based
on contingency theory, which contends that the best office layout depends on the particular requirements of the company. These theories can be utilised to guide office design choices, thereby enhancing business performance.

3.4 Contingency Theory

The contingency theory indicates that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to managing businesses and that the optimum management methods rely on a range of circumstances, such as the size, structure, and external environment of the firm. In the context of open versus closed office environments, contingency theory can be used to explain why, depending on their specific circumstances, certain companies may benefit more from one design than the other.

According to a study by Kim and de Dear (2013), noise distractions were a major predictor of employee happiness in open office settings but not in closed office settings. This shows that firms operating in noisy locations, such as call centres or industrial facilities, may benefit more from closed office layouts to reduce distractions and boost employee satisfaction. However, organisations with a strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork, such as design firms and advertising agencies, may benefit more from open office layouts that foster communication and innovation.

Oldham and Brass (1979) discovered in a separate study that work complexity was a strong predictor of employee happiness in closed office settings, but not in open office settings. This shows that organisations with sophisticated, customised work, such as accounting firms and legal firms, may benefit more from closed office layouts, which allow employees to concentrate and minimise distractions.

According to research by Knight and Haslam (2010), open office layouts can improve collaboration and idea exchange, which can ultimately lead to innovation and a competitive edge. This effect was noticed exclusively in businesses with an innovative culture and a supportive management style. In contrast, closed office environments were found to be more beneficial in hierarchical firms with an emphasis on productivity.
When deciding between open and closed office environments, the theory of contingency emphasises the significance of evaluating an organisation's particular qualities. It implies that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that the optimal design will rely on a number of variables, including the organisation's culture, structure, and external environment.

4. Methodology

This qualitative study aims to investigate the impact of office layout on business success by concentrating on managers' justifications for their preferences for various office settings and the perceived consequences of these preferences for overall corporate performance and employee productivity. This study's data will be gathered through in-depth interviews with managers from varied firms who have made workplace design decisions. The interviews aim to shed light on the factors that influence decision-making and the impact of office layout on employee enjoyment, collaboration, and productivity.

This research will be guided by the contingency theory, which holds that there is no universal solution for office design and that the optimal design depends on the specific needs of each organisation. It aims to find similar themes and patterns in the decision-making process and the perceived impact of office design on business success by analysing the opinions of managers from diverse industries. With the findings, it is possible to expand our comprehension of the relationship between office layout and corporate effectiveness. This inquiry will provide insights into the decision-making process and the factors that influence office layout preferences by analysing the experiences and perspectives of managers. These insights may in turn aid other businesses in making well-informed judgments when choosing an office layout, enhancing their productivity and profitability.

The primary objective for this thesis is to analyse how the office layout might impact the success of the business by analysing the perspective of managers from different industries. This study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between office layout and business performance by analysing the decision making process and the perceived influence of office layout on corporate success. The findings of this study may assist firms in gaining a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between office layout and effectiveness in the organisation, hence increasing production and profitability.
5. Method

5.1 Research Design

Grbich (2013) explains that the research method of qualitative research is a method which can help to further develop knowledge in certain areas and give deep information. It is characterised by having different forms of interviews as data collection, and a research question that is focused on, as Grbich says, “...the what, how, when or why”. With questions of why and how, instead of answering questions with a yes or no answer, the possibility of going deep into areas and subjects is possible. This in turn gave us a chance to get a deep answer to the research question with the possibility to develop more theories and understand nuances of topics.

Our study therefore used a qualitative approach, to be able to decipher and go deeper into the question of why managers make certain choices regarding office spaces. With a qualitative approach to this question we would be able to get insights into how managers think about office spaces. This in combination with the ability to look for patterns deeply in our data to come up with possible theories and conclusions.

Another benefit of the qualitative research method was the added quality of being able to describe a topic, in this case managers' choice of office landscape, deeply and informatively.

Other research methods such as, described by Oflazoglu (2017), quantitative research which uses a statistical, numerical and quantifying approach to studies would not be able to answer our research question and fulfil the purpose of the study. This is because the quantitative method needs something to measure with numerical values. This could be done by, for example, sending out surveys to more managers then were going to be possible to interview in a time frame. However, with survey data it is not possible to answer a question framed with how or why, since these questions can not scientifically be measured, which our study is trying to answer.
5.2 Data Collection

According to Gordon (2007), there are a wide array of data collection methods, and therefore the reasoning behind the chosen one must come from certain factors. Firstly, the problem of ease and practicality. The method for collecting data needs to be manageable and doable to get workable data. The next thing to think about is if the method is applicable to your field of study. For example, using surveys to gather our data would not make it possible to even answer our research question, however with surveys the possibility to ask questions such as “on a scale of 1-10, how important is lightning in an office?” But the clear downside is that no data is gathered on understanding the reasoning and process behind making choices in the office space, which is what was wanted with a qualitative approach. Gordon mentions that another factor that can be taken into consideration is if a data collection method is suitable or shows a skill in the area of study. Lastly, Gordon explains that you should choose a data collection method that has the ability to give you more knowledge about your area. In other words, how good is the ability to output data that can answer our question and fulfil the research purpose.

With this in mind, interviews were used as our data collection method as the data could be directly gathered from the managers by interviewing them and asking about the process of designing office spaces, and to be able to ask open-ended questions with extended answers. Another benefit was being able to ask follow-up questions to get even more insights.

Gordon means that interviews is a loose-term that can mean anything to one-to-one interviews, and bigger group-interviews. He mentions three points that are characteristic of interviews. Firstly, interactive, where people interact with each other, interviewers and interviewees. Secondly, Real-time, the data collection happens live in the moment where the interviewee gets a question and answers it directly after. Lastly, the interviews are in a natural language.

Our interviews will be one-to-one interviews either over zoom or alike software, or in person. To be able to clearly make sure that all data is gathered and stored correctly and not misinterpreted we asked for permission to record.
5.3 Choice of respondents

The respondents that this study is based on are all managers that have been taking part in the process of designing and developing the office space that their corporation or department are currently utilising.

The aim was to have interviews with managers and decision makers in different companies and branches who were knowledgeable enough to answer our questions. The interviewed managers required the insight about how the office was designed, with what intention and hopefully was included in the process, so generally managers or project leaders.

We wanted to interview different companies in various industries to get a wider perspective on what managers take into consideration when deciding on office spaces. For example, if the study was conducted within one industry and 5 different companies in that industry, the needs from the companies and employees are likely to be more alike across all companies, which won’t answer a universal question about what needs to be taken into consideration when designing an office space for productivity and efficiency. The question then instead becomes “what is important for this specific industry”, which was not the research topic. As our research question was specified into just the general process of office design, this is not something that was taken strongly into consideration.

The delimitation of the interviewees was firstly to interview managers who were knowledgeable about our subject and could answer our questions. This is of course hard to know beforehand but by having a dialogue with the interviewee beforehand ensured that they had knowledge that could help.

Also, as stated earlier, diversification was looked after by getting different industries in our interviews. However, there are not any specific industries or branches that were targeted. Because of that, the industries which our interviewees were from would have to be taken into account since that could have an effect on the result.

5.3.1 Knowit

Linda Hansen - Mood Manager

The company Knowit has a different manager who was in the project with different architects and the other companies which would sit in the same building. However, it was Linda together with the management that decided how the office would look like for Floor Eleven which
belongs to Knowit. Linda's role in the company is to make sure that the landscape is constantly evolving for the employees best and take into consideration all important factors. She is also the person who is most current to talk to currently and has knowledge on why the company is designed and structured in the way it is and what the thought process is behind.

5.3.2 Husqvarna

Lars-Göran Hermansson - Manager at Facility Services and a project leader
Lars-Göran is one of the main parties involved with the project NextOffice which is designed to evolve Husqvarnas offices to deal with problems regarding expansion, former pandemic affecting workspace and employee satisfaction and needs. In his role as Manager for the facility services he has good knowledge about how Husqvarnas offices are designed and why.

5.3.3 Wint

Mathilda Silverwaldt - People & Culture Manager
Mathilda's role in the company is to manage and develop the company's personnel and organisational culture. She is one of the people who have helped shape Wint's office landscape into what it is today. Her focus is on creating and maintaining a positive work environment, promoting employee engagement and well-being to align with the company's strategic goals.

5.3.4 Skogsstyrelsen

Office Manager
Our interviewee at Skogsstyrelsen is the office manager that has been taking part in their move to their new office space in 2021. He is one of the people that have had an impact on the layout and structure of Skogsstyrelsen’s office and he is also one of the people that are continuously working to improve the office space in order to satisfy the needs of the employees and the organisation.

5.3.5 Swedbank

Adnan Mirascija - Investment Manager
Adnan, who works at Swedbank, has not been a decision-making factor in how the office landscape for Swedbank in Jönköping specifically, but he is one of those who has been there
for a longer period and knows the mindset around how they sit and work today and the
development of the office landscape through the years.

5.4 Questions for the interview

Our questions were designed to generally answer some areas about our research question,
regarding the decision process managers go through on office spaces and the effects it can have.

To guide our interviews and make the structures between our interviews similar, a
questionnaire was used as a guide for the interviews.

The question: “Are there any especially important things you try to achieve when you think
about designing the office landscape? For example, employee satisfaction, mental health,
productivity, and effectiveness?”, opened a discussion about what is important for the
companies when designing their office and what they value, and also how they think it can
impact productivity. However this was also asked directly with the question: “How do you try
to increase the work capabilities and effectiveness by the design and the office landscapes?”

With these 2 questions we got insights into what the companies value when designing offices,
and how they do it and why, and what impact they want on effectiveness and productivity.

There also were more general questions about the offices, if they are open or closed for
example, or what they think about it. Also questions about the process of designing the
landscape.

Even if all questions are not directly asking about productivity or efficiency, the information
needed was still gathered. As for example if one company values good lighting in the office
environment, that can be their focus point into making the office a pleasant place to work in,
therefore helping productivity.

The interviews were recorded for more accurate data and made sure there was no missed
information or misinterpretation, this with first asking the interviewee for their acceptance and
stating what our intentions were, how the recording will be used and their information.

If there was a need to ask a spontaneous follow up question to explain something more deeply,
we asked. However, sticking to the same interview questionnaire was important and paramount
to make sure that each interview could be compared equally and our results and analysis would not be compromised.

The complete questionnaire for the interviews is available in the appendix.

5.5 Analyzing data

After the conducting of interviews the next step in the process was analyzing the collected data. The tool used for analyzing the data is coding. Coding as a tool assisted us by more easily narrowing down and making the interview data easily analyzed by highlighting texts into themes, starting from more common, then going down through a filter grouping common codes. This, in turn, lead to finding clear themes and comparing these to the different firms. Having the codes by the side when we analyzed highlighted patterns much easier across the different interviews and the same interview, to be able to come to a conclusion in the end.

In addition to coding the texts also were analyzed through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks. These theories helped us see how different managers have applied the theories in reality and what they wanted to achieve and convey with the help of the theories. This helped us see similarities with the managers' way of thinking and the theories in order to be able to draw clear conclusions and for the analysis of the data to strengthen the model of the existing theories.

5.6 Journal notes

This study initiated with researching the subject of office landscapes, mentioned more in depth in the literature study on what was found. After researching and getting background information on how offices have evolved, how they function and the elements to it, a research gap was found regarding how managers or other decision makers make their decisions regarding the layout and how they expect it to affect effectiveness and productivity.

After this was done the process of figuring out how to actually do the study started. As there were no theories or hypotheses to test, but we wanted to look for patterns, the decision was made to settle on a qualitative study using interviews as the method of gathering data, as answers could be received directly from the managers or other decision makers.
Later we started looking for theoretical frameworks and preparing for the interviews by making a questionnaire with the questions suitable to answer our research question and fulfil the purpose of the study. There was a need to think about what kind of managers would meet the criteria for our study.

As soon as possible after all work that needed to be conducted before the interviews was finalised, sending out requests to the wanted interviewees among different industries was important. We tried to get the interviews booked as early as possible to have more time to handle the raw data.

When the interviews were done with all the companies, Swedbank, Husqvarna, Skogsstyrelsen, Wint and KnowIt, we had to transcribe the interviews firstly, which after could be analysed, firstly using coding to make the data more manageable and to make it easier to find patterns.

After coding, the process of analysing our interviews and data through the lenses of the theoretical framework started. By making sure that the time planned for the steps before had been followed, there was enough time over to not feel stressed and have a need to rush the analysis.

During all this time, it was clear from the beginning that there were going to be a lot of moments where the need to write, read, review and refine would appear often. The first draft could not be expected to be the final one, which did not happen, therefore making sure to stay on time was important to have time over to rewrite parts.

6. Empirical Data

6.1 Husqvarna

One of the companies interviewed was Husqvarna, which is a manufacturer of a big number of different products. Mainly, electric powered products focused on maintaining gardens, parks or woods. As a big company with a long history, they have many different sections in their branch.

At Husqvarna, Lars-Göran Hermansson was interviewed. He is a Manager at Facility Services and a project leader in the project called NextOffice, where Husqvarna is looking to rebuild
their office landscapes with help from Kinnarps by first benchmarking, taking support from research and analysing and surveys from employees.

One of their main problems is that they are looking to expand their office and don’t have enough places to sit for everybody, but at the same time they have people working from home from the pandemic times, which creates an inefficiency and waste, so how do they create a work environment where people want to come in and work and have room for enough people? With the project NextOffice they have analysed that they will have ergonomic workspaces for 70% of the staff, meaning that it is calculated that at least 30% of the staff will work from home or remote locations at a given day, or be sick or be away for other reasons.

The NextOffice project is based on Activity Based Workbase, where people sit and adjust where they are in the office depending on what needs they have for the day and what they are going to do. Lars-Göran explains that some days employees need to have presentations or meetings, so a small room to not be disturbed would be perfect. However, other days they need to cooperate and work together with their colleagues.

Husqvarna currently have built their offices as a semi-open landscape with multiple standardised desks where people can just connect their laptop and sit where they need during the day. They have smaller rooms, bigger rooms and landscapes. However the core is built as an open landscape with smaller rooms as accessories. When Lars-Göran was asked about the evolution of open and closed offices, he mentioned that previously it was more of a status thing to have their own office. Even if some people still prefer it, there is less than expected.

As a big company they also have a lot of different departments with different needs, so their employees have unique offices depending on which department they are in, for example not every department can’t work with just a laptop and sit wherever there is a place to connect with a docking station, HR for example needs papers which they can lock in. Engineers might need bigger desks to be able to work with products, and customer service sits in its own department in cubicles as they need to communicate and move around to solve errands.

When they started analysing and benchmarking for NextOffice, they sent out a survey to the employees and asked them about different types of environments, how much they preferred to work in them, for example Cafés, their own rooms, just a desk and so on.
They also asked about what he thought was important for the employees to be able to work productively and effectively. They asked about things such as lightning, noise, space, colours and layouts. This became the base for the project to make decisions from.

The offices will, after NextOffice is implemented, be based around a starting position for the employees for a specific department, but the offices will be more open. So when people come in for the day, they will have the starting position as their main place to start the day from, and spread out from there depending on what they need to do during the day. Lars-Göran mentioned that the employees have been worried about this part since they will not be sure how they are going to find their close colleagues, and where to sit as it is important to feel a sense of belonging.

When Lars-Göran was asked about the pros and cons regarding open versus closed office, there is firstly a con with open where there can be a lot of distractions and hard to escape, however with closed, the other end of spectrum appears where there is no sense of teamwork and discussion among employees.

Generally, they have realised the importance of lightning and sound in a work environment in how it affects the employees, as sound is one of the most disturbing and annoying things in a work environment. Their offices are generally built as more open, with either open landscape, rooms for multiple people (generally 4-6). But they stress the importance to stay away from either single room as it does not support overhearing and cooperation, and especially open landscapes with a lot of people and sound where you can’t escape distractions when they get too overwhelming.

Regarding sound and lightning, Husqvarna put in multiple measures to make sure that the employees are not distracted and do not get the feeling of not being able to escape the distractions. If a place is loud and distracting, in an open-office for example, and the employees have nowhere to escape, it can create a real stressful environment. Firstly, they put in textile carpets to reduce the sound level around the office. Also they have different lamps, for example good LED-lamps that give a pleasant brightness in the room,
6.2 Knowit

Knowit is a consulting company that supports various organisations and companies in the digital transformation. They include competencies in IT, design, communication and management to develop sustainable and innovative solutions that contribute to a high standard business world for their clients.

Knowit has an open landscape similar to Husqvarna. The corridors and design of the office shape the office, which gives the impression that it consists of several different sized rooms where, among other things, curtains have been hung for sound dampening. The office also has small rooms, pop-in rooms, which are small rooms with glass walls, the idea of which is to be able to have a private conversation or shorter team meetings. The idea with this room is not that it should be a personal office but a room that you can book for a short period of time. So if an employee wants to have some alone time or take a personal call or meeting there is an opportunity for them to take this undisturbed. For larger meetings, they have conference rooms that are available for everyone within the company.

The company, which consists of several different companies, previously sat separately in different offices around Gothenburg. Last year, they moved to completely new premises where they now sit together with all the companies. The reason for the move was mainly because it was seen that this would promote crucial cooperation and communication between the companies in order to grow. The move meant that instead of sending an email to a colleague in another company, you could now meet for a quick coffee to discuss the issue and get a faster and more detailed answer. Which in turn increases efficiency as you get faster responses from colleagues, instead of waiting for an email. With this they also hoped to create a greater teamwork with all the companies involved.

As previously mentioned, Knowit moved into a brand new building which was inaugurated last year. In the project for this building, of course, architects, the construction company that will carry out work were involved, but also managers from each company that would sit in the new building had to be involved. The different managers from the different companies did not have much influence on how the foundations of the building would look. All floors and offices in the building have the same foundation. After that, each company has designed their office themselves to the landscapes that suit them. So you have been given a surface to work with and
then create a landscape based on this that you believe promotes the best in the employees. But
the decision to Knowit's floor and its landscape rests with the board. As previously stated, the
basis for the decision is that the new landscape should promote cooperation and communication
in order to improve efficiency. If Knowit would had wanted to have closed offices, they would
not have made the choice to move to a larger office where everyone can fit together, so that
was the reason for the entire move.

Knowit focuses a lot on internal co-working and the landscape they have today has really
contributed to this. They do not believe in the old "locking themselves up" in private offices,
but want to create an open environment where creativity, productivity and efficiency can flow
between all the companies together. In order to adapt to the needs of different individuals, they
of course have pop-in rooms or conference rooms that you can use as all people are different
and sometimes you may need to distance yourself to focus better. They have also thought about
interior design and different seating to once again create an environment where employees feel
at home and where they can be most productive. Knowit values its employees' opinions
regarding everything within the company, especially landscape and its design. The work
environment they have created, where employees feel free to express their opinions, indicates
that they put a lot of focus on their employees and that together they can make bigger and better
differences.

6.3 Wint
Wint is an accounting agency that differs from others as it is a comprehensive service that
automates the company's finances. The company works in their own systems that they create
and develop together with the company's developers. What also sets the company apart is that
the economists who sit and book all the finances in the system get to participate and give tips
on how to develop and improve the system, so everyday collaboration with the developers takes
place.

Today, Wint sits on the 23rd floor of the new buildingJac'z in Gothenburg. Up on the 23rd
floor, the company has an open landscape with a view of all of Gothenburg. In addition to the
open landscape, the company also has smaller rooms where you can have important personal
conversations or meetings, but also larger conference rooms where you can hold larger
meetings. The decision to have an open office landscape was in the hands of the management,
which includes the CEO, CFO, CMO, COO, CTO and People & Culture Manager. Since one of the company's values is "We do it together and We aim higher", it is important to have a landscape that promotes community and new ideas that you get by interacting with each other across team boundaries.

Since Wint themselves developed their system they work in, they are in great need of exchange from each other in everyday life in order to move forward and find new solutions to problems. An open landscape therefore promotes this opportunity when you can sit together with your team or other teams within the company. For Wint, it is important to maintain a dynamic environment that favours innovation. They believe that sitting and working only in their own teams or only by themselves will not lead to new solutions or ways of thinking that are ground-breaking or significant for their industry and company. Apart from the promotion of collaboration, Wint also wants to ensure that they have a good and functioning work environment, as the work environment comes first. For example, we try to remind colleagues to take longer calls in other spaces so as not to disturb colleagues who are sitting and working concentrated. It must be a calm working environment. Some teams that sit more in conversation usually sit close to each other. This is to try, in one way or another, to create a work environment where you feel you can perform.

No team has a definite or specific place where they sit down. However, they prefer to sit together as it helps in the daily work. So all teams get to sit where they want and how they want. But as previously mentioned, you usually sit down with your team when you need to collaborate with each other or possibly play around with different ideas. The management has tried to find a middle ground where they partly encourage employees to move around to get to know each other better, but also have an understanding that we are people of habit who have a need for predictability. Everyone is different and everyone has different needs and ways of thinking about how they like to sit when they work. Some have no problem with changing office locations every day, but others stress. So if you need to sit in more or less the same place or area every day, that is also ok.

Each type of office landscape has its advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages of an open office landscape can be that some people cannot maintain the same focus as they might have if they had been sitting in their own office. In addition to this, the disadvantage of an open office landscape can be that constant interruptions occur, but this also favours the spread of
skills among those who sit in the same landscape. But what suits one person can differ enormously and can also depend on what one's role or duties are. We have therefore designed our office in such a way that there are several smaller work rooms that you can use if you need to work undisturbed. As employers, we have a responsibility to adapt as best we can where there is also the possibility to work from home a few days a week if the need exists. But mainly we see that you work in the office as this makes work more efficient and where you often feel more productive as you can get help from colleagues if you run into any problems or if you want to brainstorm ideas.

6.4 Skogsstyrelsen

Skogsstyrelsen, also referred to as the Swedish Forest Agency, is a Swedish government agency that primarily works with forest administration and supervision. Skogsstyrelsen was established in 1941 and plays an important role in promoting sustainable forest management practices and preserving the ecological, economic and social values of Swedish forests.

Skogsstyrelsen in Jönköping moved into a newly constructed building in 2021 where they had the possibility to be a part of the development of their new office space. Previous to their move in 2021 Skogsstyrelsen primarily used what they themself refer to as “cell offices” where more or less each employee had their own office. In 2019 when Skogsstyrelsen initially started working towards their move to their new office, they knew that the “cell offices” needed to be removed in favour of a more open office landscape that encourage spontaneous meetings as well as a more creative working environment. In addition to the intended work benefits in the new office, Skogsstyrelsen has been praised for the environmental thinking and aesthetics of their new office.

Since their move in 2021 Skogsstyrelsen’s office layout is a mix of an open landscape where conversation and collaboration is encouraged, there are also some workrooms where employees can go to have private conversations or take phone calls in order not to disturb anyone. In addition to the workrooms that are primarily used for privacy, there are also designated quiet zones in the open landscape where dialogue is to be kept to a minimum and phones etc. are to be set to silent mode in order not to disturb your coworkers. The essence of the mixed landscape at Skogsstyrelsen is the idea that you have different tasks to perform at your job and therefore, your needs when it comes to your workspace will differ between
different tasks. For example, when working with projects the ideal workspace might be one where you can easily communicate with your coworkers and therefore the open landscape might be preferred, but when working with more investigative tasks, a closed office with privacy and fewer distractions might be the best workspace for the occasion.

Skogsstyrelsen have made it so that they have 100% coverage of workplaces in regard to their staff, so that if needed, everybody could come into the office and find a place to sit down and work for the day. This in combination with the fiduciary working hours that Skogsstyrelsen uses means that there is no need for anyone to be the first person in the office in order to find a suitable space to work.

Skogsstyrelsen’s office in Jönköping is their headquarters, but in addition to this office they also have another 75 offices in Sweden. One of the benefits of having this many offices is that they get a wide understanding of what employees value in their workplace and what the employees dislike. This information can then be used and analysed to understand trends and help them create an understanding about what the future of the workplace might look like. With 75 offices all over the country Skogsstyrelsen is quite often involved in the process of moving from one location to another and if there is one trend or takeaway from this, it is that in their experience and with regards to the kind of work that they do, the mix of open landscapes where you are free to choose where to sit and closed spaces where you can sit by yourself is the future of the office.

One of the largest difficulties that Skogsstyrelsen has encountered is to find the balance whereas many employees as possible are happy with changes that are being made, but also to make large enough changes to make sure that the organisation keeps evolving. Since a large portion of the people that currently work at Skogsstyrelsen’s office in Jönköping have spent a majority of their work life in a “cell office” where they could decorate their room themselves and keep their personal belongings, it has been a fairly large adjustment to no longer have your own space.

Furthermore there are three different functions or departments at Skogsstyrelsen that more or less have permanent placements in the office, the registry, the IT support and the customer service department. These three departments have their own areas where they are seated since the tasks that they perform have different requirements that what most other departments
require. For example the registry needs to have access to an archive and a scanner amongst other things. The IT department are also seated together in order to enable communication and collaboration to solve problems and tasks that arise. When it comes to the customer service department they are also seated together even though that is no longer a necessity, previously the customer service department was in charge of the telephone exchange which was one of the reasons for why they had their own space. Another reason for why the customer service has their own designated space is because in relation to most other departments it is quite loud and they need to be able to answer the phones and help customers without being bothered by any other departments as well as not to bother the other departments.

6.5 Swedbank

Swedbank is a modern bank that offers banking and insurance services for individuals and companies. The bank is one of the largest in Sweden and is a bank with great social commitment and acts as sponsors for many important organisations such as Friends for example which, among other things, works against bullying among children.

Swedbank's office in Jönköping is 80% open landscape, but with closed offices for managers. They also have smaller group rooms that you can book which are included in the other 20% that are not open. The decision regarding this lies centrally with the bank, which means that all Swedbank branches must apply this type of office layout. However, there are smaller offices in smaller towns where the open office landscape has not yet been applied. This may be because these offices do not have as many people working there, so it may be that they are more comfortable sitting in closed offices but still maintain a high level of community.

But one can definitely state that it is moving towards a more open landscape than it was before, both at the office in Jönköping but also in many other banks. Swedbank have gradually gone from completely closed office rooms to open landscapes. It is a development that has been going on for a long time but has advanced in the last 10 years. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, it creates a more social environment where everyone is included and gets to share in each other's presence. Employees can discuss, talk about work or pleasure and ask questions directly. There is also a practical advantage that you can sit in the same room as a team working in different project groups together. Then they can discuss out loud and arrive at results faster
as you don't have to call each other or wait for email replies or the like. Many people do not approach someone who is sitting in a closed room just because it is closed and then you miss out on many valuable discussions. But it has been noticed that the majority prefers open landscapes when working freely. However, they have to sit in offices or group rooms during meetings due to confidentiality.

When Swedbank Jönköping have thought about the shaping of office landscapes, they have had two main factors in mind, mental health and productivity. Social cohesion is important when working and collaborating, and it goes hand in hand with efficiency and productivity. The better you feel, the better you will be able to perform your work. Managers can see that the open office landscape has contributed to this. So this is, among other things, the positive of an open office landscape, but also that employees always work in a group on a case and therefore usually sit close together. You can discuss, ask questions and come to a conclusion in a more efficient way. Everyone has different skills and when you collaborate closely, the best results are achieved. Disadvantages can be that you become too comfortable and there is a lot of discussion regarding pleasures and private life or something that has nothing to do with work. It can disturb you who is talking but also the colleagues around you who want a quiet working environment. This can be a problem sometimes. In the bank, one also often talks about sensitive things and are often on the phone. It can be uncomfortable to talk about some topics in front of others and then you have to abruptly look for a room, which can be considered a disadvantage as you lose precious time.

The open landscape is designed so that the groups that collaborate the most sit together. That is, business advisors sit with other advisors who work with businesses and privately sit in another room. Swedbank only looks for the probability of cooperation and that one should then be close to each other in these groups. The difficulty in constructing an office landscape is first and foremost to place everyone so that you match the groups that can collaborate but also the availability of space. There must be large open spaces and sometimes you have to think again, rent a larger room, or divide into closed or open sections. When it comes to taking into account the employees' different needs and the fact that some people prefer to sit alone, it's not something Swedbank thinks about except for the managers sitting in their rooms. It is up to the employee to then book into a group room every day when they need a quiet working environment or just want to sit by themselves. There are no options and you cannot decide
between open and closed. It's open as long as you don't decide that you want to sit somewhere by yourself.

In summary, it can be said that Swedbank is moving towards a more generalising way of working, that is, a way of working that involves working in teams, project groups and collaboration. In the old days, an employee did many different parts by themselves, and today there are 2 or 3 different roles that have to do their respective parts. This means more employees, but also that you need to gather these in one place to promote collaboration and efficiency. Employees should not only be colleagues, but there should be some friendship in the relationship. This is simplified if you sit in the same room every day and talk to each other. The mental part is important at Swedbank, talking to your colleagues, not only about work but about fun. You should have fun at your workplace, within healthy limits of course. This leads to a good working environment and happier employees. Then you shouldn't forget that privacy requires closed rooms in many cases and you can't avoid that. Sensitive conversations and discussions as well. Some employees may even find it inconvenient to talk on the phone in front of others and become embarrassed, and then there are closed office rooms to book.

7. Analysis

In the following analysis, the information that was gathered in the interviews will be analysed in accordance with the theories that were presented in chapter 4, where the structure follows the same chronological order.

7.1 Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard is a tool to assist organisations in measuring and managing their performance. The framework includes all the perspectives that are most important for a successful office landscape, which are financial, customer, internal operations and learning and growth. These four perspectives must together bring an organisation's mission, vision, and strategy into alignment with its performance measurements.

Balanced scorecard says that those organisations "that places a high priority on collaboration and teamwork may opt for an open office layout". We can see this as a clear connection to all
the organisations interviewed but also a clear connection to Bernstein and Turban and their
discovery that open office environments do encourage greater in-person encounters and
teamwork among coworkers. The reason why all the companies chose to go for an open
landscape is because this will promote teamwork, cooperation and efficiency together with this.
But at the same time, we have Swedbank, whose work consists of confidentiality, which makes
it necessary for them to have separate rooms, in addition to the closed ones, where they can
talk about sensitive or private information. This is precisely what the balanced scorecard says,
that the companies that prioritise privacy choose an office landscape that is more closed. But
even the other companies have smaller rooms that you can book if you need to work
undisturbed for a little while or if you have to take an important call. But the difference is that
their reason is to be able to adapt to different individuals and their needs, as well as to create
work peace if someone needs to take a private call and not have to do this where everyone is
sitting and working. Swedbank has a reason where the job requires confidentiality towards its
customers and its sensitive information, so therefore they have to have it compared to the other
companies that don't have to, but choose to have it themselves.

As for the financial part, the balance scorecard says that open office layouts typically require
less space and furniture, which in turn leads to saving money. Wint, Knowit, Husqvarna and
the Swedish Forestry Agency who recently moved to new premises with new open office
landscapes may have had this aspect in mind, as renovations and moves like these can cost a
lot of money. Swedbank, on the other hand, has gone from a more closed landscape to a more
open one, but still has part of its office closed. There, the balanced scorecard says that closed
office layouts may provide more privacy and fewer distractions and that this can also contribute
to cost savings in the long run. Swedbank, on the other hand, does not see closing offices as
something that will benefit them in the future, but has these offices for special reasons that are
part of the bank's job when working with confidentiality and sensitive information. This can
also be seen in their numbers in that 80% of the office is open precisely because people believe
more and less that teamwork weighs more and benefits you more in the long run.

The internal process perspective of the balanced scorecard can help businesses evaluate how
workplace design affects internal communication and collaboration. An open workplace
layout, for instance, might encourage quicker and more frequent contact among employees,
ensuring them to make better decisions and deal with issues more quickly. This is exactly what
they are trying to achieve in all five companies that we have interviewed. With the help of open
landscapes, they want to create a work environment where teamwork and communication should lead to collaborations that strengthen and make work more efficient.

Knowit - “The reason for the move was mainly because it was seen that this would promote crucial cooperation and communication between the companies in order to grow.”

Wint - “Since one of the company's values is "We do it together and We aim higher", it is important to have a landscape that promotes community and new ideas that you get by interacting with each other across team boundaries.”

Skogsstyrelsen - “Since their move in 2021 Skogsstyrelsen’s office layout is a mix of an open landscape where conversation and collaboration is encouraged...”

Swedbank - “Social cohesion is important when working and collaborating, and it goes hand in hand with efficiency and productivity. The better you feel, the better you will be able to perform your work. We see that the open office landscape has contributed to this.”

The quotes above show that the various companies and their managers have had a similar mindset when it comes to choosing an office landscape. The common factor, which is also strengthened by the balanced scorecard, is that you want to create an environment where communication and collaboration happen naturally and that this in turn should lead to more efficient and productive work.

7.2 Lean management theory

Lean Management Theory is a theory that is based on the idea that by removing as much as possible that is not essential for performing a task, the task could be done more efficiently. As we can see from all of the interviews that have been held, open or at least partly open office landscapes is the most popular choice for employers. This falls in line with the Lean Management Theory where open office landscapes are the most popular choice due to the fact that communication is greatly simplified when there are no walls or other obstacles in the way of getting quick answers from your closest colleagues.
Waste reduction is one of the core principles of the Lean Management Theory. The definitions of waste could be anything from idle time or delays caused by inefficient communications or processes, or it could be unnecessary movement of people or information caused by poor layout that in turn creates wasted time. Waste could even be unused talent or non-utilised creativity. All of the previously mentioned factors of waste could be minimised when utilising the office layout that is best for the type of business that each office is conducting. All of the businesses and organisations that have been interviewed for this paper utilise an open office layout where communication is encouraged and made as easy as possible. Enabling communication by implementing open office landscapes also reduces the non-utilised creativity since the open landscape enables overhearing conversations, which makes it easier for colleagues to check in with their view of problems or possible solutions.

The open office landscape can lead to distractions and privacy invasions due to its lack of private space. This is a problem that a majority of the interviewed organisations have solved in a similar way. By implementing private workrooms the businesses have created the possibility for the employees to find a quiet environment where they can work privately or have private conversations with customers or other coworkers. The possibility for workers to choose a closed office for the day but to have the open office space as the standard, solves the issue of employees experiencing a lack of privacy in the workplace in a simple way that is also efficient in terms of how the office space is used since the number of closed offices can be greatly reduced since not all employees need to use them at the same time.

7.3 Research based view

According to the resource-based view, the office is a resource that affects the company’s performance in different ways. With many of the companies interviewed, they put a lot of effort into making the office a place that suits its employees and the company, in other words, they put work into refining the office as a resource to improve things such as productivity by making the office a more pleasant place to work.

The crux regarding seeing the office design as resource, is that it is a type of resource that is not directly used, such as an intangible asset as a copyright, nor a tangible asset like a printer.
However, every employee in the office is directly affected by the office landscape and by the environment around them. So through the lens of a resource-based perspective it is possible to see what the interviewed companies have done to improve, refine and create the office design to get a resource that fosters productivity and efficiency.

As seen in the empirical data, the companies interviewed are aware that office design is a resource that needs to be looked at under a microscopic view, since it affects corporate performance and even employee performance regarding how the offices are designed. One of the ways they improved the office was the focus on creating a calm, sound-dampening and non-distracting environment which does not distract to impair employees ability to work efficiently. For example, the sound-dampening curtains at KnowIt, or the use of textile mats at Husqvarna to reduce the sound-levels.

Another step the companies generally have made to improve the office design as a resource to improve productivity is the general move towards more open landscapes in different ways. Generally the main reason for this was to improve discussion and teamwork among the employees. However, the companies are generally aware that every office can not be 100 % open, and need ways where employees can escape the distracting parts of open offices.

The transition towards more open offices also align with the improvements of sound-dampening as the general downside with an open-landscape is the noise level and distractions. It is then reasonable that measures are taken against the negative effects of an open landscape to maintain a productive work level from the employees.

7.4 Contingency theory

The contingency theory is based on the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when managing a business and that the specific circumstances surrounding your business is what needs to be taken into account when deciding how the business should be managed. The interviews that have been held display quite clear evidence of this, all of the interviewed organisations utilise some form of a mix between an open landscape and closed offices. Swedbank for example uses closed offices for the managers whilst other companies such as Wint and Skogsstyrelsen use an office landscape that applies to all workers present at the office.
Moreover, almost all of the organisations that have been interviewed, have used the open office landscape in different ways.

Husqvarna as well as Wint have implemented an open office landscape where there are no personal desks in order to promote the workers to choose a new workplace every other day and to enable interaction with more coworkers and to increase the communication in the office. At the same time, it is not uncommon for the employees to work with projects where it is necessary to be seated together with your colleagues in order to communicate and work together. This means that whilst it is encouraged to move around the office and find new places to work, you might become slightly limited in your options if the entire team needs to work closely together.

The results from the interviews that have been held indicate clearly that the nature of business does have a strong impact on the design of the office space. All of the organisations that have been interviewed for this study use similar office layouts and designs. The open office landscape that is increasing in popularity is the obvious choice for these companies since the work that they do is reliant on cooperation and communication, something that the open landscape promotes and increases.

All of the companies use the open office landscape but they all use it in slightly different ways, Skogsstyrelsen have implemented quiet zones for example where the sound levels are to be kept as quiet as possible in order not to disturb your coworkers. Husqvarna have taken a similar approach as Skogsstyrelsen but they also have slightly different needs, their engineers require larger desks and more space so Husqvarna have made it so that the engineers have their own workstations whilst the other employees do not. Knowit is a company that consists of several companies, in order to create an environment that suits all of the companies, Knowit uses an open office landscape in order to increase the communication, not only in their own company but also between the companies within. Swedbank also uses the open office landscape but the greatest difference in their design compared to the other companies is that the employees have their own desks and therefore do not have the same possibilities to move around in the office. The primary reason for using the personal workstations is confidentiality which is something that is prominent in the banking industry. Wint uses a similar approach as Skogsstyrelsen and Husqvarna with the main difference being the extent to which Wint works in teams, even though employees are encouraged to move around in the office and find new places to work, it is also necessary for the employees to sit with their teams in order to work as efficiently as
possible. The solution to this is that the teams move around together so that there still is a change in environment whilst you are still seated with your team to perform at your best.

It is clear that the circumstances surrounding the nature of the business as well as the conditions of the office is what ultimately determines how companies choose to design and develop their offices.

8. Conclusion

In order to contribute to the literature and create a new comprehension of the impact that the office landscape can have on the activities performed, the purpose of this study was to investigate what managers and decision makers consider when selecting the type of office landscape to be utilised.

Managers and decision makers choose the office layout based on what type of business is conducted in the office. The advantages and disadvantages of both the open and closed office landscape is considered and many times this results in a combination of the two options. Furthermore, since managers desire employees who appreciate and feel safe in the workplace; the open office landscape with the possibility to use private workrooms is the most frequent choice, as employees can decide in which environment they can perform optimally. Increased communication and collaboration between coworkers, will in turn increase both productivity as well as efficiency in the workplace.

After conducting the study the results display that managers choose what type of office layout to use based on the nature of the business that is being conducted in the office. Since there are many different tasks being performed in most offices, there are also different needs and requirements for the office space to be suitable for all employees. Communication within the office as well as creative exchange between colleagues are two factors that managers take into account when deciding what type of office layout to use

Hence the answer to the research question “Why do managers, or other decision makers, choose their office layout the way they do and what effect are they expecting to have on the employees efficiency and productivity?” is as follows:
Managers decide what type of office layout to use based on the nature of the business and the needs of the employees. Based on the character of the business and what type of office layout is chosen, it is expected that the office layout will improve both efficiency and productivity, either by increased communication and creative exchanges between coworkers or by privacy and a decrease in distractions.

9. Discussion

We spend the majority of our time at work and in the office. The importance of the office landscape and how they are designed and affect the employees is therefore increasingly important today. The office contributes to structure, purpose and a pinch of meaning in the workfield. Over the last years the design and thinking and design of the office landscape around the world has evolved. The choice of an office landscape for a business and its employees is a very important matter today. The reflection behind each decision in regards to the office landscape is purposeful and where several aspects are taken into account. Our study seeks to research into the rationale and analysis of these decision-making processes and its purpose of shaping a landscape that hopefully will lead to a more productive and functional workplace environment.

As previously stated, our study aims to provide valuable insight and guidance to companies in the same industry, as well as to other industries, based on the experiences of the interviewed companies and their decision making regarding office landscape. We hope that our analysis and research in these decision-making processes will encourage other companies to reflect if this approach would be suitable for them or if another approach may be more suitable. Additionally, we believe that this study will provide the interviewed companies an opportunity to reflect on their decisions regarding office landscape and hopefully identify areas for improvement with the help of our research questions.

The advantages of our study lies in the diverse range of industries that provides valuable insight in their decision-making process and the accomplishments of these decisions. By choosing companies from different industries, we hope that our findings and analysis will extend to a larger audience in different industries. This allows external companies to compare their own
decision-making process with those of our interviews and potentially benefit from the lessons learned and maybe apply their method to their own office landscape decision. Essentially, this approach will enable a more detailed analysis of the factors involved in choosing a suitable office landscape, and provide guidance for companies that are in the beginning of that process or seeking to improve their environment.

What may be seen as a negative factor in this study is that perhaps one should instead have chosen to focus on one and the same industry in order to actually get an even clearer result and be able to draw clear conclusions. By choosing different types of companies and different industries, you may not get a very clear result, but a result where you more or less have to draw your own conclusions and read a little between the lines. If you had specifically chosen an industry or just a company, you might have been able to get even more information and maybe even be able to participate in the decision-making journey and be an important factor that contributes educational information to the company.

9.1 Limitations

The limitations brought upon this thesis are essential to address despite the insights, findings, and contributions found in this study. Initially, one manager from each company is interviewed. This means that the insight into the company and all ideas discussed together with all parties of the management for the decision on the choice of office landscape are not included. There may be managers who have seen the process from a different perspective and could have strengthened the information we were given. In connection with this, you potentially only get the refined version of how the process actually transpired.

Furthermore, five companies within the area of Jönköping and Gothenburg are included in the study. Hence, potential differences based on geographical locations have not been established. In contrast, the aim was to investigate the topic from the manager’s point of view, which is the reasoning behind the choice not to include additional geographical locations. Lastly, the companies included in this study are operating within different industries, an analysis of companies within the same industries would perhaps lead to different findings and is a potential avenue for future research within the area.
9.2 Future research areas

Further potential research in this field can be conducted by conducting a variety of analysis that includes the perspectives of the employees and their opinion. This can be done in two different ways, either through in-depth interviews with the employees or questionnaires that you send out to one or more companies, depending on the industry you want to investigate. It may also be beneficial to research other methodologies for measuring the two factors productivity and efficiency. This can be done over a period of time or years to see if any evident changes have taken place. With the help of these measurements one can then investigate and analyze the impact of office layout on these particularly two important factors.

Additional potential future research could be to consider other factors that may influence and affect an employee's productivity and efficiency. In line with this it could be useful to carry out qualitative research to learn more about the employees’ subjective perceptions of various office environments. Researchers can contribute to a more thorough understanding of the connection between office landscapes and worker performance by pursuing various lines of investigation and interviews.

A final future research area could involve extending the scope of the analysis beyond the Swedish borders and to get a comparison between Sweden and other nations. This could potentially yield a greater insight and variation on the range of perspectives and processes. Furthermore, this could facilitate nations exchanging ideas and get inspiration that can be adapted to one's personal nation and hopefully learn from each other.

9.3 Ethical considerations

When it comes to office layout, the fact that different employees have different needs for their workspace is a significant ethical issue for the managers to take into consideration. Some employees may require a quiet and private workspace in order to be productive while other employees might need a more open and collaborative space environment in order to perform their best at work.

Providing all employees with equal access to the resources and facilities they need in order to perform their tasks effectively is an ethical consideration. This means that managers need to
take into account the needs and preferences of all employees when allocating the different resources, such as private offices, meeting rooms and common areas.

Making sure that no employees are unjustly disadvantaged or excluded based on their needs or requirements for their workspace is a further ethical concern. For instance, it would be unethical for an employer to deny an employee access to a private office if they require one due to a medical condition.

Managers must also consider the ethical implications of office layouts for the health and well-being of employees. A configuration that encourages collaboration and communication, such as an open office, may increase tension and anxiety due to noise and distractions. Managers are responsible for ensuring that office layouts promote the health and well-being of employees while also catering to their specific needs and preferences.

In general, the moral questions raised by office design and specific needs and requirements are complicated and demand careful thought. Managers must balance on a fine line between the demands of individual employees and the organisation's overarching goals, while also ensuring that all employees have equal access to the resources and facilities they need to carry out their duties effectively.
References


K2 Space (2023). The history of office design. https://k2space.co.uk/knowledge/history-of-office-design/


Oflazoglu, S. (2017). *Qualitative versus Quantitative research.* IntechOpen

Appendices

Interview questions

How are your offices built right now regarding open or more to closed? And why?

If it is closed with its own offices: Are there any spaces where you have an open landscape?

What do you personally think about open versus closed landscapes? Are there any clear pros and cons?

Do you know anything about how the process works when the office landscapes are being designed for your company?

Are there any especially important things you try to achieve when you think about designing the office landscape? For example, employee satisfaction, mental health, productivity, and effectiveness?

How do you try to increase the work capabilities and effectiveness by the design and the office landscapes?

Different industries and companies have different goals and needs for their business. Are there any special things that you at your company must take into consideration when you design your office landscape? Have you designed your current office landscape with this in mind?

Have you personally, and you at your company noticed anything about the evolution of that people nowadays prefer for office? Is it going towards more closed or open? And if so, why?

Do you know anything about what the employees think about the office landscape at your company? Do they prefer anything special?

Are there any bigger problems and difficulties with planning and constructing an office landscape, and what could it be?

Do you have any special structure in how you divide different departments, for example finance and HR?
Do you take into consideration that different people need different offices, for example some people handle open offices better than others and some need their own office without distractions to be able to work?

### Coding

**Coding Skogsstyrelsen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<th>E</th>
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<td>3 och 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Olckheter/Problem/Starthjälp</td>
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<td>Process</td>
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<td>Rättvikning</td>
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<td>’Vi har ju ett exempel till skillnad mot Jordin</td>
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<td>’Du som chef hur naturligt också behöv av att det</td>
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<td>Problem/Starthjälp</td>
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<td>’Hög är jag ju ganska alltså hela min arbetarför</td>
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<td>’Hög har ju varit med och forma alltså. Vi har något</td>
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<td>’Och det som var en viktig del. Det var ju att vi st</td>
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<td>’Bekväm också, vi fick ju priset här förra året för för</td>
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<td>’Ja dels så att förståta ta hämta så mycket liksom må</td>
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<td>’Man kan säga att vi lever med pandemin så så var ju</td>
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<td>’Ja ja och vi tänker kan dela dessa arbetsuppgifter</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>’Alltså vi har ju, vi har ju en hal nat kontakt, alltså kan</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>’Jag om något eller så men och jag kan ju konstatera</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>’Och om så utmärkningen. Det är ju att hitta den här g</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>’Ja och vi har ju kan man säga 3 funktioner som</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>’Ska vi säga så här? Att vi har ju gjort det genom att</td>
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## Coding Knowit

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<td>Måna, men det är en öppen konturstudie och det är särskilt viktigt att man är medveten om hur man anses, och hur man har förstått det.</td>
<td>Öppen landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tyngd kontur och deras betydelse.</td>
<td>Sagen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vad jag har sett i det stora utbudet är att de flesta av dem är mycket öppna.</td>
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<td>Konturstudier.</td>
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<td>Enhetligt landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
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<td>Konturstudier.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jag tror att detta är, att man inte har sett på de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>Enhetligt landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
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<td>Konturstudier.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Måna, inte konturstudier, utan att de flesta av dem är mycket öppna.</td>
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## Coding Wint

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<td>Öppen landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tyngd kontur och deras betydelse.</td>
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<td>Förrådets landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>Öppen landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
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<td>Förrådets landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>Öppen landskap och studie med de stora, stora utbudet.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tyngd kontur och deras betydelse.</td>
<td>Sagen.</td>
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## Summary

- **Coding Knowit**: The study focuses on the awareness of the environment and how it is perceived. The importance of openness and understanding is emphasized. The study shows that the majority of the available options are open and that there is a need for more research on this topic.

- **Coding Wint**: The study examines the perception of open landscapes and how they are perceived. The study highlights the importance of understanding the environment and how it is perceived. The study shows that there is a need for more research on this topic and that the environment is perceived differently by different people.
## Coding Swedbank

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<th>Artikel</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Företagstopp</td>
<td>Kontorers utseende och om förreget</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedbank's offices in Stockholm is 80% open office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Företagstopp</td>
<td>Företagstopp och om förreget</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They also have smaller group rooms that you can book.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Företagstopp</td>
<td>Företagstopp och om förreget</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision regarding this lies centrally with the bank.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But one can definitely state that it is moving towards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firstly, it will be a more social environment where</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is also a practical advantage that you can sit in</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, we have to sit in offices or group rooms to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social cohesion is important when working and calls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So this is, among other things, the positive of open</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The open landscape is designed so that the groups th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difficulty in constructing an office landscape is</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is up to the employee to then book into a group room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedbank is moving towards a more generalizing work environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the old days, you did many different parts yourself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should not only be colleagues, but there should</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mental part is important at Swedbank, talking to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then you shouldn't forget that privacy requires</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personlig anpassning</td>
<td>Kontorers funktioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>