

## **German Call-center becomes Green Oasis**

The recent trend for Call-centers requires a new approach to building and designing workspaces. A great number of people in an open plan office constantly under stress in a very competitive and noisy atmosphere, need an extremely well planned office space to enable them to deliver the best service possible. Plants have an important role to play in creating this atmosphere.



A large publishing company in Essen, Germany, Sutter Verlagsgruppe, employed the help of Anke Adolf, a psychologist and Stefan Fillibeck, a computer scientist, to design a call-center, which would encourage employees to give their best.

Stress levels in a call-center are understandably high staff have to remain calm and friendly in the face of often impatient and/or unfriendly callers. Therefore trainers and managers are extremely interested in any initiative, which helps to reduce stress levels. Research has shown that the use of plants provides a very cost-effective and efficient way of doing just that.

### **Plants reduce stress in the workplace ....**

Using 3D computer models and staff interviews as feedback, Anke Adolf and Stefan Fillibeck created a green working environment for staff. Findings from John Klein Hesslink at the Dutch Institute for Health and Safety, confirmed Adolf's personal experience and showed that plants effectively reduce pollution and provide a healthier workplace, immediately noticeable to staff - they feel secure and their enthusiasm for their work is noticeably raised.

### **... and absorb toxins in the air**

Research has shown that plants create the optimum climate at work. They not only encourage a friendlier atmosphere by providing focal points, but they reduce harmful chemicals in the atmosphere. This is especially important in recently refurbished offices as new furniture and carpets result in high emissions of chemicals. In large open plan offices like call-centers, typically 150m<sup>2</sup> or 180m<sup>2</sup>, the air filtration aspect of plants is very important in creating the ideal environment.

### **Plants absorb noise ...**

Plants are very effective in reducing the high noise pollution in call-centers too. 20 - 30 staff all talking simultaneously on the telephone create a very high level of background noise. Despite this, each individual has to achieve an extremely high level of concentration. Plants provide a very effective way of buffering noise without having to result to extensive and costly building projects.

### **... and affect humidity levels**

Another important contribution made by plants to the office environment is the creation of moisture. For an optimum climate a humidity level of 50-60 percent is required; this can effectively be created by plants without resulting to air conditioning. Creating a green oasis in your offices is certainly not a waste of money, but the best way of creating an optimum atmosphere to improve staff efficiency - naturally.

### **Staff eager to make the most of green working oasis**

Staff at Sutter Verlagsgruppe, were so pleased with their new green working environment that they have agreed to have future internal training in the newly planted offices.

### **Plant Maintenance**

One important factor to consider is the care and maintenance of the plants. Sutter Verlagsgruppe used a professional organization for this purpose. Staff are discouraged from watering plants - that could not only be harmful to the plants (rotting through over-watering, etc.) but also lead to devastating damage caused by overflowing water onto computer cables and other technical equipment. A professional care organization ensures that there are no drawbacks to the new "green" office.