

Work Environments

5 Types of Work Environments (and How to Identify Which Is Right for You)

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Your work environment is made up of all of the elements that can affect your day-to-day productivity, including when, where and how you work. During your career development, you can pursue opportunities that provide a comfortable work environment that promotes your success and aligns with your core values. In this article, we discuss what work environment is, the elements that make it up and how to best identify a suitable work environment during your job search.

Read more: [Core Values: Overview and Examples](#)

What is a work environment?

A work environment is the setting, social features and physical conditions in which you perform your job. These elements can impact feelings of wellbeing, workplace relationships, collaboration, efficiency and employee health. Here are the significant aspects of a work environment:

Physical environment

This element is made up of the size, layout and location of a workplace, whether work is conducted indoors or outdoors, the facilities offered in a workplace and the furnishings used while working.

Company culture

This element refers to the way a company and its employees operate, including what effective communication looks like between different levels of staff, employees' perspective of company leaders, the company's goals and what the organization values.

Working conditions

This element includes the formal terms under which staff members are hired, such as the rate of pay, contract of employment and length of the workday. It can also cover recreational activities and other initiatives to promote a healthy workplace.

Read more: [Guide to Company Culture](#)

Elements of a work environment

Use the following descriptions of each work environment element to identify a positive and productive workplace:

Physical environment

The physical conditions you work under will play a crucial role in enabling you to reach your full potential. Some critical aspects of your physical environment to consider include:

Size

The size of your working area can have an impact on whether you have everything at hand to accomplish your job, while at the same time significantly influencing how you feel at work. To evaluate the size of your workspace, consider the amount of space you have to move freely, whether you have all the equipment you need nearby and if the area is large enough to accommodate all staff members.

Layout

Some indoor workplaces have an open floorplan, while others use cubicles or other dividers to separate spaces. The design of a workplace may depend on the type of work. For example, a more collaborative environment may benefit from an open layout, while a job that requires discretion would better operate with separate offices or cubicles to ensure privacy.

Furnishings

Desks, chairs, conference tables and other workplace furniture can also impact employees on the job. Access to comfortable and adequate seating, clean workspaces and functional desks can ensure indoor workplaces remain efficient. Outdoor workplaces may include comfortable furniture for break times.

Equipment

Some roles require special equipment to do their job, and depending on the company, the employer may or may not provide it. Some roles, such as a mechanic, may be required to bring their own set of tools. Indoor office spaces are more likely to provide the necessary equipment, such as computers, printers and other essential technology used on the job.

Facilities

Other facilities can influence how you feel physically and mentally during your working life. Being able to take a break or go to the bathroom are essential parts of any productive daily routine, so the location of these facilities can also impact the work environment. Additional facilities such as relaxing spaces and on-site gyms can also have a positive influence on employees.

Location

Some roles predominantly work inside, some spend most of their working day outside and certain roles may have a mixture of both indoor and outdoor work. Many employers may provide additional facilities or equipment to ensure employees are comfortable while working and productivity is maintained.

Company culture

Your company's beliefs and how their goals align with yours can be a substantial factor in your comfortability in the workplace. Here are the significant elements of company culture:

Code of conduct

Some companies may explain their business culture in a formal code of conduct or provide guidelines for employees. These documents can have you following certain conditions when performing tasks as well as when interacting with coworkers, workplace leaders and external stakeholders. These guidelines are often found in an employee handbook.

Encouragement and development

Some employers directly promote collaboration and teamwork, emphasize positive feedback and consistently celebrate employees who succeed. Other employers may provide more constructive feedback to encourage employees to improve.

Company mission statement

This statement is a set of values the company seeks to advance through its work. While these values may not be discussed daily, they guide every task you do and each goal you set as a contributor to the organization.

Read more: [What Is Corporate Culture?](#)

Working conditions

The following elements determine what the day-to-day may look like and how your employment impacts areas of your life unrelated to work:

Work-life balance

The number of hours worked each week and when can vary depending on the role, company and industry. Some organizations may promote work-life balance by offering generous paid time off or flexible work schedules. Other employers may encourage employees to work overtime to meet deadlines or provide 24/7 service to clients.

Terms of employment

In addition to set hours, these terms may include whether your work is a temporary contract or permanent employment. This element may also include benefits and paid time off stipulations as well.

Workplace safety

There are nationally mandated workplace safety regulations that all employers must follow. Your employer might display the regulations in public spaces to ensure all employees understand and adhere to these policies. Also, the safe use of equipment, as well as accessibility to exits, emergency equipment and first-aid, impacts this element of working conditions.

Healthy lifestyle

Some employers may encourage employees to stay fit and eat balanced meals to improve their overall wellbeing. They may even stock healthy snacks, partner with a nearby gym or host team events that incorporate physical activity.

Types of work environments

There are many different types of work environments that include a combination of physical components, company culture and working conditions. What elements make for the best type of work environments depend on an organization's industry and age, the number of and types of employees, and the ideal environment the organization wants to cultivate.

According to the Holland theory of personality and job compatibility, some environments may be a better match for certain personalities. When considering a work environment, discover the characteristics and values of your personality type to find one that best suits you. Personality-based work environments include:

Realistic

This environment promotes physical activity and may be best for more kinesthetic employees, also called "doers." Those who work well in this environment are often skilled at and prefer using tools and working with their hands. Jobs with realistic work environments include those in engineering, maintenance and construction.

Investigative

This type of environment is built on critical thinking, experimentation and problem-solving. Much of the work in this environment involves gathering evidence, studying information and learning as well as making conclusions. Employees who are "thinkers" can thrive in these environments, which are often found in careers like healthcare, engineering and technology.

Artistic

This environment encourages innovation and experimentation as well as personal expression. Artistic environments are often best for those known as "creators" who thrive in more flexible and emotional settings. Some careers that work best in this type are in fields like design, fine art and performance.

Social

This type of environment promotes communication, helping, healing and education between employees. Those who do well in this environment are often known as "healers" and have traits such as kindness, empathy and compassion. Careers that typically offer social working environments include education, social work, counseling and nursing.

Enterprising

This work environment also involves communication but has an emphasis in guiding others toward goals. Enterprising environments are best for “persuaders” who thrive on competition and prefer to serve in roles that involve selling, convincing and debating. Some careers that have enterprising environments include real estate, politics and public service and sales.

Conventional

This environment is built on specificity, predictability and organization. Those who prefer traditional environments are often referred to as “organizers” and work best in settings that have clear order, encourage practicality and value dependability. Roles that exist in conventional work environments include those in finance, assistant positions and traditional office settings.

Read more: [Guide: 16 Personality Types](#)

How to identify a suitable work environment

During your job search, consider evaluating prospective employers to find a comfortable work environment that promotes your productivity, efficiency and success. Use the following tips to discover ways to identify work environment elements:

1. Read the job description carefully

The description may give you a sense of the physical environment you’ll be working in, such as the common daily tasks and type of physical setting. Review the employer’s expectations for the role to find elements of company culture.

2. Research the company online

Many companies have a website, so [use this resource](#) to learn more about their values or goals, discover if they have recreational facilities or read about their latest team-building activity. You can also find their social media pages and see how they interact with customers or other external parties.

3. Ask questions at the interview

After doing your research ahead of time, you can also prepare several questions focusing on the work environment, such as which equipment you’ll be using, whether they have healthy eating options nearby and how they prefer to resolve conflicts on teams.

4. Visit your workplace

After some interviews, the company may invite you to tour its facilities and see what it’s like to work there. You can visit the physical environment where you could be working.

5. Ask contacts who work at the company

If you know any current or past employees, contact them to ask what it's like to work there. You may gain more insight into employer-employee relations and the company culture.

6. Read online reviews

Many career or job search websites offer you the chance to read about other employees' experiences. Read positive and negative reviews to understand the pros and cons that a job or company may offer. View these responses in terms of how these elements may affect you if you worked there.

7. Read through your employment contract and introductory documents

Once you receive a job offer, you are likely to review onboarding documents that discuss the specific conditions that make up your work environment. For example, contracts typically include your hours of work, requirements of the job and rate of pay. You may also review the employee handbook to understand company policies and procedures.

8. Ask questions if you have any outstanding concerns

If you feel you need more information about the work environment after receiving an offer, ask the human resources representative or the hiring manager to learn about their experience with the company.