

KIPINÄ.

A design intervention to enhance employees' sense of belonging by stimulating informal social interaction.

Why

During the pandemic, the sense of cohesion and belonging between colleagues is significantly reduced. This is due to the decrease of spontaneous face-to-face informal social interactions, which affects particularly colleagues having more individualistic roles and those who have recently been recruited.

As the hybrid working mode is expected to be the future of the way of working (de Klerk J. J., 2021), it is important that organisations emphasise the social aspect of the office by increasing the possibilities for social interactions between colleagues.

A sense of belonging and cohesion in the office benefits not only the well-being of employees, but also the performance of the organisation (Rosales, R. M., 2016).

How

For the implementation of the final design, organisations need to maintain long-term contact with supplier partners (e.g. furniture companies) to produce, assemble and develop new design features. These change according to the evolution of the pandemic, and the insights generated by ongoing user testing.

The organisation is responsible for monitoring and addressing the social behaviour of the office (Team Managers and HR Department), and for the installation and maintenance of the object within the office coffee corners (Facility Management Department).

The continuous sharing of research insights between companies and supplier partners contributes to the development of knowledge for a healthier and socially connected workplace in the post-pandemic era.

What

The final design is a demonstration that it is possible to increase the sense of cohesion and belonging among workers, by means of an interactive object that increases the chances of informal serendipitous encounters.



When the interactive object detects people within the interaction area, it produces randomised sounds (= 'element of surprise') to trigger the initiation of conversations.



When people start talking, the object stops playing sounds and starts the light function.



As the conversation continues, the intensity of the light gradually increases. This is intended both to encourage users to maintain the conversation (= 'collaborative activity', see point 2 on the left) ...



and to encourage the passer-by to observe (= 'visual trigger' and 'learning by watching', see point 1 on the left) ...



... and possibly join the conversation.



When people leave the coffee corner, the light gradually dims leaving a 'mark of light' that symbolises a previous presence to future passers-by.

1. In the early stages of the HPM (from Passer-by to Audience Member), visual instructions are used to both gather (through 'visual triggers') and instruct (through 'learn by watching') participants to engage in the interaction.

2. In the later stages of the HPM (from Participant to Actor), once the user is brought to the interaction spot, a shared activity is used to encourage users to interact with each other (through a 'collaboration activity' involving visual/audio feedback or props).

*HONEY POT MODEL. In HCI (Human-Computer Interaction), the 'honeypot model' describes the way in which people interact with a system by passively stimulating passers-by to observe, approach and engage in an interaction (Wouters, 2016).

Giusivelia Morena
Social well-being in offices
15/12/2021
MSc Strategic Product Design

Committee
Dr. ir. Mooij, S.C.
Drs. Colenberg, S.E.

 TU Delft