

MOVABLE WALLS ④



Bringing Productivity to Light

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■ INTRODUCTION

Lighting plays a pivotal role in office environments. Its importance and delivery have evolved along with design trends and available technology.

Before the 1940s, daylight was the primary light source in most buildings, supplemented by other light forms. In subsequent years, electrical lighting transformed the typical office environment, as reflected in more “inward” workspace designs. Windows were reserved for executives and management staff, representing a kind of status symbol.

With today’s energy and environmental awareness movement, daylighting has become a rediscovered element in preferred building designs. And although the emphasis on lighting and daylighting in recent years has been primarily on energy efficiency, worker efficiency must also be included as a critical consideration of lighting design.

Chiefly because lighting has a proven, powerful effect on people both psychologically and physiologically, it can influence workers’ emotions, stimulate the senses, affect biological functions, and generate a more productive workforce. Using light to create comforting and inviting workspaces as well as to establish a connection to nature can create organizational benefits just as valuable as energy efficiencies.

Movable walls complement the movement toward more light-filled environments. They harness and leverage light within a space to improve productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.



■ LIGHT'S POWERFUL EFFECTS

There is an undeniable emotional attachment to light, important to the general well-being of humans. People naturally feel better when working in well-lit spaces. And when people experience positive emotional states, they tend to be more productive.¹

Numerous studies have shown time and again that people prefer daylight over electric lighting as their primary source of light. The preference for daylight may be partly due to a negative view of electric lighting. One study found that people tend to believe that working by daylight results in less stress and discomfort than working by electric light.²

But the preference for daylight may also be because of its beneficial effects on our well-being. Life is drawn to light. Natural light stimulates essential biological functions in the brain, while the body uses light as a kind of nutrient for metabolic processes similar to food or water.³ Light affects many of the body's regulatory functions including the nervous system, endocrine system, circadian rhythms, and the pineal and pituitary glands. One need only consider the extensive and recent research on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) to recognize the significant power of light to influence our well-being.



Accordingly, people prefer to sit at desks that are positioned near windows, especially when those windows have access to direct sunlight. Many European countries have recognized this preference along with light's beneficial effects on workers' health and attitudes, requiring workers to be within 27 feet of a window.⁴

Given the many benefits of daylight and its universal preference to electric lighting, the proper use of daylighting within the office environment can most certainly support workplace productivity.

Indeed, numerous studies dating back to the 1920s illustrate time and again that office worker productivity can and will increase with the quality of light.⁵ A range of other benefits have also been studied and proven including increased alertness, increased interaction with co-workers, decreased absenteeism, reduced turnover, and increased employee retention and job satisfaction.⁶

■ LETTING LIGHT IN WITH MOVABLE WALLS

Superior movable walls can serve as a conduit for light's benefits. The best systems and designs leverage glass to bring light deep into the workspace, allowing all employees to reap the beneficial properties of light.

Movable walls also provide a level of design autonomy that fixed wall solutions often cannot. Glass patterns and opacities are easily designed into a movable wall solution to control light permeation as well as privacy levels.



Moreover, movable walls are inherently tailored to an organization's needs. Endless glass options are available to increase both daylight and exterior views. Customizing the amount and placement of glass within each panel can assist in providing the optimal amount of daylight as determined by building conditions.

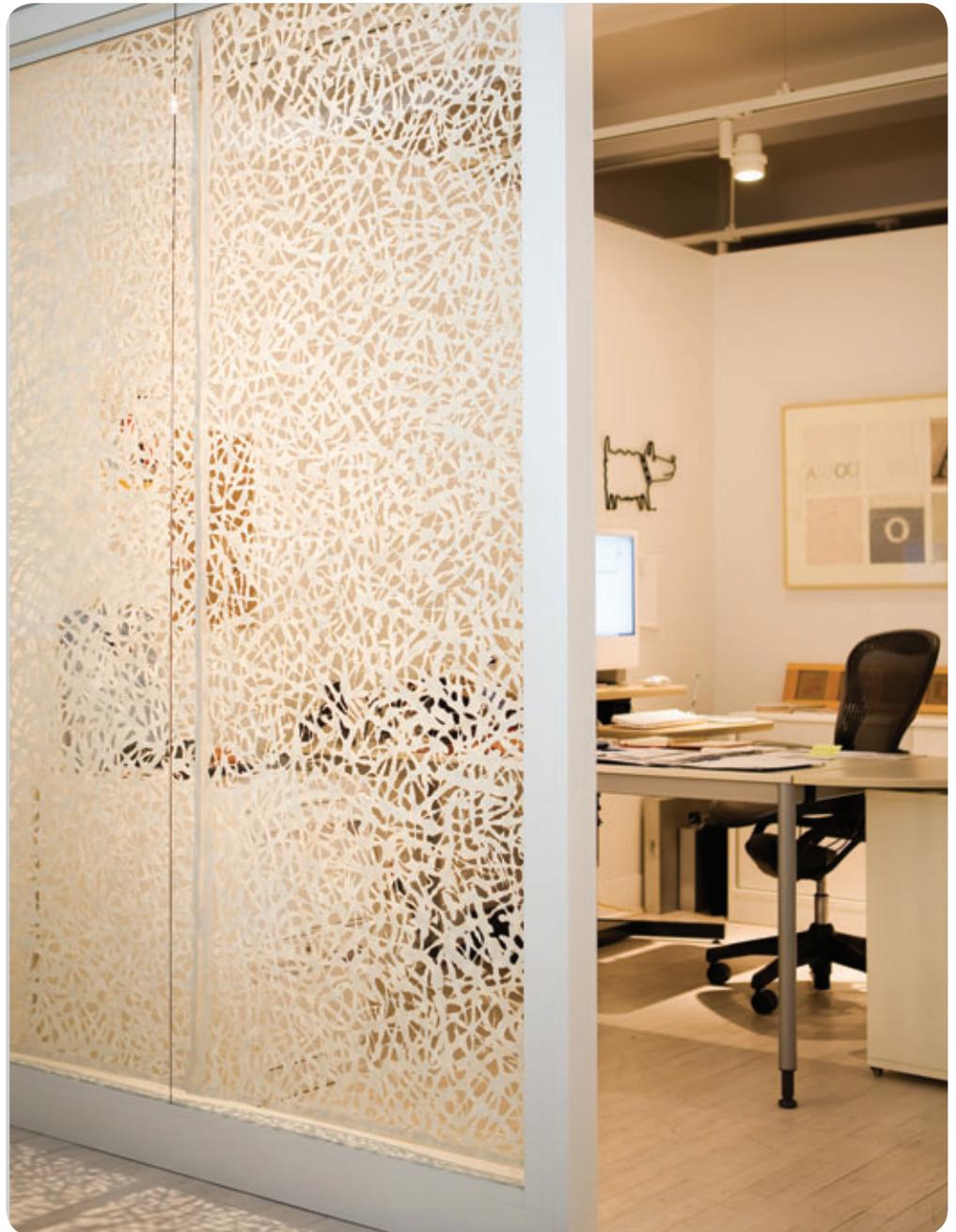
Nowhere is light better liberated than with storefront design. However, traditional stick-built storefront is labor-intensive and expensive. The finished installation is often beautiful, but it comes at a price: it cannot be relocated and there is invariably material waste that negatively impacts the environment.

One recent innovation provides an alternative that can deliver the aesthetics of storefront, but in a movable wall system. Lightline® from KI is the first pre-engineered, pre-assembled glass wall system that enhances light and is designed to move. Its seamless, unitized connections and minimal profiling maximize natural lighting for brighter, more efficient spaces while providing visual unification between architecture and furniture. Highly sustainable, it offers unlimited product reuse versus a traditional stick-built product.



■ HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE, MOVABLE

The effects of light on workers' wellbeing and productivity are substantial and substantiated. Using light efficiently and daylight properly is simply good medicine and good business. Movable walls that give organizations the design autonomy to leverage light should be an important part of any workspace design.



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To learn more about movable wall,
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