



Stanford eCorner

Architecture's Effect on Productivity

William McDonough, *William McDonough + Partners*

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How important is the role of cheerful architecture in the business world? It can mean significantly increased profits, says William McDonough, founder of McDonough + Partners. For one Michigan-based chair manufacturer, a new working environment and factory floor flush with daylight, fresh air, and an "aloha shirt" mentality nearly doubled worker productivity.



Transcript

Here is a project for Herman Miller in Zeeland, Michigan; a factory where we're restoring the landscape and providing places of work for people who work in their office, the factory. This is the factory floor. It's full of daylight and fresh air, views of the outdoors and the Beach Boys. This sort of came out of a conversation with the president of the company when we started the project. He said, "If my building was a suit of clothes, it wouldn't be Brooks Brothers button-down. It would be an aloha shirt. If it was a car, it wouldn't be a Mercedes with tinted windows. It would be a 1960 4-1/2 Mustang convertible, probably pink." What we realized is that they really didn't want to be working in Southern Michigan. They wanted to be working in California. And so we decided to build California, so the building is full of daylight, fresh air, the sun, and the Beach Boys.

Their productivity went up; by some accounts, it doubled.