Vision Statement

High-Performance Office Space

Data by **Andrew Laing, David Craig,** and **Alex White**

What are the costs of using 20th-century spaces to do 21st-century knowledge work? Lost productivity, higher capital expenses, and inaccessible managers. Here's how the pharmaceutical company Lilly remedied those problems at its headquarters, by radically redesigning 470,000 square feet of space for 3,300 employees.

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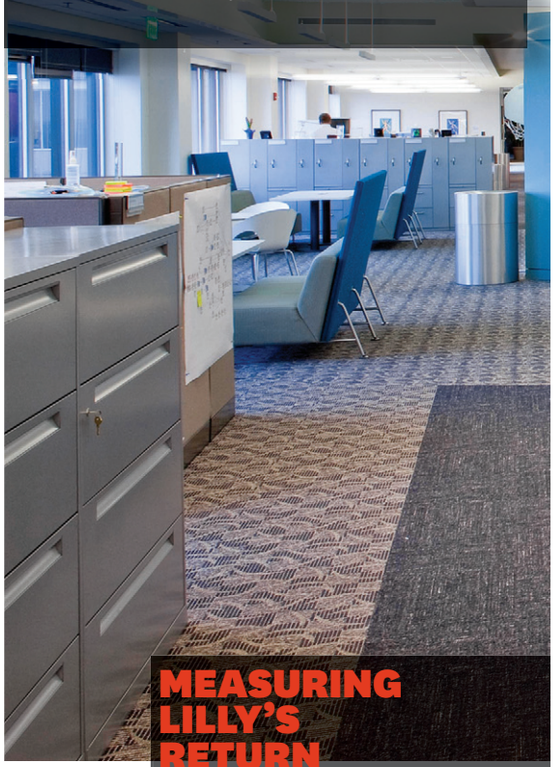
BEFORE
THE TYRANNY OF THE CUBICLE

Lilly had a typical cube farm. This kind of space has significant drawbacks, according to the workplace-strategy consultancy Lilly hired, DEGW. Research it has conducted—44 surveys involving 7,312 knowledge workers at 18 organizations—reveals that in traditional offices, it takes knowledge workers, on average, 4.7 hours to get a response from colleagues and 8.8 hours to get one from managers. DEGW also found that workers each lose 66 minutes a day to inefficiencies, hassles, and distractions and spend only 35% of their time at their desks.

Most offices cluster workspaces together by department. But modern work requires interdepartmental communication, so staffers resort to e-mail and meetings. All-purpose cubicles are open enough to let in distracting noise and drop-by colleagues but not so open that they improve communication and visibility. All of this decreases productivity and lengthens decision-making cycles.

AFTER
FLEXIBLE, CUSTOMIZED SPACE

Lilly reduced the amount of assigned space and increased the amount of shared and temporary, unassigned space, which employees can use during the two-thirds of the day when they aren't at their desks. The new spaces are not generic but designed for different kinds of work (quiet focus rooms for tasks that demand concentration, cafés and team rooms for collaborative work, enclaves for private conversations). The more open plan promotes ad hoc communication and, employees say, stimulates more creativity. In the initial series of pilots, Lilly saw workers' satisfaction with their workspace almost double, associated capital costs nearly cut in half, and the amount of time lost to distractions, waiting, looking for meeting rooms, and the like decrease by 16%.



MEASURING LILLY'S RETURN ON THE REDESIGN

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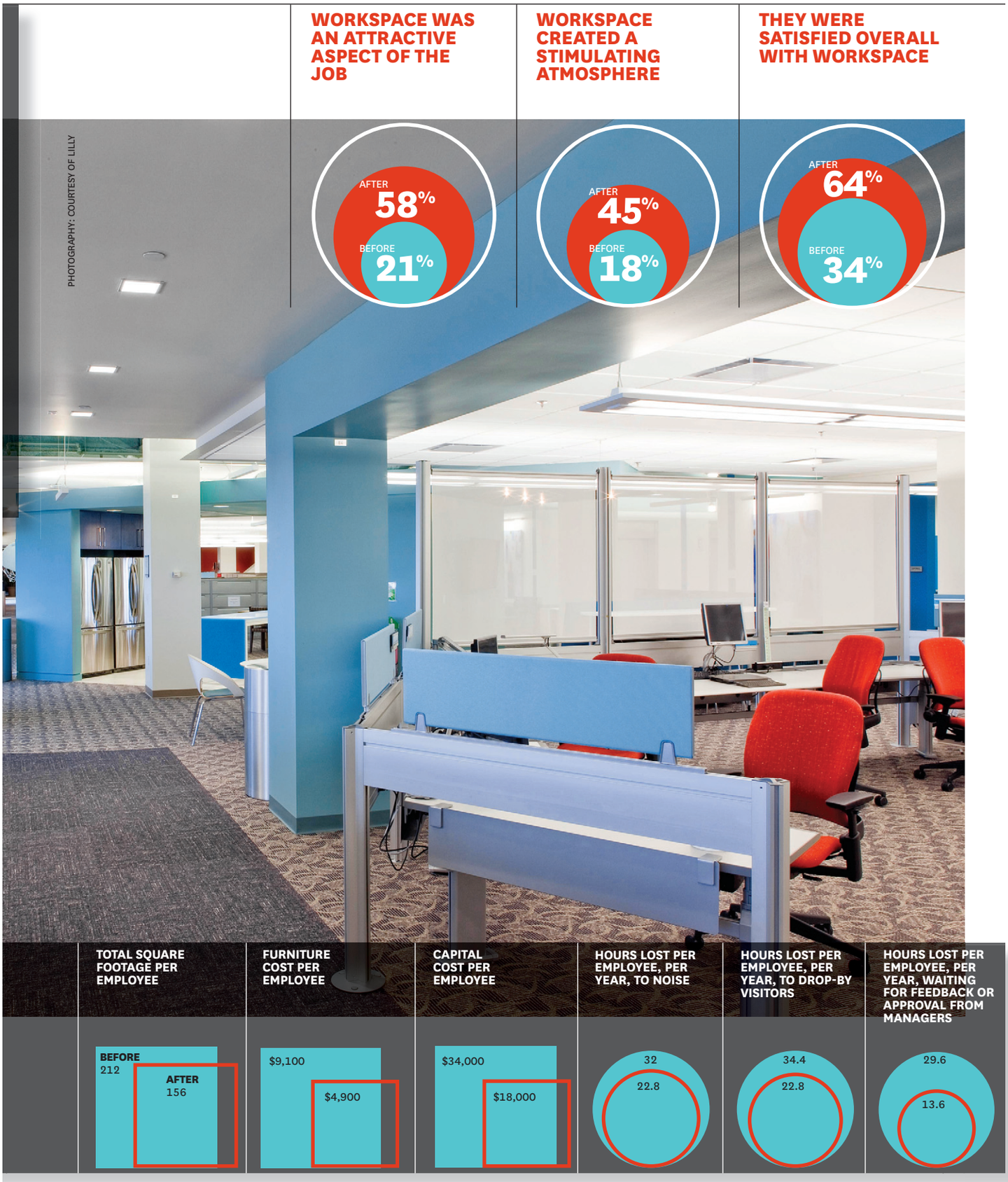
PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES WHO SAID:



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