

# Noise at work

The background of the slide is a blurred office environment. In the foreground, a man with dark hair is sitting at a desk, looking towards the right. In the background, a man in a blue shirt is standing and talking on a mobile phone. To the right, a woman with blonde hair is sitting at a desk, looking at a computer monitor. The office has large windows in the background, letting in bright light.

As our recent study proves, it is also a growing issue. Open plan offices with little acoustic planning often amplify noise.

Outdoors, everyday noise can make it just as difficult to hear and be heard.

So how big is the problem? What is the real-world impact of noise at work? And what can you do to stop noise from becoming a major cost to your enterprise?

No longer an issue you can afford to ignore

 **93%**

of office workers are adversely impacted by noise.



**4 in 5**

employees consider noise in their office to be distracting



**16-24 year olds**

are most likely to put on a headphone or headset to combat a noisy work environment

**Top 3 biggest noise complaints:**

1. Noisy colleagues
2. Phone calls
3. Electronic office equipment

# Too much noise



**55%**

of workers have brought at least one noise complaint to the attention of their management.

**Most common effects of noise:**

- Lower productivity
- Stress
- Physical ailments such as headaches



Source: Opinion Matters surveyed organisations employing over 250 employees in the UK, Germany and France (1000 per region) in February 2015.

# The true effects of noise...

## ...on your colleagues

The office environment is now dominated by open plan spaces. On desk phones, the noise within these open environments requires employees to strain and raise their voices to be heard (all the while contributing to the problem). These issues are exacerbated when people do not feel they can raise the issue with their superiors – often because they know that nothing will be done. The result is a lack of motivation and a dread of dialling in to a call.

### WHAT INDIVIDUALS EXPECT:

- A workplace and technology that allows them to get on with their job
- Quieter spaces in which to concentrate or make calls in private

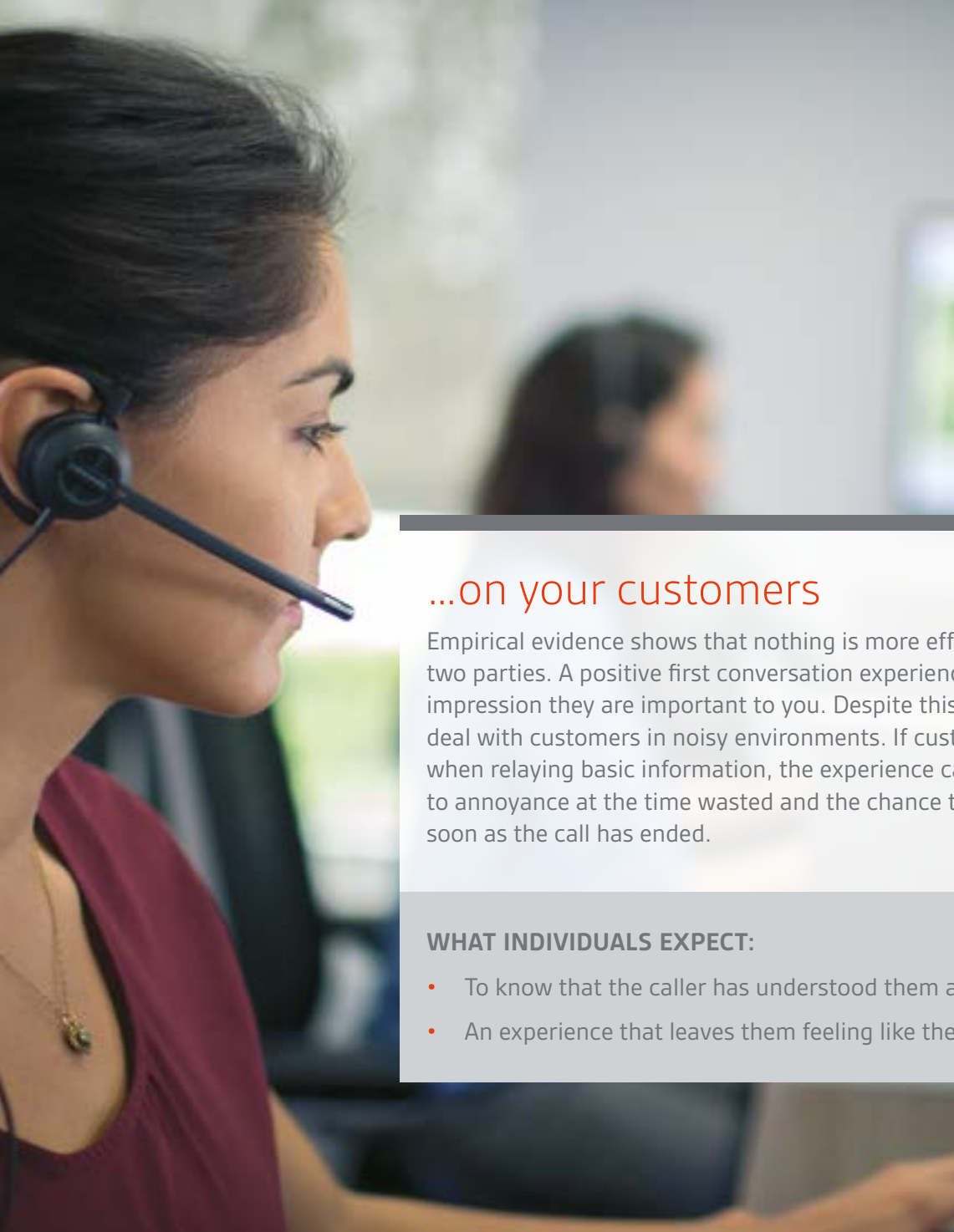
“Having the right technology for your employees does enable them to be more comfortable in an environment that is an open workspace.”

Susan Lovegren, Sr. Vice President,  
Human Resources, Plantronics

## Higher among the hierarchy

Do you believe you would be more productive in a less noisy work environment?





## ...on your customers

Empirical evidence shows that nothing is more effective than voice at getting clarity between two parties. A positive first conversation experience will leave your customers with the impression they are important to you. Despite this, organisations continue to expect staff to deal with customers in noisy environments. If customers have to repeat themselves, especially when relaying basic information, the experience can easily turn into a negative one. This leads to annoyance at the time wasted and the chance that they will become an ex-customer as soon as the call has ended.

### WHAT INDIVIDUALS EXPECT:

- To know that the caller has understood them and their issue
- An experience that leaves them feeling like they made the right choice to call

“Not all noise is good and not all noise is bad. It’s all about having the right level of speech intelligibility.”

**Evan Benway**, Product Manager,  
New Ventures, Plantronics

## ...on employee collaboration

Major developments in collaboration technologies, such as Unified Communications, are bringing people together within enterprises like never before. Yet fundamental barriers remain. Conferencing facilities are not always fully functional or people are not equipped with audio devices that can make dialling in from home or a hotel room that much clearer. Employees can be left frustrated because they have to turn PC volume controls up to the maximum or they experience an echo every time they speak to someone overseas. It means people are less inclined to share their views, ideas are not exchanged in the way that was intended and most people just want to leave the call as fast as possible.

### WHAT TEAMS EXPECT:

- Technology that promotes rather than prevents better group interaction
- Easier ways to share thoughts with people across the organisation

“There are dissatisfactions in these ‘open plans’ because people just put them together, without thinking through the acoustic environment.”

Ken Kannappan, CEO, Plantronics

## ...on enterprise productivity

A study by the University of California in 2007 demonstrated once and for all that unwelcome noise disrupts concentration, increases stress and decreases productivity. Taken individually or cumulatively, these three factors contribute to a less effective workplace. Whether reflected in lower output, staff absenteeism or people simply 'working to rule' through lack of motivation, over time there will be a significant cost to the enterprise. If success in your industry depends on small margins or requires everyone to operate to their full capacity then the impact of noise can undermine your organisation's ability to compete.

### WHAT ORGANISATIONS EXPECT:

- An efficient workplace in which employees are able to be brand ambassadors
- Simple communications infrastructure that helps people create new ideas

"We interviewed 2,000 knowledge workers around the globe. And what comes back is this: they are distracted by their noisy environments."

**Bill Loewenthal**, Vice President,  
Enterprise Solutions, Plantronics

**4 in 5**

employees consider  
noise in their office  
to be distracting





## Solutions exist!

Today, many organisations fall into one of two categories. Staff either find it hard to collaborate effectively or they are regularly distracted by background noise. It does not have to be this way.

By taking a holistic view of the way your employees work and the office environment in which they are asked to work, you can formulate a strategy to combat unwanted noise.

Plantronics supports progressive organisations to make this big step forward. We focus on three key areas of work to provide the tools they need to support colleagues, deal with customers effectively and be more productive.



People



Places



Technology



## Focus on People

We can remove some of the typical frustrations your employees have with voice communications and help them make better use of technology. Meetings may have changed and shifted to the phone but we believe that some of the key rules of face-to-face meetings should still apply.

Whether dialling in to a teleconference or video call, employees should be able to contribute, to listen actively and to participate fully without distractions. The simplest way to enhance these new forms of collaboration is to use a headset or smart speakerphone with noise-cancelling microphones. At Plantronics, we also use a new approach to conference calling – Smarter Meetings.

We can take this a step further too. With Speech Impact training, we will show you how to make sure every caller is understood. You will also discover how employees can better use the power of their voices and how to tell stories that will engage your audiences.





## Focus on Places

Plantronics audio engineers can introduce you to the principles of SoundScaping and show you how to realign your office to minimise noise pollution. They will help you plan the right spaces for the right types of activity, whether that is to **concentrate, collaborate, contemplate or communicate.**



Watch >>  
[Overcome Noise Challenges in the Open Office with Plantronics](#)

By following the ABCs of Acoustic Shielding we can also show you how to enhance acoustic performance, whatever your office environment:

**ABSORPTION** – using specialist materials on your floors, walls and ceilings to minimise noise from one area impacting other areas in your office.

**BLOCKING** – introducing vertical barriers to limit how far sound can travel across your open plan office.

**COVER** – playing computer-generated sounds, such as 'pink noise', to mask unwanted distractions.

Out of the office, Plantronics professional headsets will help your employees manage disruptive noise wherever they happen to be. On the move or stationary, wireless headsets with advanced noise cancellation technology actively prevent sound from impacting their conversations.



## Focus on Technology


Giving employees access to the latest wearable and desktop audio devices will support better Voice Intelligibility at work. Active noise-cancelling technology in most Plantronics headsets cuts out unwanted sounds, allowing people to speak naturally to customers and colleagues while reducing their contribution to general background noise.

On conference calls, our smart speakerphones help to relay contributors' voices clearly so there is less time wasted on the call. In busy workplaces, callers benefit from our wireless headsets, which give them the freedom to get up and move to quieter spaces. These devices also work seamlessly with smartphones, tablets and laptops to provide a more professional call quality when away from the office.

Plantronics headsets are also optimised to work with all the major Unified Communication vendors, including **Microsoft, Cisco, Avaya, Alcatel-Lucent** and **Unify**, to deliver a superior end user audio experience.

We call this combined approach **SoundScaping**.

Toughest tasks to complete in a noisy workplace:

 **64%**  
Telephone calls

**V<sub>s</sub> 30%**  
Calculations/analytics



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and a black Plantronics headset, is shown in profile. She is holding a black mouse in her right hand and looking towards the right. The background is a blurred office or call center environment with cubicles and desks.

For more information about  
Plantronics products visit:  
[plantronics.com](http://plantronics.com)

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