UNIT 3 : OFFICE LAYOUT

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Office Layout

- 3.3.1 Importance of Layout
- 3.3.2 Principles of Layout
- 3.3.3 Types of Layout

3.4 Location of Office

- 3.4.1 Choosing an Office Location
- 3.4.2 Office Building

3.5 Let Us Sum Up

3.6 Further Reading

3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.8 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe office layout
- explain different types of layout
- discuss about location of an office

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, we have given a brief description of office management. In this unit we are going to discuss about office layout and location. Every office should be properly accommodated, have a good working environment and should be properly equipped to improve efficiency and reducing cost. The place of work and its surroundings are important factors which affect the efficiency of employees to a large extent. An office should be established in such a place where visitors, employees and customers can reach comfortably. Office location and layout plays a vital

role in attracting visitors and customers. To perform the office activity smoothly, the office manager should decide on location of the office, office building, and office layout and office environment. In this unit we will discuss these aspects in details.

3.3 OFFICE LAYOUT

Office layout may be defined as the arrangement of equipment within the available floor space. Office layout deals with design and set up of an office. It takes into account all the accessories and equipment needed in an office. The details of the office work depend on the type of business involved and activities conducted. Features of an office such as people, space, equipment, furniture and the environment, must fit together well for workers to feel healthy and comfortable and to be able to work efficiently and productively.

One could look at how the office is laid out, including where people sit in relation to equipment and furniture. The equipment and furniture should be suitable for the type of work that people are doing in an office. This includes seating, desks, computers, printers and anything else that they might use to do their job. The environment of the office depends on the temperature, ventilation, lighting, decoration etc. All these aspects of an office are considered in relation to the individuals in the office with emphasis on their safety, health, comfort and productivity. This includes arranging where people need to sit for the specified work in the office, according to who they work with , what equipment they need to do their job and what sort of working environment they need. Some people may need a very quiet area to work, for example if they need to concentrate, and could be put in a separate area away from noisy people and equipment. Other people may need to work creatively in teams, and would be better off in a relaxed, open plan area. If the office has shared equipment, such as printers and scanners, they need to be easily accessible to everyone who needs to use them. One also needs to think about the facilities that people will need for storage. People might need their own filing cabinets or shelves. In large or busy

open plan offices, the layout needs to be planned very carefully, as many people with different jobs will be using the area. Also, if space is restricted, the layout becomes important to ensure that the working space should be arranged nicely, and people don't get in each other's way. Access and emergency routes need to be defined and laid out to ensure that people can move around the office easily and quickly if necessary.

3.3.1 Importance of Layout

To work efficiently a worker needs proper working environment. So unless he or she is provided with adequate and suitable physical accommodation and a good working condition, it will not be possible for them to maintain the physical and mental stability necessary for performing their duties efficiently. Before setting out to find the accommodation, manager should check the location, site, building and other physical factors while selecting the layout.

3.3.2 Principles of Layout

The important principles of office layout are as follows :

- The office must be located at some convenient place so that it may serve the entire organization in the best possible manner.
- Work should flow continuously forward, as simply as possible.
- Departments having similar function should be located near one another to reduce travel time.
- Furniture and equipment should be arranged in a straight line, with any angular placement of desks and chairs reserved for supervisory personnel.
- Space allowances should be adequate for work needs and employee comfort.
- Desks should be arranged so that no employee is compelled to face an objectionable light source.
- Units that utilize noisy equipment, such as data processing or telex machines should be located in separate rooms to avoid

disturbing other work groups.

- Work groups that have frequent contact with the public should be located in an easily accessible place.
- Departments in which work is necessarily untidy should be kept away from public view.

3.3.3 Types of Layout

Different types of office layout exist depending on the requirements of the office. There are basically two types of office i.e open office and private office. These two types of layout can be further segmented into three different types based on the recent trends in the office layout, which are discussed as follows:

- **Open office :** An open office refers to a large room where all the departments' employee and equipment are housed under a single roof without partitions.

Advantages of open office :

- Better space utilisation is possible.
- Easy for the supervisor to watch the work.
- There is more economy in arrangement of light.

Disadvantages of open office :

- Work will be affected by visitors and movement of the staff themselves.
- There will be internal noise of conversation by the staff themselves or with the visitors.
- Infection or diseases may spread quickly.

- **Private Office :** Private offices are small rooms occupied by departments. Each department will be placed in each room. Such rooms are allotted by considering the nature of the confidential matter to be dealt in, or for top officials etc.

Advantages of private office :

- There is increase in efficiency on account of absence of noise.
- Confidentiality can be maintained as greater privacy is possible.

- It promotes personal atmosphere.

Disadvantages of private office :

- Lot of space is wasted for partition.
- It is more expensive to build separate offices.
- Cleaning of the office becomes a tedious job.

In respect of the above, we may have some variations in the way the offices are organised. Some of them are indicated below.

a) **Landscaped Office :** A landscaped office is an open office that the arrangement of straight lines of desks. This type of structure is suitable for technical specialist, management information services etc.

b) **Movable Partitions :** This type of structure is used in private offices. Movable partitions of ceiling, partial or counter height made up of metal, wood, glass or plastic materials are used to segregate the office space.

c) **Modular Units :** They occupy less floor space; enhance work efficiency by eliminating unnecessary motions. The most popular type of modular desk is the L-pattern desk unit with a flat surface.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is office layout?

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Q 2 : State any two principles of office layout.

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Q 3 : What is open office and private office?

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3.4 LOCATION OF OFFICE

Once the office is set up it is very difficult to move to other place. So, before starting the office proper location should be selected for the office, as per the requirements of the employees, visitors and customers. The office manager has to consider wide range of factors like, markets, labour supply, local laws, power, taxes, trends in regional and local development, transportation facilities, and better infrastructural facility etc. before choosing a location. The selection of location also depends on the cost factor. The best location is one which gives the maximum advantage at lowest possible cost. While selecting the location, following aspects should be taken into consideration:

- **Convenience to Customers :** The office location should be near to those parties with whom the business concern has almost daily contact.
- **Transportation, Postal and Banking Facilities :** Office should be located at a place where there is good transportation, postal and banking facilities.
- **Availability of Sufficient Space :** The place selected for location office should have sufficient accommodation and future expansion scope.

3.4.1 Choosing an Office Location

Since the main purpose of an office is to facilitate the conduct of the business, its proper location depends primarily upon where it can be of most benefit to the business. The office location can be either in urban place or in suburban place depending on the service they provide. Basically there are five factors which affect the selection of location. They are:

- **Proximity to Related Trade :** It is desirable to have an office near other offices which are engaged in the same line of trade.
- **Proximity to Other Departments :** When all the functions of a business are carried on at one location, the office should be located in the same location, so that it function in a more effective way.

- **Nearness to Service Facilities :** The office should be located near such service facilities as banks, posts and telegraph offices, railway stations, markets, trade or stock exchanges etc.
- **Nearness to Transport Facilities :** The locality in which an office is situated must be adequately served by transport services of all kinds.
- **Availability of Labour :** Large offices where different types of employees are needed should consider this factor.

3.4.2 Office Building

The location of office building is very important and it affects the office environment. If the office building is located at a far place or in a dirty place, it will affect the health of employees adversely. The size of office building should be adequate to run the office. Security system in the building should be proper. When an office building is constructed, it should be planned and designed to fit the exact requirements of the organization. The office building can be either in own house or can be leased or in rented house. Office building should be selected based on the following criteria :

- Safety and records of staff.
- Working condition.
- Adaptability to proposed layout.
- Office fittings.
- Future expansion.



3.5 LET US SUM UP

Office location and layout plays a vital role in attracting customers. In this unit we have discussed the following aspects in details:

- Office layout includes the room, computers, communicating with others by telephone or fax, keeping records and files, furniture, temperature, ventilation, light, environment etc.

- There are basically two types of office layout exist depending on the requirements of the office. i.e open office and private office.
- An open office refers to a large room where all the departments' men and equipment are housed under a single roof without partitions.
- Private offices are small rooms occupied by departments. Each department will be placed in each room.
- The office manager has to consider wide range of factors like, markets, labour supply, local laws, power, taxes, trends in regional and local development, transportation facilities, and better infrastructural facility and cost etc. before choosing a location.



3.6 FURTHER READING

1) Balachandran, V. and Chandrasekaran, V. (2009), Office Management, Published by Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.
2) Chopra, R. K. and Chopra, Ankita (2009), Office Management, Published by Himalaya Publishing House.



3.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Office layout deals with design and set up of an office. It takes into account all the accessories and equipment needed in an office.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : Two principles of office layout are as follows:

- Work should flow continuously forward, as nearly as possible in a straight line.
- Departments having similar function should be located near one another to reduce travel time.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 :

- An open office refers to a large room where all the departments' men and equipment are housed under a single roof without partitions.
- Private offices are small rooms occupied by departments. Each department will be placed in each room.

3.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1 : State the principles of an office layout.

Q 2 : Discuss different types of office layout.

Q 3 : How office location can be selected?

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