

## Quick-Hitting Survey Legal Office Design

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### Executive Summary

#### Methodology

In January 2019, The Health Management Academy conducted a quick-hitting survey to examine office designs for health system legal functions. The 13 responding Chief Legal Officers and General Counsels represent health systems with an average Total Operating Revenue of \$4 billion that own or operate 110 hospitals and have approximately 1.3 million admissions per annum. Additionally, one Industry organization responded to the survey.

#### Key Findings

- 77% of legal executives indicated that their attorneys have walled offices as opposed to cubes due to the need for security, privacy, and confidentiality.
- 39% of legal executives responded that their department is in a securable suite separated from other departments in an open office plan.
- Informed practices for designing a legal office plan without walled offices include, noise-cancelling headphones, soundproof telephone booths for confidential conversations, and filling surrounding cubes with legal team members.

#### Results

The majority (77%) of legal executives at responding organizations report having walled offices for their attorneys as opposed to cubes. One executive who responded “No” commented that while their attorneys work in cubes, the most senior attorney has a walled office.

Just over one-third (39%) of legal executives indicated their legal departments are located in separate suites that could be secured after hours. Thirty-eight percent of legal executives indicated their legal department is not located in a separate secure office suite; however, this is inclusive of some organizations in which all attorneys have walled offices and therefore a separate suite is not necessary.

It is interesting to note that of the three organizations that do not have walled office space for all attorneys, only one organization has a separate, securable legal suite (Figure 1).

Of the two remaining respondents, one has their legal office located in the same admin area as the CEO and CFO and is thus secure. The other respondent explained that many of their colleagues typically work from home in order to “get the privacy and quiet that they need.”

FIGURE 1. LEGAL DEPARTMENTS WITH A SECURE SUITE, OF THOSE WITH NO WALLED OFFICES

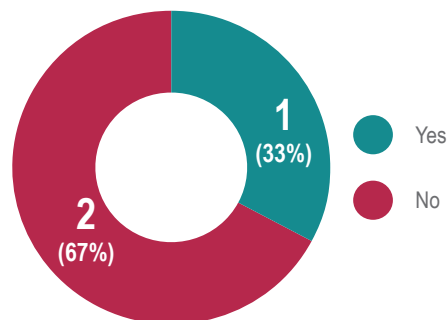
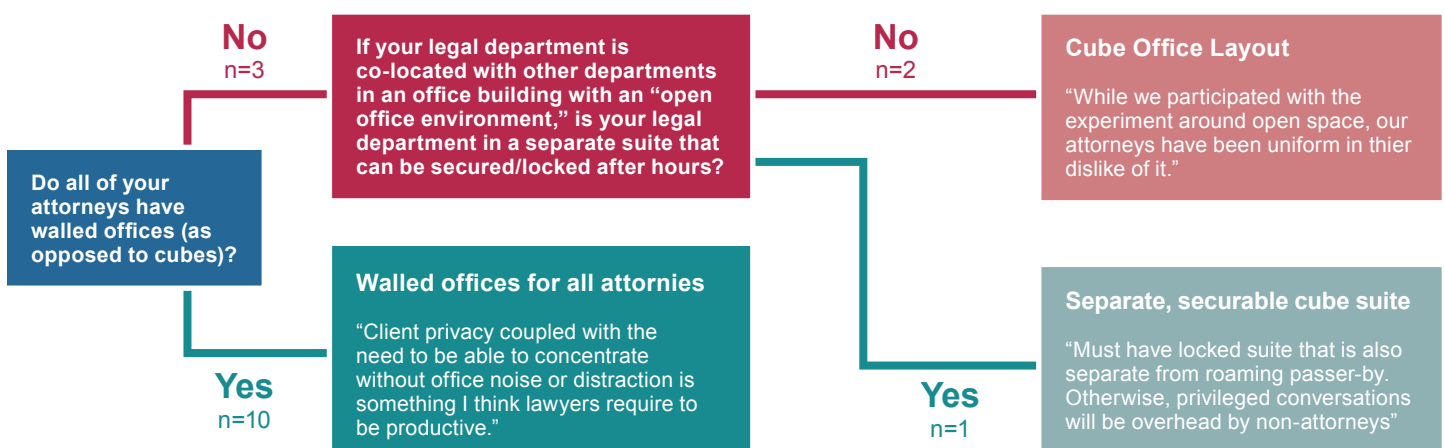


FIGURE 2. BREAKDOWN OF LEGAL OFFICE LAYOUTS



Legal executives were generally in favor of walled offices for attorneys (Figure 2). This office design ensures the security of sensitive legal information, helps to protect the privacy of attorneys and allows better concentration. Responding executives noted walled offices were more conducive to having frequent in-person meetings with clients and have the benefit of being easily locked after hours for additional security. Beyond protecting confidentiality, walled offices are also beneficial for recruiting new attorneys, many of whom are accustomed to and prefer having private, walled offices.

However, some organizations have elected to move to an open-office design. Best practices for addressing challenges associated with an open office space are noted below:

## Informed Practices for Cube Offices

- Have sound-proof “quiet rooms” that attorneys can use for confidential phone calls.
- Offer noise cancelling headphones for staff to eliminate the ambient noise from the cube environment.
- Have offices located in a locked suite to prevent non-legal personnel from overhearing sensitive information.
- Position your legal cubes inside of another secure administrative area.
- Recognize that cube offices can make it difficult to recruit attorneys who are used to the privacy of walled offices.
- Offer the opportunity for attorneys to work remotely to take calls.