



Even though it's an after-lunch meeting – that time of day when your energy levels often flag – I'm feeling pleasantly

energised. I'm in the newly unveiled Mesh Club, a slick co-working space in Johannesburg, to talk to the two owners of architectural lighting design company, Smith.Tait, the company responsible for the club's lighting design.

It's noticeable that the lighting's been considered. Unlike the unforgiving glare of fluorescent lighting you find in most offices, the lighting at The Mesh is somewhat calming and matches the unhurried, but professional mood of the place. I discover that the lighting's programmed to change at different times of day in order to nudge and enhance your circadian rhythm.

Often referred to as one's "body clock", the circadian rhythm is a daily cycle that tells our bodies when to sleep, wake up, eat, etc. It's important because it regulates many physiological processes and is affected by environmental cues such as sunlight and temperature.

Think about the different light we experience in the course of a day: the coolness of morning light, the brightness of midday and the warm glow of sunset. These all send subtle messages to our brains, affecting our moods and, in a work environment, our productivity.

To maintain a healthy circadian rhythm, we all need a good dose of bright "anchor light" during the day. Stepping into natural light for about 30 minutes at lunch time should do it, but most of us stay indoors at the office and endure subtle (but continual) fluorescent flickering. This contributes to "sick building syndrome" and definitely affects our moods, and therefore our productivity.

At night, your home lighting should be more subdued, as bright light suppresses melatonin production, the regulator of your sleep cycle, which is why staring into the blue light that your smartphone emits is so bad for you just before going to bed. It simply wakes your

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Mesh Club.

LET THERE BE (CIRCADIAN RHYTHMIC) LIGHT

Dion Chang reconnects with his inner body clock and discovers the advantages of aligning his circadian rhythm with appropriate lighting: a new trend in office lighting design that promotes workplace productivity

brain up and disrupts your circadian rhythm.

Installing office lighting that can maintain a healthy circadian rhythm for a workforce seems to be a logical step for any company wanting to boost productivity. For example, even on an overcast day, the Mesh Club's lighting will recalibrate to ensure seasonal affective disorder (SAD – the depression you experience during gloomy winters) is avoided. However, this attention to detail is usually sidestepped because LED lighting costs more. For me, this apparent cost-saving is penny-wise and pound-foolish, as the long-term productivity of a company's workforce is surely a good return on investment.

Even lighting company Philips now has a wifi-enabled lightbulb called Hue which allows you to program a full spectrum of white light to match the routines of the day in a home or office, so the concept of aligning your lighting to your circadian rhythm is growing.

The concept's been adopted by many airlines and airport lounges, where passengers – especially business travellers – crossing time zones need their circadian rhythms to be recalibrated. It's a subtle, but effective means of ensuring productivity.

For the CFOs reading this, I hope this revelation is indeed a "light-bulb moment".

• Dion Chang is the founder of Flux Trends. For more game-changing business trends, visit: www.fluxtrends.com