

Sound Masking

Achieving Speech Privacy Cost Effectively



Office Noise, Employees, and Profitability

Employees are a business' greatest asset, but can also be its greatest liability. Conversations, noise, and other typical office "distractions" often cause employees to lose concentration, become irritable, and be less productive. All of these items can lead to poor customer interactions, computing errors, and increased employee turnover, all of which directly affect a company's profitability. Offices with cubicles, call centers, and shared offices are particularly susceptible to these conditions.

An additional concern in regards to office noise is the ability to maintain privacy behind closed doors when rather than a conversation being a distraction; a conversation needs to remain private. Executives, supervisors, and human resource managers often need to have private conversations. Keeping these conversations private requires the use of expensive construction including heavy walls up to the structural ceiling and thick doors that are often sacrificed in office design for drop tile ceilings and thin walls and doors in order to minimize cost.

The problems of noise and confidentiality are the same in medical and healthcare facilities as they are in corporations and government offices, if not more so with the constant activity and sensitivity of people's health information. The advent of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has mandated privacy for medical patients in hospitals and doctor's offices as well as in corporate environments where HR managers and supervisors handle employee personal information. Anyone handling personal information, such as health care providers, pharmacies, doctor's offices, and hospitals are required to comply with this law that includes taking the necessary steps to prevent private conversations from being overheard. The additional concern of identity theft at financial institutions that handle large amounts of customer personal information, including account numbers and access codes, make their call centers and retail locations prime examples for the need for a speech privacy system.

What Solutions Are Available

The first solution involves spending more money on more fixed structure or architectural improvements. For open offices, higher and more enclosing panel systems are available, as are ceiling tiles with a higher NRC rating, so voice reflections are reduced. These improvements will help with speech privacy, but to move up higher on the Privacy Index scale, sound masking can be a very cost effective solution. A well designed masking system will put privacy everywhere, not just where people are seated at their cubicles.

For closed offices, walls with high sound attenuation ratings have been installed. These walls are often raised to the structural ceiling, forcing the return air either to be ducted or to go through a hole in the wall that destroys the benefit. A hidden cost of this "solution" is the added power required of the air handling system to maintain the required airflow.

When needing to cut costs, the standard method is to increase people density and apply less costly materials – which decreases speech privacy even further. For the open office, panels are made lower, suspended ceilings are removed, and persons are moved into smaller workstations.

For closed offices, lighter wall construction is used, the suspended ceiling is made continuous so the wall extends only up to the suspended ceiling and return air grilles penetrate the ceiling to allow airflow into the plenum above.

AtlasIED Speech Privacy Solutions

Sound Masking / Speech Privacy systems are characterized by a sound masking generator and speakers. A sound masking generator is designed to produce “pink” or “white” noise through installed speakers. Rather than trying to eliminate sound, properly placed speakers and a sound masking generator raise the perceived level of noise between workers therefore minimizing the distractions that they hear and keeping them focused and on task. No other manufacturer can match the in-depth knowledge, product line, and industry support that AtlasIED can provide for speech privacy and sound masking. By combining the proper masking equipment with paging and/or music functions, costs can be minimized. With the proper design, achieving speech privacy and all of its benefits is simplified.

AtlasIED manufactures the industry’s most extensive sound masking product line. AtlasIED is pleased to provide you with all the necessary tools to make installing and setting up every speech privacy system easier whether it’s your 1st or your 10,001st.

Focusing on increasing your knowledge on the subject, AtlasIED offers a comprehensive guide called Sound Masking Done Right by industry expert Dr. Robert Chanaud. This book offers a complete look at speech privacy and sound masking systems, covering everything from the intent, advantages, and principles behind today’s audio privacy to the specific requirements, system designs, and potential problems involved in their installation and use.

AtlasIED also has the most comprehensive acoustical analysis program and software available. SCOPE (Sound Conditioned Open Plan Environment) is an analyzer with up to 46 sound paths for all varieties of open and closed offices. It has an extensive database of materials such as ceilings, walls, carpets and furniture system panels from which an office can be constructed. The analysis determines how much privacy is afforded by the building structure and then builds the desired sound masking spectrum to achieve the degree of privacy desired. If the results are not satisfactory, the program can be used to determine where changes are needed, to cost effectively improve and balance the various factors. All analysis is based on the Privacy Index, now standardized by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

AtlasIED’s unique software allows the desired sound masking to be achieved by analyzing office sound measurements and putting any corrections needed directly into its products. SCOPE and additional control, design, and scheduling software are available for download at www.AtlasIED.com.

AtlasIED is the industry’s foremost sound masking and speech privacy expert. AtlasIED employs a dedicated, Speech Privacy Support Manager, who has been in the audio industry for over 30 years, with the last 10 years doing sound masking design work, and who is available to assist owners, architects, and contractors in designing the most cost effective and highest performing system possible. Additionally, AtlasIED can connect you with a qualified speech privacy system installer in your area to help execute your sound masking plan.

Generators



ASP-MG2240



ASP-MG24



TSD-GPN1200

Sound Masking Loudspeakers



M1000



M1000R-W



M2000-SM



M2000-LP

Self Contained Systems



AM1200

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