



Office Flexibility Allows for the Greatest Return

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Inside Real Estate

While real estate assets are one of the largest capital investments a company can make, an investment in people can often yield the greatest return. What does this mean for your physical space? One of the best ways an organization can attract and retain employees is to create a well-designed space that can inspire people, enhance culture, and lessen negative environmental consequences. Great spaces lead to strengthened human, organizational, and facility performance.

Today's office and work environments must keep pace with evolving technology and work styles. Based on what we are seeing in office design, we offer the following tips to enable your work environment (and employees) to operate at peak performance.

Build for Flexibility

Over the past 30 years, exciting new options for customization and flexibility have emerged in the furniture industry. Today, each component of a furniture system can be customized, including color, fabric and material selection. Each element can also be tailored to specific technology and functional requirements. Taken together, these options create a highly flexible environment that responds to both employer and employee needs. When a space is flexible, an organization can lower the cost per square foot, capitalize on new technology and simplify moves, adds and changes.

Advances in systems furniture allow for better integration with technology tools. Wall panel systems offer a multi-disciplined capacity to support the changing needs for power, telephone and data modules within all types of work-space. You need to allow for quick changes with minimal downtime while maintaining an active work flow.

Optimize Work Flow

In the past, many offices used high-height wall panel systems to define work areas. Now lower height wall panels, with the option of glass tops, offer new configuration styles. They provide acoustical separation, and have the added benefit of visual connection between work stations. By using lower wall panels and varied heights, with a combination of segmented styles, the work area can better support collaboration and group interaction.

Additionally, lower wall panels increase daylight within work areas, reducing the need for task lighting. Electronic ballasts and energy efficient lamps can also reduce energy consumption. Both measures reduce eyestrain and increase productivity.

Maximizing storage and personal space is another way to optimize work flow. Mobile components such as pedestal storage units with cushioned tops can double as an informal touchdown space, replacing a standard guest chair.

As organizations change and grow, there is a significant outlay in the reconfiguration of physical space. While systems furniture allows companies to be less dependent on furniture and offer people the ability to be more mobile, conventional drywall construction presents another area that has the opportunity to be more organic in nature. Demountable wall products used with strategic systems solutions help to create a highly effective environment that embraces change.

Creating informal meeting areas within ordinarily static spaces is one way to enhance employee collaboration while not tying up precious real estate with dedicated meeting rooms. A touchdown space within a cafeteria, lobby, or even a storage area can be an effective use of the furniture and space to support these interactions.

Go Green

Many furniture companies are looking at the entire product cycle to minimize the environmental burdens of products, processes and services. This includes the creative use of recycled content materials, rapidly renewable materials, and the ability to recycle materials at the end of their useful life "cradle to cradle."

Many facility managers and designers are looking at ways to incorporate more sustainable products, such as moveable walls that can reduce waste compared to conventional drywall construction. In addition, they are looking at ways to increase the amount of natural daylight to reduce energy consumption.

If you are an employer, engage your employees in their workspace. Ask for feedback on workflow and what makes them more productive. Know what is working, what is not. Employee insight is powerful and a great way to get a full picture of your organization. After all, people are your most valuable resource and biggest investment.

If you are an employee, take every opportunity to share your experience, especially if your space is impacting your productivity. Small changes can revitalize an entire organization.

Companies that embrace change and look for opportunities to capitalize on those changes are those that thrive.



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