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Workplace Insights

Balancing Tradition and Innovation: Three Considerations for Effective Work Environments

As we move into the next era of the workplace and adopt new design innovations, it is important to recognize the enduring design principles that are still relevant today. New trends alone will not ensure an increase in associate attendance or productivity, but trends and amenities can be skillfully employed to augment the long-standing fundamentals of successful workplace design

With today's demand for hybrid and flexible work, there is a need to create visually interesting spaces that draw associates to the office, while continuing to holistically support the employee. When thinking about a renovation to your workspace, consider these key points to accommodate both remote and in-office work:

1. Balance design with the needs of your end users. Now that employees are used to being able to work from a range of non-traditional spaces, they want the office to provide a larger variety of choice than alternative work settings. Although our modes of work have shifted, the actual work being done is often still based on established practices. Therefore, spaces need to be designed with this diversity in mind by considering the end users'

preferences, work habits, and comfort levels, but all within the context of being able to do productive work. One design solution to support focused work while promoting alternative work settings? Create "neighborhoods" that allow for individual heads-down work but also include direct adjacencies to a variety of work settings and collaborative areas.

It's important to program the adjacencies so that collaborative, energetic "loud 'WE' spaces" are not directly affecting heads-down workstations - or "quiet 'I' spaces". For example, if a neighborhood with private workstations requires a direct relationship to a collaborative area, then consider enclosing the collaboration space to maximize privacy and productivity. Alternately, in a neighborhood full

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of active teaming modules, an adjacent collaborative space open to the teaming area may be appropriate

- 2. Consider the culture.** Company culture is a critical factor when designing the next workplace for your employees' wants and needs. It's important to understand what YOUR company values and how the workplace can illustrate those values. Consider the differences between assigned workstations and hoteling workstations. Non-dedicated workstations could be essential for one company but underutilized at another company. One tool Hixson uses to determine these types of priorities early in the design process is a Visioning Session with end-user stakeholders. The Visioning outcomes then guide the design evolution and are helpful for your team from ideation through change management.
- 3. Think about the future state of your workplace.** When we're talking about designing for the future, we're talking about flexibility and longevity. It's important to meet the current needs of employees but also to anticipate future requirements. For example, including supplemental power outlets may not be required in the current design, but as the workplace is altered and your needs change, you will have the necessary access to power (and crucially, the necessary electrical panel board space) to support those changes. Additionally, you may incorporate conference rooms that can flex and become training areas, workstations for the day, etc. Staying flexible and building in adaptability is imperative for success.



The design of functional spaces that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of employees is a complex and evolving process. As we navigate this phase of the modern workplace, success hinges on finding the sweet spot between innovation and practicality: While it is important for workspaces to impress, it's equally crucial for those spaces to be used to their full extent. By approaching the design process with common sense and a focus on user-centered design, companies can create effective work environments that are aesthetically pleasing and truly work for the people who occupy them.



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