

THE FUTURE OF WORK

WORKSPACE DESIGN TRENDS TO INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

YOUR OFFICE NEEDS MORE NOOKS, LESS SITTING. GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES A SPACE THEY LOOK FORWARD TO COMING TO.

BY VIVIAN GIANG

Creating paths for chance meetings, including nooks, and designing agile, unique workspaces are solutions that designers say promote collaboration, creativity, and productivity in the modern office.

"In the last four to five years, we've all been focusing on sustainability and the impact technology has in an office," says Kay Sargent, director of workplace strategies at infrastructure solutions provider Lend Lease. "During this time, we've forgotten that we're designing for people. Now there's a real focus on trying to maximize human potential, performance, and productivity."

But what is productivity? It's no longer about sitting at your desk with your head down working all day.

"I think of [productivity] as effectively creating ideas and solving problems and a lot of

that has to do with being collaborative," says Miguel McKelvey, cofounder and chief creative officer of coworking office space WeWork.

To help employees come up with their next great idea, McKelvey and Sargent provide the most current trends in workspace designs:

CREATE PATHS FOR CHANCE MEETINGS

In the past, people used to have to sit at their desks if they needed to answer emails, but today, anyone can do that—or any other work—from anywhere. This means that, from a creative perspective, it's no longer necessary to make sure people are at their desks at all time.

"It's more crucial to make sure people are connecting and brainstorming with each other," says McKelvey, who leads design and architecture at WeWork.

"We're very specific when we're drawing work plans. We think about the chances of when a person gets off the elevator where they will go," he says. "We think about how people get to a coffee machine, when they go and get their lunch, when they go to the bathroom."

The chance encounters are necessary to increase familiarity and to hopefully create conversations that lead to solutions.

Sargent, former vice president of architecture and design at furniture manufacturer Teknion, says there is a popularity now for designs that help people move.

"There's a huge movement now to design for human potential ... for intellectual and emotional intelligence," she says. "We see staircases are now designed to be in the center of offices and not in the back as exits." This is because designers have realized that there are several chance encounters that could happen as people pass one another on stairs, simply going to and from their desks.

INCLUDE NOOKS NEAR COMMON AREAS

The best-case scenario when people run into each other is that brilliant

conversations spark, resulting in innovative solutions. This is exactly why you should include nooks—areas where people can go and maintain some privacy—around these common areas and paths.

"When you start a conversation when you're at the coffee machine, you can quickly sit down after and have a 20-minute meeting," says McKelvey. "If you have to reserve a conference room to finish that conversation, then you lose time. It's not efficient."

McKelvey advises to put these nooks adjacent to social places, such as areas for eating, coffee, or printing.

BUILD CONFERENCE ROOMS DIRECTLY IN COMMON AREAS

Instead of the boring walls that usually put people to sleep, glass walls in the middle of a busy area can help keep the mind awake.

“YOU CAN'T CONTROL ALL DISTRACTIONS, BUT YOU CAN GET UP AND MOVE.”

"Your mind is being spiked by the activity that's swirling around," says McKelvey. The downside is that this could be a problem for people who have issues concentrating.

INCLUDE BOOTHS FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS

With the popularity of open floor plans, "it's certainly important for people to have a sense of privacy," says McKelvey. "People need a space that they can go to make a conference or Skype call."

"It's important to create those spaces and create a company culture that supports those spaces." In other words, you don't want to have a culture where the boss is always asking why someone isn't at their desk.

People need to feel like they can go to a private area for a phone call or simply to work uninterrupted if they need to.

CREATE AN AGILE WORKSPACE

"We're designing spaces today where every employee doesn't have to sit in a specific spot," says Sargent. "Rather than going to sit in one desk all day, it could be that I'll

start working at a bench, then I'll go to a more quiet space for head-down concentration, then I'll go to the social hub because I want to connect with my co-workers. We've moved beyond traditional offices to agile design."

Sargent says agile designs make more sense because it feels more comfortable for employees. If you have a house, you go to the space designed for the task at hand instead of having to sit in one spot all day. This increases your movement, and creates an agile environment where people have choices, more control, and power.

"We still need to conquer how to control distractions. You can't control all distractions, but you can get up and move."

HAVE ADJUSTABLE DESKS AND CONFERENCE TABLES

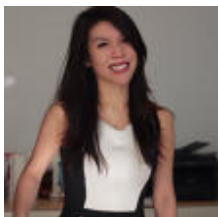
Research shows that sitting too much is harmful to our health and employers should be concerned about the health of their biggest asset: their employees.

The solution to this problem is the adjustable desk, which is said to be a healthier alternative and can help people feel more alert throughout the day.

"Desks need to be in sync with our natural movements," says Sargent. "If I want to stand, I should be able to stand and if I want to sit, I should be able to sit."

Sargent says desks today should be able to adjust to any height and conference tables should do the same since research also shows that standing meetings keep groups more engaged and less territorial than sitting meetings.

[Image: Flickr user 準建築人手札網站 Forgemind ArchiMedia]



VIVIAN GIANG

Vivian Giang is a freelance writer of gender conversations, leadership, entrepreneurship, workplace psychology, and whatever else she finds interesting related to work and play.

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RANDOPATI392 > VIVIAN GIANG 6 MONTHS AGO

Nice tips on improving your office space! I used to work in an office that had nothnig but cubicle rows. Thanks to help from Office Specialists, Inc. (<http://www.osi.biz/IL-IA/office-furniture/space-planning-design/>) my boss was abe to create an innovative workspace. It improved my productivity at work, and allowed us to work together as a team.



Link Reply

RANDOPATI392 > VIVIAN GIANG 6 MONTHS AGO

I used to work in an a stale workspace, which had nothing but rows of cubicles. Eventually, my boss decided it was a time for a new office design, and we consulted Office Specialists, Inc. (<http://www.osi.biz/IL-IA/office-furniture/space-planning-design/>) and they created a whole new layout for us! Check them out if you're looking for some trends mentinoed in this article.



Link Reply

MIKEHARTMANSR > **VIVIAN GIANG** 11 MONTHS AGO

Nothing is worse than coming into a "blah" work place! I am GLAD that places ARE FINALLY making workplaces more colorful as well as taking time to even make them smell better.

What I DON'T like are co-workers that leave even the slightest things laying around (and DON'T CARE!) like pieces of paper on the floor, hairpins, napkins for example, makes me wonder what THEIR home looks like! Anyway, GREAT article!!



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Comment removed.

JEANNETTE FLYNN > **VIVIAN GIANG** A YEAR AGO

Great Article as I have been researching best furniture to buy for my office. I also recently learnt the term "Activity Based Working" Here is a company that supplies that type of furniture to allow for all this modern activity.

<http://profilesystems.com.au/uncategorized/activity-based-working-a-growing-trend-in-office-design/>



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ERIC JACOBSEN > **VIVIAN GIANG** A YEAR AGO

"give your employees a space they look forward to coming to" I wonder if Mr. McKelvey feels like he succeeded in that. This article could use some feedback from people who have to work in these spaces.

SHANDU BHATIA > **VIVIAN GIANG** A YEAR AGO

Being a designer, I find that not only does the creative industry naturally provide for such flexible environs for ourselves, it is also not an effort for designers to adapt to such a flexible work culture, as opposed to many of our Clients who are concerned about whether such environs will be abused/misused by staff.



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KEITH > **VIVIAN GIANG** A YEAR AGO

Love this! I work for a graphic design company and we have several spaces that allow me to move around throughout the day and stand most of the time. This provides me with environments for fresh perspectives as I work. In fact, one of my favorite places is in our garage, especially when it's raining.



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