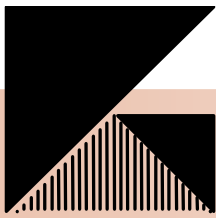


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Trends IN OFFICE DESIGN

Flexibility, technology and security continue to drive corporate spaces



COLOR SCHEMES Offices are incorporating a range of color selections, based on the intended look and feel of each space. Color affects moods and concentration. Warmer tones, for example, are being used to create more comfortable environments. For relaxing and quiet areas, natural materials are used to define a soothing space. In contrast, bolder colors, such as oscillating reds and oranges, are added to spaces to evoke an upbeat, energetic atmosphere.

FURNITURE Now more than ever, businesses look to create more efficient workspaces that achieve a sense of comfort and flexibility. The feeling of free mobility is important to employees. In terms of providing quality, flexibility and durability, systems furniture in particular has become more advanced than ever before. Knoll Furniture recently unveiled its A3 Office System, which features "high-performance" workstations and other furniture that offer optimum flexibility, comfort and durability for the price.



LIGHTING Natural lighting remains popular because of its proven energy efficiency and ability to enhance productivity. One current office design trend is to open up a space with as much natural light as possible, incorporating taller windows, skylights, solar panels and atriums. For other sources of lighting, uplights and LED lighting are popular because they are more energy efficient and last much longer than standard fluorescent lighting.

ADVANCED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Speed requirements of information technology devices are driving the communication infrastructure of businesses. Advanced fiber-optic cable and the sharing of broadband Internet access has accelerated e-mailing, browsing and downloads. Computerized communication and information storage systems have become so sophisticated that increasingly smaller, more efficient computers are becoming the standard.



MATERIALS & FINISHES Natural materials and finishes such as stone, slate and medium to dark wood finishes are growing in popularity. Environmentally friendly recycled carpets in earth tones also are becoming more common. With the use of "green materials" there has been substantial reduction in the off-gassing of pollutants into the interior environment. This is true of carpets as well as systems furniture finishes.

"Companies will look toward designs that provide open, technologically advanced, flexible, comfortable and secure spaces"

—all the necessary components to attract and retain high-caliber employees and maximize

ROOMS AND AMENITIES With the continued popularity of open office space comes the need for more conference rooms, both formal and informal. Common requests are for one large boardroom and several smaller conference rooms or meeting areas.

SECURITY FEATURES In the post-Sept. 11 business world, security has become an immense issue, and more companies are cautious about how secure they are in their environment. Many office designs now incorporate highly advanced security systems—from mini-cams, access cards and ultra-sensitive alarm systems, to x-ray and screening stations (for larger companies).

High-tech conference rooms continue to be a strong trend, complete with such features as video conferencing capabilities, flat screens and gas plasma screens that offer brilliant images. Also, liquid crystal display (LCD) flat screens, although expensive, continue to gain stride over the standard CRT monitors. LCDs take up less space and power, and also provide clear-cut imagery.

Some offices even go beyond access cards to biometrics, which involves thumb, hand and retina scanning; proximity cards, which track employees and monitor access; and specialized ventilation systems at mail distribution sites. These systems are controlled and monitored through a central security station.

Offices now feature more spacious lobbies that have a strong visual impact to create that first impression. Lobbies are highlighted by sophisticated lighting and finishes, high-end reception desks and less guest seating.

ACHIEVING A FEASIBLE DESIGN There are a number of interior designers and space planners that specialize in helping businesses create office environments that incorporate some or all of these elements. A qualified, reputable and creative design consultant can help strike a balance between an extravagant concept and a realistic, cost-effective design that will best meet a company's needs and reflect its personality. *(By Karen Tom, Interior & Sources, March 2005)*

Other amenities incorporated into corporate office campuses include gyms, higher-end staff lounges and outdoor lunch areas. For example, the world headquarters for data capture and conversion company ADCS in Poway, CA, features a full cafeteria, sleep lounge and exercise areas so employees working on a deadline can work 24 hours around the clock.

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