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Office design don'ts: inflexibility, fluorescents, sitting all day

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Rose Hanson

Employees are demanding more choices for where they work and what those spaces will look like, interior designers say. The design experts who shared their top trends also talked about what's out in office design and the new ideas that are taking over.

Unhealthy work environment

Some much of life is spent at work that people have become sensitive to anything that conveys an unhealthy office environment. They're against tall cubicles that block natural light, floors that require toxic-smelling wax and being pinned to their desks all day.

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- [Columbus designers: Consider workers to do offices right](#)

What's in: Outdoor access for workers such as rooftop or courtyard gathering spaces, products that do not require chemical cleaners, paint with low-toxic gases, floor-to-ceiling windows, low cubicles that give people a view outside, design that promotes movement in the office between your desk and group areas, workstations that don't stress your neck and back.

Designer's take: If workers "don't have the eye strain because the lighting is bad, the furniture that they're sitting in is ergonomically correct and they have the ability to stand and sit, then the overall environment of the company is better, which in turn makes people more productive," said [Carrie Boyd](#), director of interior design at M&A Architects.

Single-purpose work spaces

The closet-like breakroom and the conference room behind a closed door down the hall are becoming less common. Companies don't want space going unused for large parts of the day.

What's in: Triple-duty spaces for a café/meeting space/lounging-while-working zone; converting circulation spaces such as pass-through areas into gathering spots; common work areas with comfortable chairs and technology access; smaller enclaves when privacy is needed.

Designer's take: Imagine workstations arranged in a corral with the conference room in the

middle, said Michael Bongiorno, senior designer at DesignGroup architecture. "Your team members are close enough to overhear each other's ideas in each station and in the middle space."

Stationary work stations

People don't want to sit at a desk for hours on end after recent research showing how important blood flow and movement are to our health.

What's in: Adjustable-height desks and tables that allow workers to stand while working or meeting, big-screen computer displays built on casters to move to meetings.

Designer's take: "We now understand the importance of being able to change your work posture throughout the day to improve the health of that individual," said Nick Magoto, executive vice president of design for Continental Office Environments.

Big offices behind closed doors

Companies do not want to spare huge square footage for executives' offices with personal meeting areas. Managers' offices often do not ring the employee work area anymore, and many bosses are forgoing walled-off offices altogether.

What's in: Smaller offices interspersed among the staff with glass walls; managers stationed among the workers using the same, shared work lounges.

Designer's take: "The workplace becomes more democratic and the percentage of real estate that workers occupy will be based on how much time they spend in the building, not their seniority," Bongiorno said.

Bland cube farms

With more group spaces, the days of rows upon rows of towering cubicles are ending.

What's in: Seating areas with electronic ports where workers can set up temporarily; smaller personal desk areas with low-walled cubicles that encourage people to stop to talk; design with raw materials such as metals and wood tones that evoke a less corporate atmosphere.

Designer's take: "Decreasing the size of the workstations allows for more money to be spent on collaboration spaces," said Chelsea King, designer at King Business Interiors.