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Columbus designers: Consider workers to do offices right

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Companies that are building and updating offices want to use every inch of space wisely to fit communal, multipurpose areas needed for mobile workers, local design experts say. That could mean repurposing spaces such as conference rooms that are used for short times during the day or shrinking cubicles to make room for technology lounges where employees can plug in to work and to relax while sharing ideas with colleagues. Office design often is driven by workers who prefer a home-like feel and who do their jobs on the go, toting their technology along, the designers said. Here are trends that Columbus-area experts are seeing for offices in 2015.

Incidental spaces

Spaces previously just for function are reimaged. Picture a large walkway getting a conference table with computer stations, serving a dual purpose for circulation and meeting space.

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- [Office design don'ts: inflexibility, fluorescents, sitting all day](#)

Who spotted the trend: [Michael Bongiorno](#), principal and senior designer at DesignGroup architecture firm in Columbus

What it does: A stairwell might become a series of platforms and seating areas for gatherings, and a glass-walled mini room could be added among the people's desks as a huddle space for impromptu meetings. The idea is to keep employees thinking and interacting because work is a continuous activity, Bongiorno said. "The journey through the workplace will be just as important as the destination."

Why it's better: People passing by one of these spaces will be encouraged to join in discussions with new ideas.

How much will it cost?: Interior renovations run about \$90 to \$110 per square foot, and a new building plus interiors runs about \$200 to \$250 per square foot.

BuzziSpace furniture

Much of the furniture in this Belgian line looks like spacecraft. The pod-like chairs and phone-call booths are designed to counteract the noise and lack of privacy in shared workspaces.

Who spotted the trend: [Carrie Boyd](#), director of interior design at M&A Architects in Columbus

What it does: The products, which are just getting introduced to Columbus, are covered in sound-absorbing felt, coming in colors such as hyacinth, ice blue and denim. The company calls its BuzziHood an acoustic cocoon; it hangs on the wall to provide a spot where workers can hear their phone calls in noisy surroundings.

Why it's better: Boyd says these products are the perfect example of how offices are helping people adapt their space for their needs.

How much will it cost?: BuzziHood's starting price is listed at \$2,015 on the company website, but local customers could expect to pay 35 percent less through a furniture dealer.

Fireplaces for 'live-at-work' spaces

More businesses are adding fireplaces to areas where people lounge, work and eat – possibly all at once. This trend is part of an effort to make office spaces feel more inviting because people spend so much time at work.

Who spotted the trend: [Gabriel Cantrell](#), commercial account specialist at Hamilton Parker Co., which offers design services for its tile, brick and fireplace lines through its Columbus, Delaware and Cincinnati locations

What it does: The pictured electric fireplace surrounded by stone veneer tiles can be hung on a wall and is great for a space where less heat output is wanted. The fireplace built into the wall costs more but puts out greater heat.

Why it's better: These electric or gas fireplaces can add style and comfort to an existing space with minimal effort.

How much will it cost?: \$2,500 for the wall-hung model, \$15,000 for the built-in unit.

Modular construction

Rooms using prefabricated walls allow substantial changes to an office with minimal downtime or small changes to make a space more useable.

Who spotted the trend: [Nick Magoto](#), executive vice president of design for Continental Office Environments, with locations in Columbus, Toledo and Pittsburgh

What it does: The walls are built off-site and installed toward the end of construction, allowing tradespeople such as electricians to prepare the space simultaneously without obstructions. Modular rooms, which offer a variety of standard and custom finishes, are popular for team-building areas and allow companies to react to changes in the size of their work force, Magoto said.

Why it's better: Besides the time savings, prefabricated walls come embedded with electrical and data access points, and modular spaces can be reconfigured over time, giving office buildings a longer life.

How much will it cost?: When a high level of fit and finish is required, modular construction often costs less than conventional construction.

Technology-driven workspaces

Laptops, tablets and phones are driving the design of furniture and meeting spaces, with electronic components or access ports built into tables, desks and rooms.

Who spotted the trend: Chelsea King, interior designer with King Business Interiors in Columbus

What it does: Furniture is being made with materials that keep electronics from slipping off. Companies are selling a technology that amounts to the digital version of posting sticky notes, drawings and charts on an idea wall. The technology comes with giant touch-screen displays to use in a meeting, and multiple people can access the virtual space anytime, anywhere from their computers to post handwritten ideas, reports and notes.

Why it's better: Technology integration meets the demands of workers who rely on frequent use of their devices, especially younger generations joining the work force, King said.

How much will it cost?: One of King's examples is the Haworth Harbor Work Lounge, which is part work seating and part lounge chair. It has a work surface for laptops and a wing with a cup holder for small electronics, personal items or a drink. It comes with a footstool that can be raised to double up as another work surface. The price starts at just under \$2,000.