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Everything you need to know
about office design in under
7 minutes



DALE
Office Interiors

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Introduction

When it comes to office design and layout, there are lots of potential routes you can take - from a small project (such as a new breakout area) to new furniture or facilities. While a full office design can feel like a big step, it's often the best way to address the various challenges in your workplace.

That's because effective office design is far from simply deciding where desks and chairs are placed, or adding some stylish aesthetic features. It even extends beyond the functional aspects of a workplace too.

So what is effective office design?

In this guide, we will look at everything you need to consider in an office design - from sustainability to company culture, and how to get everything you need from an office layout.

What is involved in office design?

In any office design project, there are numerous factors to consider, with interior design a vital and integral part of creating a successful office space - whether it's a brand new fit out or an update of your existing environment.

The factors you need to consider are:

- Sustainability
- Technology
- Health and wellbeing
- Company culture

All of these factors will vary considerably from company-to-company and there is no one-size fits all approach. What works for one business will not work for another, and every successful office space is built around three core needs:

- Physical
- Technological
- Human



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Physical

Not every employee will like or benefit from an open-plan office design, while some will embrace the chance to collaborate with colleagues. Incorporating interior design that enables activity-based working in the office means employees have the freedom to 'hot-desk' at different workstations if they choose. This can not only be empowering but increase productivity by giving staff members a choice of where they work.

A good interior design company will guide you through the options and help ensure the design you want is coherent with your company culture and brand values and that it will work for your employees.

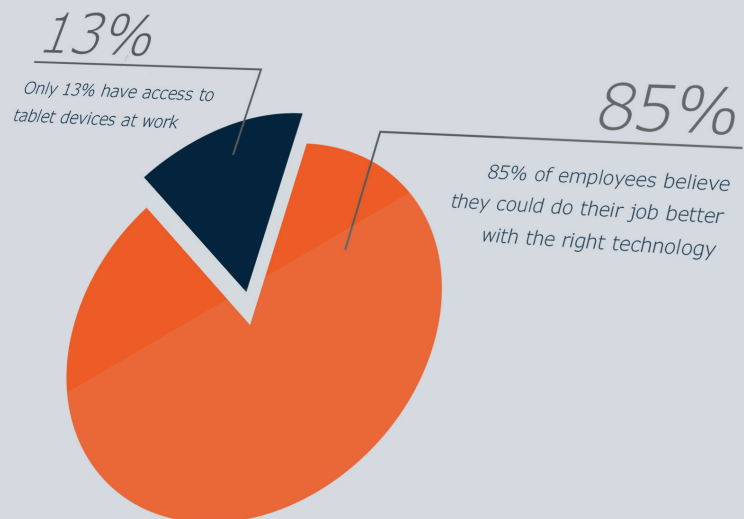


Technological

If the infrastructure in the building can't support the redesign, it won't support your employees to do their jobs properly. One survey reported that 85% of employees believe they could do their job better with the right technology and another suggested only 13% have access to tablet devices at work — tools that are vital for flexible working.

For a successful office redesign that embraces activity-based working, the appropriate technology needs to be included in the design.

Technology can actually enhance an office's interior with wireless charging pads, integrated touchscreens, audio-visual solutions, cable management and in-desk power solutions all working to make the office look sleek and provide practical power solutions.



Human

Communication with your employees is the key to a successful office redesign, as leaving employees in the dark about what's happening with their workplace will soon lead to disengagement or resentment.

You may want to create a stimulating working environment, with 'fun' features such as a slide, fully open workplaces or walls covered in loud primary colours. However, if your team just want somewhere quiet to work, then all these bells and whistles are likely to go unused or, worse, make staff feel their real needs aren't understood.

Before you begin your redesign project, speak to your team and ask them what they want, whether this is something as simple as a survey or asking them to draw their ideal office. Incorporating everything that everyone wants will be impossible of course, but employees will appreciate being given the opportunity to contribute.



How office design relates to company culture

The link between an organisation's workspace and its culture has been widely researched, with reports claiming the design and layout of an office has the power to reflect, support, influence and even change the values and principles of the company that occupies it.

'Types' of culture

- How does this work? A recent white paper suggests there are four types of office culture, and these can be nurtured by different design and layout solutions:
- A "collaborate" culture — best cultivated by a flexible, fairly open space with informal and group areas.
- A "create" culture — also best supported by a flexible environment with an organic layout, informal group areas and few enclosed spaces.
- A "control" culture — works well with a high ratio of individual-to-group space, a structured, symmetrical layout and more formal spaces with a higher level of enclosure.
- A "compete" culture — best nurtured by a mixture of formal and informal spaces, low to medium levels of enclosure and a medium ratio of individual-to-group spaces; also, a structured, symmetrical layout

Avoid cultural clashes

It may come as a surprise to learn that, in spite of the ongoing trend for open plan workspaces, a degree of enclosure and a structured layout is beneficial to culture in certain types of organisation. Of course, it is possible for a blend of different culture 'types' to operate within the same company; in fact, it's highly likely that the culture of a marketing team, for instance, will differ from accounts or IT.

In order to achieve an effective office design plan that allows all departments and individuals to thrive in their work, it's vital to understand what type of subcultures exist within the wider culture of your business. It's unlikely that one workspace design will support every part of your organisation.

Identify your identity

Equally, although looking to office designs of other organisations can be helpful in terms of getting general inspiration for your own workplace, it can be all too easy to fall into the "we want an office like Google's" trap. Although it might be appealing to create a funky environment with game rooms and modern furniture, in reality, if your organisation's culture isn't the same as Google's then using the same design ideas is unlikely to work.

A far more realistic aim is to create a workplace that encapsulates the vision and values of your company. Office design specialists are there to help you achieve this, but there are a few considerations that can aid you along the way.

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5 key design considerations for your office

While interior design is a complex subject that covers numerous aspects, there are 5 key elements that should be addressed in your office design:



1. Lighting

Lighting plays an important part of any design concept, and not purely for aesthetic reasons. It can have an impact on:

- Decision-making
- Productivity
- Sleep
- Health and wellbeing

Traditional office lighting, particularly fluorescent tubes, has a reputation for being cheap and providing poor-quality, artificial light. However, companies are beginning to realise that investing in high-quality lighting and, crucially, maximising natural light in the workplace wherever possible makes for a happier, more productive workforce.

[Learn more about office lighting here >](#)

2. Colour

When decorating a workspace, colour choice should not be arbitrary; nor should it be limited to the company's branding. The impact that different colours can have on people's state of mind is well documented, so it makes sense to capitalise on this in the working environment.

[Read more about how colour affects productivity here >](#)





3. Health and wellbeing

Considering employee health and wellbeing when designing workspaces will naturally include individual elements like lighting, colour and furniture; but it also warrants separate attention. Our research suggests that having a purpose-built space within the workplace to relax in is important to one in five people.

Bringing nature into the office can be a simple but effective measure to counteract the effects of work-related stress.

Biowalls, for example — a recent trend that introduces walls of vegetation to the office space — can have a positive impact on staff wellbeing by improving air quality, diminishing excessive noise and bringing a sense of calm to the office.

Showing your staff that their health and wellbeing is a priority when it comes to creating office design and layout plans — by listening to their needs and working preferences — is key to maintaining a happy and healthy organisational culture.

4. Furniture

Office furniture has evolved hugely in recent years and companies are realising the benefits of investing in high-quality pieces that offer flexibility, durability and ergonomic support. Renowned furniture design company Herman Miller has developed a range of flexible furniture that can be configured and adjusted in line with a company's requirements. This modular approach, which includes the option to erect partitions to enhance privacy for individual or small group work, gives staff members the flexibility to work at each other's desks if required.

Selecting the right furniture is a key part of any office fit-out project — take a look at some of our recommendations here.





5. Reception

The first impression of your business — to both clients and prospective employees — is surely worth giving serious consideration to.

There are plenty of design touches that can help ensure this area creates the perfect ambience, including:

- Displaying art on the walls
- Using comfortable yet durable furniture
- Showing off your awards
- Keeping branded material on show
- Using splashes of bright colour, such as magenta

How design support can make a difference across your business

Getting the design and layout of your workspace right is no easy task, and one that you should not try to tackle without support from an experienced fit-out partner.

A well-designed office can help retain existing staff members as well as attract new talent. When e-commerce specialist Visualsoft had its workspace redesigned by Dale, for example, job applications per role increased by 77%.



Read more about Visualsoft's workplace design >

Next steps?

We understand that when it comes to designing an office often the gap between what you want and what you need can be huge.

At Dale, we have over 35 years' experience delivering office fit out projects across a range of industries, and we understand exactly how to make an office work around your specific requirements.

Want to find out more?

Speak to one of our office design experts >



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