

# Saving money and gaining space – a guide to enhancing your workplace



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In difficult economic times it is key to do more with less – increase productivity and maximising performance are vital for all businesses. People and property are the two biggest overheads any business has, and this report aims to highlight where businesses can get the best return on both counts.

It is widely recognised that a well-designed workplace can increase staff productivity, will give a business a better chance to retain and recruit key people, and as a result can improve profitability while reducing property costs.

By combining good design, smart use of the technology that is available and functional furniture, any workplace can be made into a better working environment.

## Planning a move or refurbishment

Workplace refurbishment projects are not likely to come round too often, meaning the pressure to get it right is high. It also means designing a workspace now must take into consideration the lifespan of the spaces and the changing expectations of staff.

Research shows that the younger generation of employees are more demanding of their workplace, having an expectation of high quality, flexible working environments. Companies looking to invest now for the future will take note of this and the opportunities to make better use of space.

## During a refurbishment project:

A good design and fit out partner will endeavour to help their clients set out and achieve quantifiable goals relating to:

- Reducing overall property costs
- Improving staff performance
- Increasing productivity
- Increasing staff retention
- Attracting high quality recruits

All of which can help towards the ultimate goal of improving bottom line profitability.



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## Benefits of a refurbishment project:

In order to realise the full potential benefits of optimising your office space firstly you need to really understand the cost of the full term of your property occupation. To do that you need to consider the rent of the full lease, business rates, maintenance charges, insurance, IT, furniture etc.

Once you can see the full financial implications of gaining, for example 10% more space or giving yourself a 10% reduction in space requirements, you can see the benefits in going through with a refurbishment or workplace refresh project.

At this point in the process you should be speaking to an expert about the design process, time-scales and costs to get a good overall idea of what is going to be required to achieve your goals.

## The process of getting started:

### The workplace study

#### Components of a well design office space should:

1. Be designed and built with change in mind. Businesses don't stand still and change is inevitable
2. Have its form reflect its function. The two should mirror one another closely
3. Promote areas for informal contact
4. Facilitate and encourage teamwork
5. Have a central communal point that draws people together (tea point, canteen, display areas)
6. Provide sensory stimulation via the correct use of light, colour, furniture and space
7. Create a stunning first impression
8. Enhance and reflect your corporate image/brand

## Open plan offices vs cellular offices

### ✔ Advantages

1. Increased collaboration and communication, without the requirement of high degrees of acoustic privacy resulting in a highly efficient use of space
2. Improved workplace densities
3. Cheaper than cellurised office
4. Suited to multi-use environments

### ✔ Disadvantages

1. Reduced privacy
2. Increased sensory distractions
3. Surveys suggest they're more popular
4. Little control over working environment

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## Flexible working

Staff in the future want to be mobile, flexible and be able to work in different ways. New technology, the migration away from desktop computers to mobile and tablets mean offices need to adapt.

Some offices don't need desks, just different types of working areas.

## Reducing workplace stress to improve productivity

It is generally accepted that a better workplace can increase staff productivity and therefore profits. There are a number of things you can do to reduce sensory distractions and fatigue:

1. Maximise natural light
2. Increase air quality
3. Select ergonomic furniture that supports the task performed
4. Provide adjustable seating that encourages good posture
5. Introduce sight and sound barriers
6. Use colour to stimulate productivity
7. Control Aroma
8. Provide relaxation areas
9. Enable localised thermal control
10. Specify environmentally friendly materials

## Furniture & storage

Choosing the right furniture is likely to be a collaborative approach where employees roles and duties dictate the type and style of furniture needed. The first steps to take when looking at furniture should be:

1. Conduct an audit of furniture and storage that you have already in your workplace. Develop a list of what you are likely to keep and what needs to be replaced.
2. Research and compile a list of alternative solutions for new furniture and storage solutions.
3. Experiment with different designs and layouts with different types of furniture and calculate space savings you can make with improved storage solutions.

## IT systems

IT requirements for employees needs to keep pace with the changes in working habits and demands for flexible working. Cloud based technology means there has been a huge reduction in the need for desktop computers and an increase in the use of personal devices being used for work purposes.

In order to make sure you get the best from your technology when you are looking to refurbish your workplace, you can take the following first steps:

1. Undertake a technology audit and work out a long term strategy for IT.
2. Research the IT strategies of your competitors and market leading companies to see if there are any lessons to learn from their approaches.
3. Review any disaster recovery processes to make sure they are as robust as possible.



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## Improving productivity in the workplace

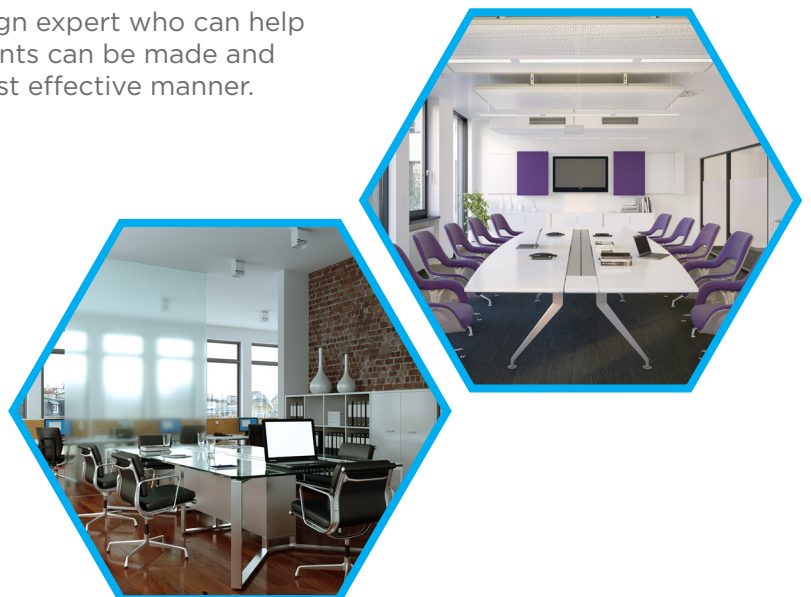
There is general agreement between all design and building professionals that a well thought out and designed workspace can increase employee productivity and reduce work related stress issues. Money can be saved by staff managing to do more and by reducing absences. As a result, the right investment into your workspace can have a positive effect on the profitability of your business.

Staff retention is also proven to be better in companies with healthier working environments and less work related stress incidents.

There are a large number of factors that can help create a better, more productive working environment. The following are important factors that should be taken into account when looking at your workplace design:

- Air and light are the most important things to be considered
- Increased quality of air through air conditioning systems
- Look at ways of maximising natural light in all spaces
- Use environmentally friendly, non-toxic materials and paint
- Control Aroma by keeping kitchen and food preparation areas separate from working desks
- Provide relaxation areas so staff can take time away from their desks
- Introduce sight and sound barriers to allow staff privacy in open plan environments
- Careful use of colour to stimulate productivity
- Provide adjustable seating that encourages comfort and good posture
- Select ergonomic furniture fit for purpose

Most importantly, work with a workplace design expert who can help you identify all of the areas where improvements can be made and how to implement changes in a timely and cost effective manner.



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## Staff retention

Turnover of staff affects businesses in a number of ways and it is important to understand this when calculating the costs vs. benefits of a workplace refurbishment or fit out.

The negative impact of losing staff and having to replace them includes:

- Exit costs
- Recruitment costs
- Time spent introducing new staff and getting them up to speed
- Time and money spent on staff training
- Lost productivity
- Loss of continuity for customers
- Admin costs
- Loss of expertise

When making the case for better workplace design, businesses should review their staff retention levels and calculate how much it has actually cost them over the past 3 years. Realising this cost can be the driver for creating a new, modern, flexible and well designed workplace.

## Conclusion

Once you have worked out the full costs of your property occupancy, and therefore the benefits of gaining more space or saving space you can full appreciate the savings you can make by enhancing your workplace.

Making sure that you choose the right workplace refurbishment partner is an absolutely key decision. They must be able to prove their track record in guiding similar projects, with consideration taken in all of the key areas:

- Components of a well designed office space
- Open plan or not
- Flexible working expectations and changes in work force
- Reducing workplace stress
- Furniture and storage solutions
- Technology and IT requirements
- Improving productivity
- Staff retention

Speaking to professionals really is the best place to start when taking on such an important project. Call one of our experts for a no obligation consultation about your business property requirements.