

# Eight trends changing the modern workspace

 By [Linda Trim](#)

17 Jan 2018

The mouse maze of cubicles of yesteryear are long gone, but the open plan office that replaced it has proven to have its fair share of issues too. Here's a look at workspace trends for the coming year.



## 1. Dynamic workspace layouts

Millennials entering employment are reshaping the workspace as we know it. Multi-functional community space is an office trend that has been around for some time now; however this is an increasingly favoured workspace layout which accommodates constantly changing needs, allowing people to have greater fluidity, mobility and flexibility in the workspace.

This trend can be seen in the form of modular, light-weight furniture, work benches and sit-stand desks. More businesses, particularly those with greater creative licence, are forming inspiring, unconventional work zones such as yoga or meditation rooms, lounges to host important meetings etc.

Communal areas are becoming an imperative part of the workplace where people can get together for an informal meeting, to simply enjoy a cup of coffee alone or with a colleague and to collaborate across teams. In summary people are being provided with options that expand far past the traditional meeting room setting.

These atypical collaboration and meeting room areas have and continue to have a profound effect on workplace synergy and positive outcomes for both company and individual.

## **2. A new level Of comfort in the workplace**

The office fit out is becoming increasingly geared towards creating a more lived-in/homey feel, a home away from home type of scenario. This is created by providing cosy, welcoming lounges, communal canteens, and comfy break out areas. Personal touch is no longer overlooked in the modern office, but rather very necessary and appreciated. This provides for a better working environment, making employees feel more comfortable and valued, ultimately leading to greater employee satisfaction.

This trend interlaces with dynamic workspace layouts as people now have the option to work in environments that occupy both a greater sense of comfortability and functionality. Due to the modern office becoming a more creative and stimulating space, social interaction between employees is increasing. Companies are incorporating games such as pool, ping pong and foosball tables into their space, allowing for people to enjoy some time away from their desks and computer screens.

Furniture used in more residential settings is now becoming a preference in the office space, ultimately creating that warm, eclectic, never-want-to-leave-the-office feeling. Creating a space that appeals to an individual's senses is a crucial consideration for office design today. Smell, colour and lighting play a large role on employee satisfaction and engagement.

When work and relaxed environments merge, the office becomes an attractive place to be as this is essentially where one spends most of their time. We will see this trend grow further in popularity in 2018, as millennials who are pushing this trend are resisting old, staid ways of working.

## **3. Some peace and quiet**

The growing trend towards the open plan office generates the need for private pods/ areas, as the open plan concept does not always allow for optimal concentration or privacy. Private pods are needed whether it is to have a quiet phone call, meeting or place to work with no distractions. Therefore a combination of spaces is essential in the modern workplace. Private areas can be seen in the form of innovatively designed telephone booths, sound proof quiet/ focus rooms and sound proof space dividers, to name a few. Look out for new and exciting designs that are constantly being developed in order to give people the privacy and quite that they sometimes desire in the 21st century office.

## **4. Design to reflect company identity**

Gone are the days of the cookie cutter office. A lot more thought is being placed on the design of buildings as well as the interior of them. Brands are starting to use their office space to showcase their brands ethos and who they represent as a company. Companies in 2018 will look further into how design can successfully tell a story about the brand to the fullest extent.

No longer are designers being given free reign to design the corporate office space, making the copy-paste type of designer a thing of the past. Businesses are becoming increasingly involved in the design process from start to finish as they are aware that the workplace needs to function according to their business's specific needs. When this is achieved, the workplace becomes an inspiring, efficient and productive space, resulting in happy employees.

Meeting rooms are being considered fun areas for companies to further showcase their brand identity and create meaningful experiences and connections with their employees and clients. From experience, if this is done tastefully, it's strikingly effective. This portrayal can be seen in the form of wallpaper, graphics, furniture, lighting, décor, scent or colour.

## **5. Bringing the outside in**

Biophilic design is a trend that we will be seeing a great deal of in 2018. People are wanting to see more natural elements in their environment as the average person spends 90% of his or her time indoors, thus having very little interaction with nature and its elements on a day-to-day basis. This trend goes far beyond the office pot plant and the odd splash of greenery. Nature is now a massive influential factor when considering the design of a building. Nature's elements are being brought into buildings via textures, patterns, natural lighting, and live plants. There is a growing preference amongst people in the office that the more natural/ nature inclined the building's finishes are – the better. We will see more of this trend in large cosmopolitan cities, where exposure to nature is difficult.

## **6. Wellness in the workspace**

All aspects of modern life are being geared towards wellness. The millennial population has completely different expectations than the workforce who came before them, and company loyalty is definitely not as strong as it used to be. Therefore companies have to ensure that their workers feel valued and invested in.

Wellness programs encouraging physical and mental health, work gyms, showers and breakout spaces providing complimentary healthy refreshments are some of the few offerings that create greater employee satisfaction. Access to natural light also has a direct impact on productivity and one's mental state, thus more and more glass is being used in the modern day office space.

This 'trend' interlaces with biophilic design. Bringing greenery into the workplace is in fact more a standard that needs to be met rather than a trend that may no longer hold any staying power in a few years time. Plants help clean the air and thus allow for better concentration and overall wellness.

These are offerings that companies need to seriously consider in the fast evolving 21st century office model. Contributing to employee wellness is not something companies can simply rule out anymore. The millennial population entering employment is reinventing commonly held perceptions of the workplace, placing more pressure on companies to meet their expectations. I think the office space is heading towards exciting things as companies get innovative in their way of thinking, to provide the best possible wellness opportunities for their workforce.

## **7. The co-working climb**

The co-working office is on the rise. Here are the reasons why this model is only growing in popularity. Shared office space is evidently more cost effective as individuals or companies aren't tied into long leases, allowing for greater flexibility. People have fewer obligations as co-working spaces provide most services and take care of the nitty-gritty admin such as cleaning and upkeep. One of the biggest attractions and benefits of the co-working office model is the opportunity to network with different people in the professional sphere. This is a great appeal to those who wish to develop and or grow this network. The model is also great for startups and entrepreneurs who can't afford to be locked into an expensive lease and for the millennial population who want greater flexibility.

## **8. Incorporating technology**

Contemporary offices are more collaborative and flexible than ever before and we see technology playing a massive role in the evolution of the office. Workers are constantly on the go and no longer have to conform to traditional office practice in order to get work done productively. Technology has created greater flexibility in the way in which we work, as people are now contactable from absolutely anywhere. This is influencing the way in which offices are being designed, as we are seeing more collaborative/ breakaway zones and hot-desking to save on space and expenditure.

Flexible working requires the office space as well as the furniture to fully integrate chargers and power points. Built-in power connectors and multimedia capabilities create an extremely functional, hassle free and pleasing environment, benefiting both employee and client. As technology changes so must the office space. This is an exciting trend as it is

constantly changing the way in which we work.

## ABOUT LINDA TRIM

Linda Trim, director at FutureSpace, a co-working joint venture between Investec Property and workplace specialists Giant Leap.

- #RecruitmentFocus: 4 trends driving the future of the workplace - 30 Nov 2018
- #BizTrends: Eight trends changing the modern workspace - 17 Jan 2018
- Creating a comfortable workplace for experienced employees - 9 Nov 2016
- Make the office work for you in 2014 - 23 Jan 2014
- Should culture affect the design of your office space? - 27 May 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>