



>>>**GREAT SPACES:** One Haworth Center global headquarters in Holland, Michigan

Creative work space design

The right design goes a long way toward making your work environment comfortable, productive and inspiring for employees.

From open-plan offices that throw the notion of the cubicle out the window to versatile workstation arrangements that easily adjust to fit individual needs, many companies are giving employees work space options that are ergonomic, customized and increasingly innovative—and for good reason.

These work spaces do more than simply provide spots for employees to get the job done. They help people feel comfortable and connected and get their creativity flowing—all while serving as a recruiting and retention tool for your business.

How do you create a work space that best fits your company and employee needs? Follow these recommendations to design the sort of office space that will have employees singing its praises—and your business running at full speed.

>>>**Consider your company culture.** “What’s the nature of your business and the culture of your organization?” asks Barbara Armstrong, principal of Kahler Slater Architects Inc., a design firm located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She says highly innovative environments will function differently than transactional areas where people are anchored to their desks. Work spaces designed to reflect the culture of a collaborative company, for instance, might feature more common space for informal meetings, or wide corridors that allow people to stop and chat without disturbing other employees nearby.

>>>**Provide communal space.** Encouraging creativity involves thinking outside the cubicle—and in many cases tearing down

walls—to allow communication and ideas to flow. “When you’re looking at creativity you’re looking to remove things that are generally rigid,” says David Fik, senior strategist for the Ideation Group at Haworth, Inc., a designer and manufacturer of office furniture and adaptable work spaces, located in Holland, Michigan. Consider the benefits of a casual arrangement of furnishings—couches, end tables, low chairs—that allows employees to gather for informal sessions rather than seating everyone around a conference table.

>>>**Accommodate individuals.** When it comes to individual productivity, one size doesn’t fit all. “Different people respond to their environment differently,” Armstrong says. “So give people ways to create flexibility with a limited number of parts.” To accommodate this notion, furniture companies have created a plethora of options that allow companies to keep some elements of their work environment standardized while customizing others. This means employees can opt for a stand-up desk over a sit-down one, storage for files versus storage for binders and more.

>>>**Be flexible.** Studies have shown that most people work in a variety of ways throughout the day—solo work, tasks addressed in groups of two and team meetings. “You want spaces that you can rearrange,” Fik says. Select furnishings that are easy to move. Also consider features such as sliding panels that allow for collaboration when open and privacy when closed.

>>>**Promote well-being.** Healthy employees are happy employees. “Keep in mind some of the natural elements that lend themselves to creative endeavors—daylight, views, tall ceiling heights,” Fik recommends. In addition remember the importance of proper task lighting, ergonomic seating and office air quality too.

>>>**Think about the future.** A well-designed office space won’t just suit you now; it will adapt to changes in technology, employee and business needs down the road. It’s smart design—and it’s what makes purchasing the right work space components so vital. “The important thing is to put money where it is going to

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make the most sense,” Fik says. “Focus on the ergonomic needs of the individual; then you can move into pieces and parts.”

>>>**Tap technology.** Beyond the physical office location, smart work space design also caters to offsite needs. High-speed Internet access helps accommodate the growing number of workers who choose to work from home, client sites or other remote locations—offering optimum flexibility for minimum cost.