

# A Better Place to Work

25 Approaches to a Positive Work Environment





# Strengthen team spirit with a central plaza

Incorporating a “plaza” in the heart of an office can foster a sense of shared identity and belonging similar to that created by a village or town hall in a small community. Centrally located and directly linked to reception and all departments, the plaza can link people inside the office to the world outside. By criss-crossing the plaza with bridges and staircases, designers can ensure that all business units are connected vertically as well as horizontally.

To be truly multi-functional, plazas must be amply equipped and offer optimal spatial flexibility. WiFi connectivity means that staff will be able to use the

plaza as an informal working or individual touchdown area. Larger plazas offer the added advantage of being able to host everything from informal 2-person brainstorming sessions to major presentations for over 100 attendees. Totally people-focused, plazas also provide team members with a versatile space where they can spend downtime.

A useful asset for recruitment and staff retention, such town-hall-like environments are also perfectly suited for internal marketing and corporate communications such as displaying new products or super graphics demonstrating corporate values.



## Design the building from the inside out

Using the “inside-out” design approach, the interior response to the client’s specific end-user needs dictated the subsequent direction of the interior architecture. Unlike existing buildings with pre-determined architecture, purpose-built premises enable the construction of an interior form which maximizes client-specified functions. In this carefully integrated holistic design solution, every aspect of both the interior space and the exterior envelop contributes to the final environment. This approach offers the added advantage that it eliminates the duplication of tasks common in more conventional delivery approaches. The end result is an environment whose high-level spatial flexibility will deliver significant time and cost savings during any subsequent expansion or re-adaptation.





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## Strive for spatial flexibility

Limited areas within an office are frequently required to host a range of different meetings and functions. The introduction of easily removable sliding partitions can ensure optimum flexibility by enabling individual units to be quickly removed or reconfigured.



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## Ensure a more sustainable office

Recent years have seen sustainability become an increasingly important fundamental consideration in office design. "Green" initiatives now go far beyond simple specification and selection of environmentally friendly materials that are natural, locally procured and easily recyclable. Today, companies not only evaluate suppliers and manufacturers on how they will integrate engineering with the final design and construction method, but also on the basis of their environmental standards and practices.



# 5

## Set up a Think Tank



“Think tanks” like the translucent orange glass “ideas capsule” pictured are cocoon-like spaces which many forward-looking companies use as inspiring meeting areas. Functioning independently from other business units, “think tanks” are 100% free from external distractions caused by routine office activities. As a result, can work in a setting where imagination has completely free rein. The provision of essential support tools such as white and smart boards, audiovisual facilities and other connectivity tools will ensure that the brainstorming flow of new ideas and initiatives will not be interrupted.

# 6

## Help being sustainable; by sourcing locally



Sourcing fixtures, fittings and furnishings locally is another proven means of ensuring cost-effectiveness in office design. Local materials can often be made and delivered far more inexpensively and quickly than overseas alternatives and, purchased through a reliable supplier will not result in any loss of quality. Local procurement offers the added advantage of being environmentally sound and sustainable as reduced transportation needs will generate a considerable savings in fuel expenditure.

# 7



## Focus on attracting and retaining staff

A well-designed office which caters for people's individual needs makes staff feel part of the team rather than part of the furniture. This visible concern for its people can significantly enhance a company's success in staff recruitment, loyalty and morale.

## Think multi-functional

Seating cushions placed on top of low filing cabinets bordering windows in the general office space have further added to this company's feeling of transparency and community by sharing natural light across all levels of the workforce regardless of rank.



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# 9

## Play with creativity

Serious business and professional services do not necessarily mean working in a dull and conventional-looking office. In incorporating a game zone within its taxation floor, this accounting firm used vibrantly colored seats on a raised U-shape platform to encourage informal contact and the free flow of ideas.

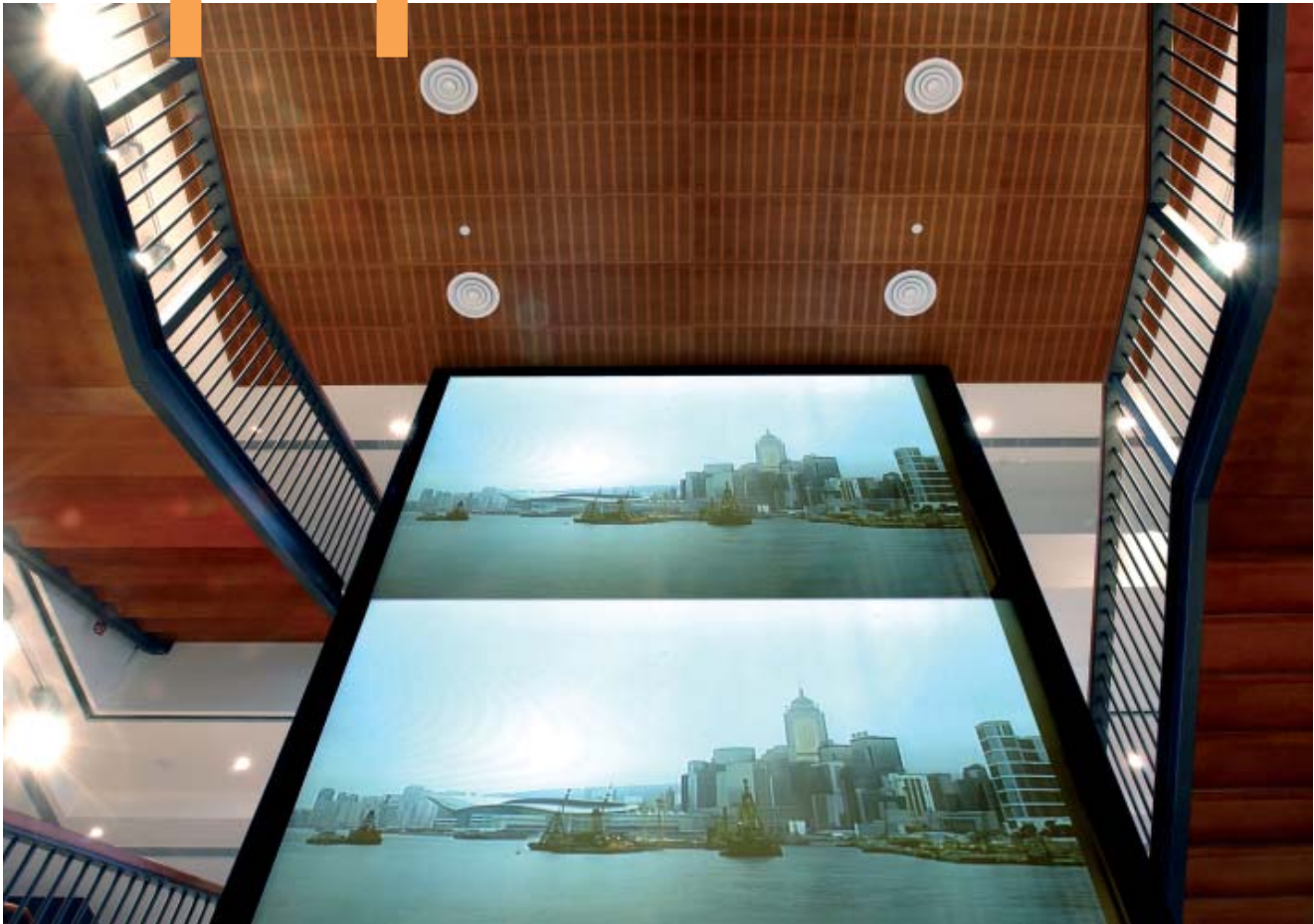
# 10



## Aim for round-the-clock versatility

All public areas in this award-winning project were designed to ensure optimum flexibility by accommodating overlapping usage. The use of modular lighting, mobile furniture and strategically located data points ensures this company's day-to-day business library can be quickly transformed into a venue for social functions each evening. The end result is an ultra-versatile space that can be used by a wide range of groups within a condensed timeframe.

# 11



## Foster community spirit in the face of change

When merging or consolidating, an organization's sense of community can suffer as a result of staff who are concerned about how the changes will affect them either personally or professionally.

The challenge facing this company was the need to strengthen community spirit by ensuring that everyone shared a sense of belonging. The resulting communal

space incorporates interactive communication focal points in areas where staff movement is heaviest.

The central atrium provides a seamless "virtual connection" featuring hi-tech access paths and lounges capable of accommodating both ad-hoc and large-scale gatherings, this open atrium is a classic example of how these aims can be achieved.

# 12

## Identify new uses for existing spaces



Transforming spaces such as retail halls into fully functional offices represents an exciting design and planning challenge. This is especially true of areas which will double as high-profile branding and communications environments. Here, a sizeable glass-roofed atrium imports natural light deep into the office interiors. In retaining the original escalator, the client was able to ensure quick access to the atrium, where people could meet, talk over coffee or simply enjoy the sunshine flooding in through the roof.

# 13

## Celebrate cultural diversity

Located within a global metropolis, this client wished to communicate corporate values in a culturally sensitive manner. A series of super graphics projecting ethnic diversity perfectly mirrored the egalitarian spirit the client wished to foster among the staff and portray to its clients.



# 14



## Highlight the nature of the business

This transparent ship's stateroom-like setting conveys a strong feeling of sailing at sea. Designed for a marine commerce insurance company, the design doubles as an effective branding tool by mirroring the firm's identity, expertise and values internally as well as externally.

## Emphasize Corporate Values

"Help and Trust" are an essential part of this company's identity. The use of "helping hands" super graphics in front of a breakout space where ideas are exchanged inspires staff and helps promote a better understanding of corporate values among visitors. By perfectly matching a value with its surrounding area's purpose, graphics and space can be synergized to optimum effect.



# 15

## Leverage the power of modularity

Modular designs maximize utility while minimizing costly and sometimes unnecessary customization. Such designs also ease space requirements, increase headcounts and trim real estate costs, while enhancing the continuity and functionality of an office. Easy to build off-site and assemble in-situ, modular units offer the added advantage of eliminating time-consuming disruptions during the construction process.



# 16

## Establish informal spaces within the office

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Informal spaces enabling cross-department communications are often amongst the most productive areas in an office. More tellingly, companies who use such social breakout zones are far more likely to generate the innovation necessary to compete in the marketplace and to attract and retain top talent. Staff who work in a relaxing environment are inclined to spend more time and be more efficient at work.

A variety of seating options against a visual backdrop can help to create a dynamic rhythm and provide a perfect atmosphere for spontaneous meetings and brainstorming sessions.



# 18

## Enable “desk-sharing” or “hoteling”



Desk-sharing, hoteling, hot-desking are now standard terms in the lexicon of corporate interiors. While subtly different in nature and ideally suited for particular work patterns, these concepts are not appropriate for all business environments. Recent technological developments, such as WiFi networking, mean almost any organization can now more easily apply such concepts. Ultimately, if desk sharing strategies are to succeed, they must be supported by a social infrastructure, environment and rewards system that enhances links between on-site managers and off-site staff.

## Establish a gallery space

# 19

A combination of design and graphics can encapsulate a company's identity and history and project an established business empowered by a fresh, contemporary vision of the future. Here, the 'flow' space in a corridor was utilized to create a gallery of super graphics showcasing the client's long, distinguished history in Shanghai. Weaving all the way through the office, the gallery binds functional spaces by naturalizing transitions between activities and fully immersing staff in the brand heritage.



## Cool under the sun

# 20

Floor-to-ceiling windows are a wonderful way to demonstrate transparency and to share natural light! That said, the heat of the sun can significantly increase energy consumption levels and air-conditioning costs. The introduction of mobile shades is an easy and sustainable way to reduce monthly fuel bills while enjoying natural lighting and spectacular views.



# 21

## Demonstrate professional expertise

Because their “products” cannot be seen, service providers must identify innovative ways to showcase their expertise. For a law firm, an extensive double-storey library in their reception and passageway can achieve this goal. Appropriately branding the space within a legal context, the volumes underline the company’s professionalism in a specific knowledge-based industry.

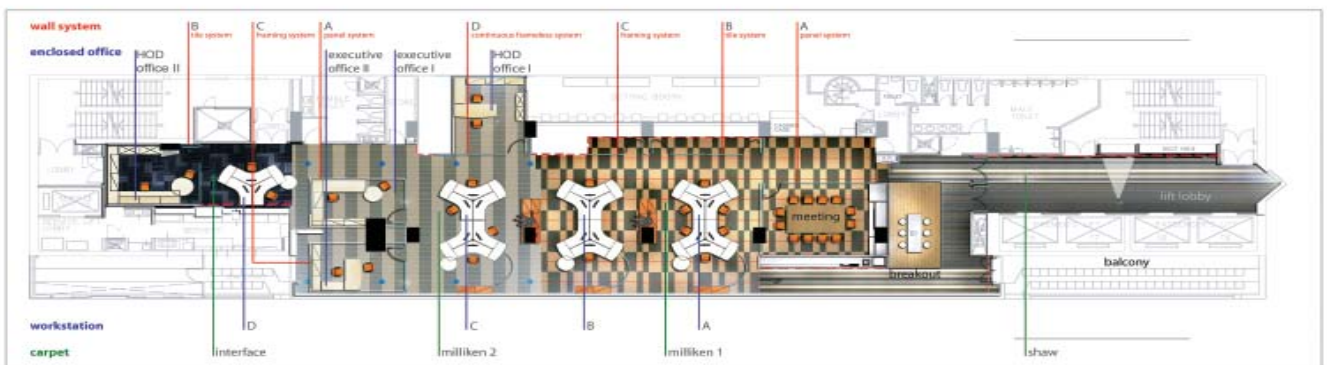


Change in the workplace is far more likely to be successful if staff are kept fully informed of the reasons and its possible effects on their daily routine.

# 22

## Communicate the reasons for change

Effective change communication can be most easily achieved through staff interviews, observation studies and workshops. Various design options can then be studied and commented upon by representative focus groups. The feedback harvested by such activities can be used to create a design idea. But before fully embracing a concept, management may feel that further validation is required and therefore wish to pre-test individual directions through a mock-up space, enabling further two-way communications with staff.



# 23



## Offer privacy in open spaces

All offices must balance the need for interaction with people's need for privacy and quiet. This is especially true in open-plan environments. Facilitating confidential conference calls, one-on-one staff reviews or heads down work, individual quiet rooms should be conveniently located, properly connected and easily accessible for all staff.

## Create communication focal points

# 24

Existing buildings offer many fascinating design cues which are just waiting to be discovered. Ostensibly a visual obstacle that reduces usable space, a set of structured column grids can with a little thought and effort – be converted into a series of attractive communication focal points.

The installation of a bar-like table around a pantry column, for example, can create a new space where staff can chat over coffee. The conversion of structural columns to white boards can also help ensure that virtually all areas of the office become potential conduits for the proposing and sharing of ideas.



# 25

## Harness the magic of natural light



Scientific studies show that human beings working in natural light are far more functional and productive than those working under man-made lighting. Proving everything from higher retail sales to increased student learning rates in direct sunlight, these studies demonstrate an unshakeable link between natural lighting and enhanced productivity. The improvement in vision that natural light offers results in less eye fatigue, improved sleep patterns, fewer headaches, lower rates of depression and better hand-eye coordination. Ultimately, such factors translate not only into increased productivity, but also more rewarding returns on companies' balance sheets.



For further information, [www.mmoser.com](http://www.mmoser.com).

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