

Office Design Concepts

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An Expert Manual On The 4 Major Contemporary Layouts



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Introduction

Office environment and design go hand-in-hand.

Many successful businesses are taking this notion a step further by transforming their workspaces into modern marvels of office excellence. They understand the quality and attractiveness of their office says as much about their brand as their products and services. In short, a poorly designed office can tarnish a company's reputation in the eyes of stakeholders.

Delivering an office design that optimizes productivity, while breeding innovation and delighting end-users is no easy feat. It requires strategic focus and inspiration driven not only by how employees engage and interact with their workspace, but increasingly by future of work.

This office design manual was developed to enable you to create the vision for your workplace by highlighting predominant office layouts in contemporary use. Before exploring their key features and benefits, it is appropriate to discuss how office design impacts workplace success, and end with a brief synopsis of helpful industry insights and assessments.



The Impact Of Office Design



Without a well orchestrated office design, it is nearly impossible for growing business brands to achieve the type of workplace environment that brings out the very best in employees—let alone sustain high levels of workplace productivity and impact.

This is because office layout designs can either support or limit operational and workflow efficiencies based on task demands. Too often, businesses get stuck in a “business as usual” mindset and fail to recognize that as the nature of work changes, so must their office arrangements to inspire innovation and cultivate growth.

Due to the ongoing automation of routine and highly technical tasks that were once time consuming, a growing need is emerging within companies that centers on more strategic and creative types of projects. In these scenarios, a well executed office layout that maximizes real estate, facilitates critical tasks and activities, while encouraging teamwork is paramount to gaining a competitive advantage in acquiring prolific talent.

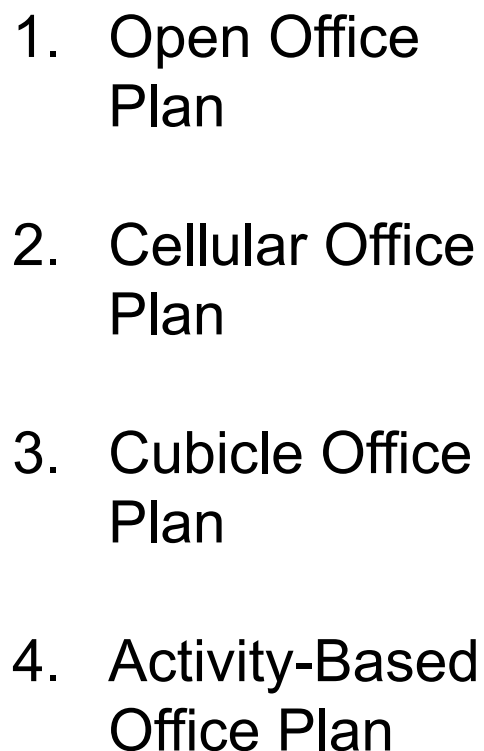
4 Modern Office Designs

Now that you are aware of the connection between workplace environment and office design, as well as the profound impact they can have on operational efficiency, it's time to familiarize yourself with the 4 types of office designs that have stood the test of time.

Supplementing high-level overviews of these contemporary office layout designs is a breakdown of key features as well as their relevant pros and cons.

Keep in mind that while we will be exploring each of these layouts independently, many offices tend to mix-and-match and contain elements from two or more design types. Depending on the type of tasks that need to be accomplished and your preferred office culture, this may be appropriate and even desirable.

This manual is not intended to promote or tout the superiority of any single layout design. Instead, it is a resource to help growing business brands create their own vision of office excellence, although the future of work will inevitably favor designs that are more flexible and collaborative in nature.

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1. Open Office Plan
 2. Cellular Office Plan
 3. Cubicle Office Plan
 4. Activity-Based Office Plan

1. Open Office Plan



The open office plan is distinguished by the sharing of a single workspace without the use of dividing walls. It is currently being used by at least [70 percent](#) of companies, making it the most common type of office layout in the U.S.

Informal and casual in nature, the open office plan is lauded for its ability to foster employee engagement and collaboration, while removing barriers between superiors and subordinates. Another advantage of the open office plan is that it improves space efficiency by increasing workstation to floor space ratios, which lowers costs per employee.

Drawbacks of the open office plan include a loss of privacy and greater difficulty in avoiding unwanted distractions and interruptions driven by increased team member exposure. Another drawback of open office plans is that they have been known to spread germs and bacteria more rapidly, resulting in higher risk for infections and illnesses.

To accentuate the many benefits of teamwork and information sharing, while mitigating overstimulation and distractions during focused tasks, well executed open office plans should incorporate quiet zones or spaces for individual work.

2. Cellular Office Plan



The cellular office plan consists of enclosed office spaces arranged along corridors. In this type of office design, space is typically allocated based on hierarchy, insofar that senior staff get their own private offices, while ordinary team members perform their work in shared meeting and conference rooms.

Unlike the open office layout, a cellular office plan is distinguished for its increased privacy and cancellation of interruptive noise, which is conducive to the swift and prompt execution of focused and independent tasks. Cellular office arrangements are also known to instill a sense of ownership and an elevated professional identity among those fortunate enough to command their own private office.

On the flipside, cellular office plans inherently limit communication, offer reduced opportunity for employees to receive mentorship and can give rise to instances in which management becomes stagnant. This comes as a result of considerably less interaction with colleagues that possess new and innovative skills and talents.

One final thing to note about cellular office plans is that they require a high degree of space to accommodate private and shared workspace. Often times, the amount of extra space needed is not always cost-effective in large metropolitan areas.

3. Cubicle Office Plan



Cubicle office plans are comprised of rows of workstations for groups of employees. These configurable workstations come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but can be categorized as standard cubicles or clusters.

Cluster workstations tend to be circular in shape and have a low partition heights to reduce restrictions on team member interaction and engagement.

Cubicle workstations come in rectangular shapes and typically have high partitions, thus resembling a mini office—although partition heights are adjustable.

Within cubicle office plans, employees are afforded a sense of privacy, personal storage space, and can expect less distractions than open office plans. This can increase their concentration on independent tasks when they are not surfing the web or using their mobile device unnoticed.

The antithesis of the open office design, cubicle office plans place limits on collaboration and can inhibit employee visibility on behalf of managers. Also, they are not the most space efficient design and require more square footage than open desking systems.

4. Activity-Based Office Plan



An activity-based office plan is a more flexible version of the open office plan. The main distinction being that employees do not have assigned workstations. In activity-based office plans, employees are encouraged to choose from available workspaces that best fit the tasks they are responsible for accomplishing on any given day.

Activity-based office designs are enjoying popularity given their innate ability to inspire and advance collective intrapreneurship. They are also revered among growing business brands for the benefits they bestow on corporate image and workplace culture.

Disadvantages of activity based office plans include the unpredictability of available workspace, as well as a more involved approach to space planning since companies will have to carefully examine workplace dynamics and patterns to achieve a design that's tailored to their exact needs.

Since activity based office layouts assume all the benefits of an open office plan with built-in autonomous features, they are typically favored by emerging talent classes seeking an innovative and attractive workplace destination.

Industry Insights

While there is no shortage of commentary surrounding office environment and design, a careful interpretation of workplace trends pegs millennials as the new standard bearers of contemporary office culture. If there is one thing to note about millennial employees it is that they favor the authentic over the conventional. With that said, it is helpful to understand how their influence is shaping modern office design.

The bad and the ugly:

Given a choice millennials would settle for an open office plan over cubicles, which they tend to characterize as dehumanizing, evil and unsophisticated. Nevertheless, open office designs have also come under attack recently and are rapidly losing the appeal they once had. With increasing regularity, millennials report diminished productivity resulting from overstimulated and at times chaotic open office environments.

The good:

More and more, millennials are becoming drawn to activity-based office plans, which have been known to improve wellness by providing employees with the best of all worlds pertaining to workplace dynamics and environment. Not only are modern activity-based designs more physically attractive and culture friendly, they also afford employees the flexibility and liberty to choose their work settings based on task relevance and comfort.

Further reading:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahlandrum/2017/05/19/3-office-design-trends-driven-by-millennials/#18c9f7717600>

<http://fortune.com/2016/05/12/the-open-office-concept-is-dead/>

<https://workdesign.com/2017/07/activity-based-working-wellness-the-humannature-side-of-the-popular-design-typology/>

Choosing Your Winner

Understanding the 4 major office design types that have stood the test of time is a significant milestone on your journey towards achieving office excellence in the 21st century. However, maximizing operational output and employee productivity, all while seamlessly accommodating new ways of working to attract top talent and enhance corporate culture requires swift and definitive action on behalf of growing business brands committed to workplace success.

This manual was developed to increase your awareness of the critical features, as well as some of the pros and cons associated with the 4 modern office designs. To determine whether your workspace is working for or against the achievement of your mission, you will have to gauge your current office layout's efficiency and effectiveness in empowering employees to perform at their best so that you can turn it into a strategic asset.

If you consider that your workplace needs a new [custom layout](#) or improved [space planning](#) and [furniture](#) upgrades, you should consult with a proven partner that can help turn your vision of a modern office into reality.



LPS Office Interiors

Family and minority owned, LPS Office Interiors has been helping growing business brands in NYC and the Tri-state area modernize their office for over 25 years.

By combining deep office interior expertise with personalized services that are unmatched in our industry, we have helped major business brands like the National Basketball Association transform their workspace into modern marvels of workplace success.

While we pride ourselves on delivering end-to-end office interior solutions designed to fit every business need, it is our commitment to our values that make us different.

When choosing LPS Office Interiors as a partner, you can expect a level of customer service that prioritizes a flexible and affordable approach to creating workspaces that thrive—without unexpected surprises or delays.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more, or schedule your [free consultation](#) today to get started on your project.

About The Author



Louis P. Pou is the President and Chief Financial Officer of LPS Office Interiors. He brings over 10 years of experience in office design, office furniture installations, and corporate relocations. His main areas of office interior expertise include: 2D and 3D design renderings, maximizing office space and modernizing workstations. In addition to directing financial obligations, Lou is strategically focused on integrating marketing and sustainability practices that will usher in growth opportunities for LPS in the decades to come.

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