

Construction, Design & Engineering

Flexible Solutions Optimize Office Space

At their best, offices are dynamic. Unlike the static and stagnant closed-door offices of years past, today's office environments are geared towards teamwork, efficiency and maximizing the skills of tech-savvy employees. As a property owner, investing in the best possible office design can enhance your property's image, boost morale among your tenants and most importantly, attract and retain the best possible companies to your location.

Keep in mind that creating the most promising office design does not mean spending the most money. The key to optimizing office space is designing your site for maximum flexibility. Giving tenants flexibility allows them the ability to adapt their individual and team needs.

Three essential components have emerged that work together to create a definitive solution for optimizing office space. Raised flooring, movable walls and modular furniture now can be constantly reconfigured to provide a proactive, versatile and robust answer to the challenges of a modern office environment.

Designing From The Ground Up

One of the most practical new choices in office design is the raised access floor. These innovative new flooring systems allow users to literally "walk on air." While they have been prevalent in Europe for nearly 20 years, property owners in the United States just now are learning how raised flooring creates more flexibility above.

Instead of forcing air from ducts above the ceiling into the bottom third of the room, raised flooring allows for the passive delivery of air through the floor. As opposed to ineffectively using energy to push air down from the ceiling to heat or cool your office, passive air delivery works with your HVAC system to heat or cool the first six feet of space where we work in a much more economical fashion.

Primarily, from the end-users perspective, raised flooring systems can improve comfort and productivity. The most common complaint to a building facilities department is that an area is too hot or cold. For the first time, using individually accessible air diffusers, employees can have the ability to turn the air



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on or off in their own workstation. More importantly, the space underneath your raised floor is utilized not only for air delivery, but also to deliver modular cabling, electrical services and other infrastructure items that are essential to today's wired offices. When services need to be configured, information technology staff can stop wasting time crawling around in the ceiling and instead access the specific areas they need without disturbing the entire office. Labor is reduced on the front end and additional cost benefit is found in the quick, clean and easy reconfigurations.

There are also visual benefits. Efficient under-floor air-conditioning creates a cleaner look that avoids the use of perimeter ducts, channels and unsightly power poles and provides a more appealing workspace for both your tenants and their customers.

Changing Needs, Changing Spaces

The next step is to build office environments not based on an inert architectural plan but on the concept of a changeable atmosphere that fits the shifting needs of employees and their tasks. Your company's projects change and that means the work environment in which your employees produce results needs to adapt as well.

With moveable walls, the only physical barrier that constrains you is the outer shell of your building. Dry wall, although inexpensive, can create many issues. Each time you want to reconfigure, the wall has to be destroyed and rebuilt, ruining the carpets and causing massive disruptions to the workplace.

Modern moveable walls run floor-to-ceiling and can be designed to fit seamlessly with the architectural style of your building while providing enormous environmental and financial gains. They also work in tandem with raised flooring to accommodate modular electrical

and data cabling components.

They have all the benefits of traditional permanent walls yet can be constantly recycled in different configurations suiting the needs of your tenants. Reconfiguration can be done in hours with no disposal costs. Even the initial installation is less expensive than traditional dry-wall construction and moveable walls offer long-term benefits. Even in the worst-case scenario that a tenant leaves your building, the flexibility of moveable walls allows you to reconfigure your office space based on the needs of many different types of businesses.

Workstations That Work

The third component of an optimal office is choosing the right workstations. While they used to have a bad reputation, today's modular workstations are far more efficient than a traditional desk in a private office.

A well-designed U-shaped space allows users to operate at multiple levels of organization. A contemporary workstation takes advantage of vertical space, giving employees a full turn radius that allows them access to more work surface, better storage space, ergonomic lighting and design, and flexibility.

Another important aspect of office design is teamwork. As teams within offices collaborate on evolving projects, the physical space they require will change, too. The best way to accommodate those changes is by employing furniture systems that stack and move and are not tied down to one location.

An office is made up of many things – your tenants, their employees, the office culture and aesthetics all play a part. By taking the time to assess the needs of your property and tenants, you can begin to build a truly flexible infrastructure based on solutions like raised flooring, moveable walls and modular furniture that all work together – as a team.

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