

{ Executive Memo

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Planning OFFICE SPACE

for **Maximum
Efficiency**

By **Carol Koplín**, ASID, NCIDQ

When German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe stated, “God is in the detail,” he was conveying that in anything we do well, attention to detail is of utmost importance. He was probably in the middle of planning new office space.

Setting up office space to maximize efficiency is achieved by carefully planning and reviewing all of the details. Attention to the details avoids waste in materials, energy, effort, unnecessary leasable square footage, money and time. You can achieve your desired end results most efficiently and cost-effectively by planning early.

Design professionals often refer to developing the space program for a client’s new office space as the first stage of the design process for new office space. They ask company officials: “What is your total staff count? What are the required staff adjacencies? On what levels or what standard office sizes do they occupy? How many conference rooms are needed?, etc.

While all valid questions, the answers may not result in the most accurate determination on how to best plan for and maximize efficiency within your new office space.

Rather, the most important first steps are addressing the two critical subject areas that I refer to as the Discovery and Exploration stages of a project.



Discovery Phase

To design the best environment for new office space, it is essential to look at an organization's work process and to identify its brand and social message, and its overall goals. This information is gathered in a very collaborative and detailed fact-finding process, which can be executed in a variety of ways, including observational design assessments, digital tracking assessments, website surveys, or more traditionally, interviews with groups and/or individuals.

No two organizations are the same; each has its own personality, needs and specific requirements to function at its highest capacity.

Some of my favorite websites to peruse for trends in efficient work-environment planning are:

www.neocon.com
www.centerforactivedesign.org
www.wellcertified.com
www.usgbc.org

Exploration Phase

I often bring clients to a very informative commercial interior design conference that occurs in Chicago every June, called Neocon. I find that clients who attend better understand current workplace trends, how an agile workplace is created, the importance of integrating all generations, what it means to create an Active

Design environment, and what the WELL Building Standard (www.wellcertified.com/) and LEED (www.usgbc.org) sustainable workplace mean. Another essential lesson: how to best attract and retain new talent in the work environment. Clients who join me at this conference generally come away with a greater understanding of how important the work environment is to the overall profits of an organization. Good design in the work environment can achieve much more than anyone usually expects.

Take advantage of office space tours. Before I begin to design a new office space, I will often schedule tours of similar facilities or organizations. Speaking with their facilities departments helps us understand what they did correctly, but, most importantly, what they would do differently now.

To plan a new office environment, take the opportunity to learn or identify the numerous details that must be taken into consideration. You need to start the process early, so you'll have all the facts and can make informed decisions appropriate to your organization. ■



Carol Koplin, ASID, NCIDQ, is a former President of the Colorado Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers, and is the principal member of Koplin Interiors, LLC, a Denver commercial interior design firm. She has more than 25 years of experience specializing in the interior design and space planning of professional offices.

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