

Innovating the Workplace through Design: Implementing Trends that Transcend

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TRENDS BOTH LEAD AND REFLECT CHANGE. THROUGH OUR STUDY OF REAL ESTATE TRENDS, AND EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH NATIONAL CLIENTS, WE OBSERVE HOW THE WORKPLACE CONTINUES TO EVOLVE TO MEET THE EVER DEMANDING NEEDS OF TODAY'S WORKERS.

No longer can we just respond to change. We must anticipate it, and design the most value based environments possible. We have identified several key office trends as follows:

- Technology Transformation
- Collaboration Exploration
- Rise of Branded Environments
- Mainstream Green
- Change Management in the Work Environment

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

Remote access, virtual networks, video conferencing, teleconferencing, multi-national companies and a global economy have changed how we work, who we

work with, and the technology we use to get the job done. The era of the corner office, the secretary pool and rigid employee hierarchy has ended. With these exciting technology advancements and a new, more flexible, multi-generational work force, the design of the office environment must evolve as well.

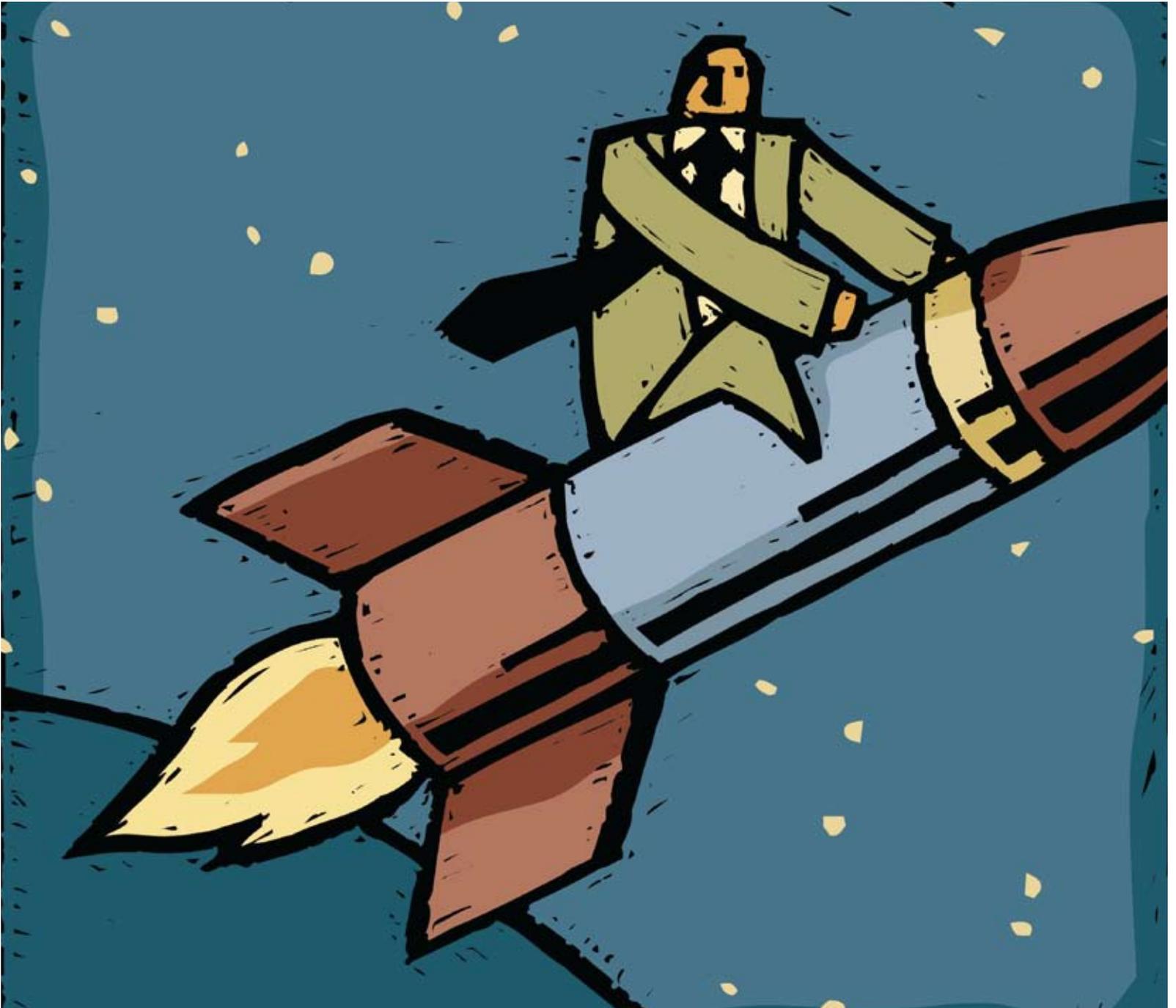
Technology has liberated us from the confines of the traditional office and has changed how and where we work. Employees travel more often, work out of satellite offices, home offices, or even their local coffeehouse and team with people across the country and internationally. With the ever increasing use of the BlackBerry and Wi-Fi®, employees stay connected 24/7.

Some companies utilize 'Free Address' stations, which are fully equipped desks

or workstations that are available for use by any employee. These stations accommodate traveling, flex, and multi-location employees. They are not only space efficient solutions because they minimize square footage, but also allow for maximum utilization by accommodating employees who work remotely, telecommute part time or work in multiple locations.

COLLABORATION EXPLORATION

Collaboration is the new catch phrase in the workplace. The American Heritage Dictionary definition of collaborate is "to work together, especially in joint intellectual effort." In response to this trend, designers are creating spaces that encourage collaboration. Employees now sit together in



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‘studios,’ ‘neighborhoods,’ or ‘teams’ with other fellow collaborators. Common Areas, which include conference rooms, flexible enclave spaces, and large-scale open working environments, have replaced space previously dedicated to private offices. New furniture systems balance the need for open office with some element of privacy, incorporating translucent, movable walls and portable filing cabinets and bookshelves. This is an effective strategy to provide some structure to open and flexible office environments.

RISE OF THE BRANDED ENVIRONMENT

Dynamic companies are seizing the opportunity to reinforce their brand and emphasize their company culture through the design of their office space, a technique termed “branded environments.” Branding the space generally translates into providing a consistent aesthetic and graphic design/signage

that enhances the corporate identity. Some specific features that communicate an organization’s personality and brand include strategic use of corporate colors, company logo, vision/marketing/advertising images as art, product display boards, or graphic interpretation of the business’s core philosophy. With an increasingly tight labor pool and fierce competition for talent, companies look to designers to transform their spaces into visible replications of their brand and culture, thus setting them apart from their competition.

MAINSTREAM GREEN

LEED™ and Sustainable Design are very hot trends across numerous industries, with commercial real estate being no exception. Some companies are choosing to pursue LEED-Commercial Interiors certification. Many businesses we work with value environmental consciousness and responsibility, but do

not wish to incur the additional up front expense of seeking LEED certification. For many organizations, this decision is driven by their company values and culture, and in some instances, mandated by their local cities and jurisdictions. LEED certification or not, incorporating sustainable design features is good for employees and good for business. Examples of sustainable design strategies include the use of more energy efficient lighting solutions, use of natural and locally available building materials, water conservation (low flow water fixtures), and the use of recycled materials, as well as designing in flexibility to reduce future potential cost and waste.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The changing work environment is a hot topic of discussion in industry and the media. We are challenged to adapt to the latest technologies and a new generation of workers (Gen X and Gen Y) who have very different ideas about work style and life balance/priorities than the Baby Boomer generation. As designers, we must be more flexible and nimble in how we navigate rapid change. Further complicating our planning of the ‘next office’ is the lack of clarity about what new technologies will be at the doorstep of our future. This reality underscores the need for us to continue to find creative ways to allow flexibility to prevail.

Today’s commercial real estate executives and design professionals must facilitate a forward look. We need to ask appropriate questions to ensure that we are designing facilities that engage today’s work styles, while keeping in mind that the pace of change has accelerated. We only need to look at the example of product design, to see how

quickly the built environment is changing. Take a quick look at your computer. How old is it, and would you see yourself working on the same computer in five years?

With many corporations exercising three- to five-year leases, the task is somewhat easier to design spaces that will be relevant throughout the lease term. But for the larger corporate user, the five- to 10-year lease is more the norm and considerations must be made regarding the flexibility of a workspace to respond to current as well as future business needs.

When incorporating new trends in workplace designs, it is important to communicate design style, intent, and benefits to the employees that will inhabit these new spaces. The Ericsson project is a good example of the importance of this factor.

ILLUSTRATING TRENDS WITH ERICSSON

Ericsson, with an international headquarters office in Stockholm, Sweden, and a North American headquarters office in Texas, is a world-leading provider of telecommunication equipment and related services to mobile and fixed network operations globally. Ericsson hired Ware Malcomb to help them redesign their United States satellite offices and incorporate a new work environment. With offices located throughout the United States and worldwide, Ericsson's employees travel and work as a part of both local and worldwide teams. Ericsson wanted to evolve the way their offices were designed to meet the new and changing needs of their employees.

Ware Malcomb and Ericsson together worked to introduce their Swedish standards into the American business



culture. The new design included desking systems for teams, free address stations, and a new branded environment. These new standards would then need to be rolled out and implemented in all offices within the United States.

The first office that Ware Malcomb

and Ericsson's real estate group redesigned was located in Fairfield, N.J. The new design incorporated innovative trends that were significantly influenced by the desire to make the work environment more engaging and efficient. Ware Malcomb designed the



space to encourage collaboration by eliminating the “cubicle” and creating an extremely open environment with desking systems and conferencing areas. We also examined ways to present the space aesthetics to be consistent with Ericsson’s brand image. However, the drastic contrast from the traditional “cubicle” and private office work spaces of the past, resulted in resistance from the employees.

Through the design process, Ericsson and Ware Malcomb developed a Change Management Program. Ware Malcomb and the Ericsson team created a Visioning Session that they will conduct with each satellite office, prior to the implementation of the new design. During this meeting, the team will share with the employees the new design style, design intent, and the benefits of the new direction. The Visioning Session also creates an

open forum for input and feedback from the employees, giving them a voice in the process. This new tool serves as a great vehicle for proactive communication about the company’s intent, sets a positive expectation and builds support and consensus.

Trends can both excite us about new possibilities, and challenge our current way of thinking. Leading progressive companies such as Ericsson, are embracing these new trends. They have adopted innovative technologies, are fostering teamwork environments, and are incorporating their brand and sustainable/green practices and designs into their workplace. The process of change can be formidable. However, Ericsson has demonstrated how careful planning and proactive communication can help ensure change is embraced in a positive way.

It is not uncommon for employees to be slow in accepting new ways of work-

ing. We encourage you develop a Change Management Program tailored to your specific organization. In doing so, you’ll ensure early consensus, a more engaged, supportive staff, and space that empowers the next generation of workers in your organization.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Workplace Design Comes of Age: Corporations Consider Innovative Workplaces to Increase Productivity, Satisfaction

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Design as a Business Strategy

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