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Five Easy Tips for More Functional Office Space

Local interior designers give advice for business owners   BY LINDSAY TIGAR

A change of scenery can sometimes be all it takes to boost morale and increase productivity, but moving offices or completely redecorating may not always be an option. Try these six easy and cheap ways to revamp your working space without going over budget:

Pick a new shade

The use of color is an effective way to improve the feel of a space. For example, try painting an accent wall or building columns in a bold shade. Or, paint the doors and door frames, using two colors that contrast with the wall. Paint is inexpensive, so feel free to explore.

Get out of the box

Lack of proper storage can often be an obstacle to functional ease and a professional image. *Storing items in more interesting, non-office furniture pieces, like wardrobe cabinets or stainless steel kitchen cabinets, adds personality and instantly hides visual clutter.*

These wardrobe and stainless steel kitchen cabinets from IKEA make for great office storage units.

Light up the room

In addition to using a basket-style direct/indirect fluorescent fixture, you can achieve dramatic results with the addition of accent lighting, such as downlights or wall-washers, to give a wall, signage, and artwork some sparkle.

Michelle Boddewyn, A.I.A., LEED-AP President of Alan Gaynor + Company in New York, NY
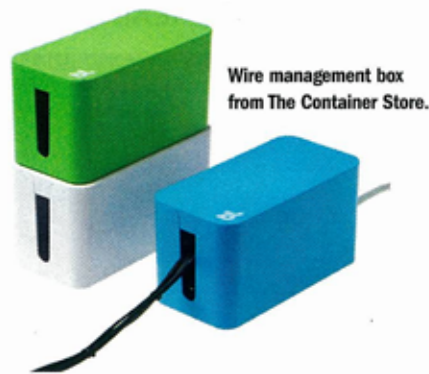
Work together

I am now defining work spaces with work tables. No more barriers, and certainly no cubicles. This easily increases interaction. I learned this from watching a 'young office' at work—they often met together in small impromptu groups while working on projects. Access and interactivity clearly promote productivity. This is a new way to work: mobile and highly interactive. Ideas are exchanged over big work tables, sometimes the work tables are even on wheels so that new meetings and collaborations can happen easily. The new office is fluid, open, and creative.

Companies such as Google and Microsoft, who were the early pioneers of open offices, use this arrangement to establish a modern take on the 'think-tank' culture. This communal design promotes a feeling of 'I love my job' because it promotes more freedom to be creative and interactive with coworkers.

Roderick Shade of Roderick N. Shade Interior Design in New York, NY

Out with the old

As a business grows and technology advances, the appearance and function of an office is jeopardized. People, equipment, and furnishings get added, but usually very little is removed. *Wire management compounds this situation.* One solution is to have grommets cut

Wire management box from The Container Store.

into desktops or the back of cabinets to keep wiring out of sight. Take a moment to assess the contents of your space. To make the old look new again, weed out the unnecessary and create fresh, more-functional placements of furnishings and accessories.

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